

ONION LAKE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

1892-1943

par

SYLVIE MARCEAU-KOZICKI

A thesis submitted to the
Department of History and to the College of Graduate
Studies and Research of the University of Saskatchewan in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
1993

Copyright 1993 Sylvie Marceau-Kozicki

Tous Droits Réservés

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work, or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head
Department of History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0W0

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work, or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head
Department of History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0W0

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance and guidance received by her adviser, Professor Jim R. Miller and her thesis committee members, Professor Laurence Kitzan, and Professor W.A. Waiser. She is further indebted to Mrs. Joan Ball, former principal of Coronation Park school in Regina, for special permission granted for research purposes. Special thanks to typist Diane Bews for her promptness and her flexibility. Une grande reconnaissance s'adresse à mon époux John Kozicki, pour m'avoir soutenue dans les périodes difficiles et pour m'avoir encouragée à avoir confiance en mes habilités. Finalement, un merci sincère à mes parents pour m'avoir donné le don d'apprendre et de me surpasser.

ABSTRACT

This thesis compares two Indian Residential schools located on the Onion Lake reserve, forty-eight kilometres north of Lloydminster. The Roman Catholic Residential school and the Church of England Residential school were both established in 1892. From their modest beginning as day schools they became large institutions, each educating over one hundred Indian pupils. This comparative study examines the schools' ideologies, financial struggles, managements, rivalries, routines, and pupils. It includes sections on disease, curriculum, graduates, fires, federal and Church policies, as well as, reconstruction, maintenance, and inspections.

Research on Indian education and residential schools reveals that the financial involvement of the federal government was generally inadequate and that despite many adversities, the Onion Lake Residential schools managed to survive for decades.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A SURVEY OF INDIAN-WHITE RELATIONS TO THE TREATIES OF THE 1870'S	1
II. EARLY DAYS OF THE ONION LAKE AGENCY, 1880-1890	20
III. THE BIRTH OF THE ONION LAKE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND CHURCH OF ENGLAND BOARDING SCHOOLS, 1891-1900	37
IV. THE TURN OF THE CENTURY AND NEW FEDERAL POLICIES, 1901-1910	70
V. THE LAST DECADE OF THE OLD BOARDING SCHOOLS, 1911-1920	109
VI. NEW BEGINNINGS, 1921-1930	141
VII. THE END OF THE PROTESTANT ERA, 1931-1943	183
APPENDICES	210
LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED	222

CHAPTER I
A SURVEY OF INDIAN-WHITE RELATIONS
TO THE TREATIES OF THE 1870'S

The Native populations of North America established domicile on this vast continent approximately 35,000 years prior to the coming of the White people.¹ They had come by land, following a long migratory process, from northeastern Asia to what is now Alaska, crossing over a land-bridge that covered the actual Bering Strait. It took thousands of years to complete this migration movement as waves of people "came in many scattered bands separated by wide intervals of time."² Their sporadic migration continued into the heart of the continent as some groups proceeded South while others headed Eastward or opted for the West coast. The Arctic environment was settled by subsequent groups who arrived at

¹E. Palmer Patterson, The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500 (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan Canada Ltd, 1972), 37.

²Diamond Jenness, The Indians of Canada, 4th ed. (Ottawa: National Museum Bulletin No. 65, 1968), 236.

a later date.³ The length of the journey depended on the abundance of the game, the provenance of the migrants, and their ability to survive in a particular environment. As the groups scattered and settled in different geographical areas, they adapted their way of life to their new surroundings, creating a culture modelled by old traditions and the new milieu.

Thousands of years of residence resulted in a natural division of the Native populations according to the geographical areas in which they lived. In Canada, there are seven distinctive groups delimited by various landscapes: the West coast, the interior of British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, the Ontario peninsula, the Eastern woodlands, and the prairies. The lifestyle of each group differed as environment had a definite influence on the shaping of cultural identity. Characteristics such as the fauna, the flora, and the climate contributed to making each Native group different from the other. These groups were divided into tribes, which were subdivided into bands.

Upon the arrival of the Europeans almost 500 years ago, the Native populations were living according to their own sets of rules, which were quite different from the

³Douglas Leechman, Native Tribes of Canada (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Company Ltd, n.d.), 8.

social organization prevalent in Europe. The Indian population of Canada was to be faced with the challenges incurred by the introduction of new weapons, new tools, new social and educational values, and also, new religious rituals and beliefs. The effects of change emerged imperceptibly as the disruption of the Indian traditional way of life was a gradual process.

Under the French regime and until the surrender of New France to the British in 1759, "the Indians were treated kindly, even benevolently."⁴ The French traders knew that the success of their mercantile activities depended on friendly interactions with the Natives. The fur trade provided an opportunity for the two groups to cooperate on a commercial and a military basis. The French government had little interest in permanent agrarian settlement. The property boundaries of New France were very loose due to a lack of extensive agriculture. The total population of the colony never posed a threat to the Native inhabitants. Most of the 60,000 settlers living in New France in 1750 were living on a strip of land along the St. Lawrence river. As a consequence, the Indians of New France and the French Europeans did not have to battle over land ownership. It

⁴T.R.L. MacInness, "History of Indian Administration in Canada", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 12 (1946): 387.

was not necessary to legislate about the Natives, and France did not feel the need to grant them special rights.

Along with the fur traders of the seventeenth century came the first religious groups. The French Catholic Church, in the midst of its Counter-Reformation movement and in a great endeavour to spread the faith, vowed to make New France a Protestant-free colony and to evangelize the Natives. The founder of Québec, Samuel de Champlain, supported the religious congregations and believed them essential to the development of the French population. In the spring of 1615, four Récollet missionaries left Paris for New France. They visited the Hurons of the Great Lakes, the Montagnais of the Saguenay, and the Algonquins of the St. Lawrence. In order to learn more about the Indians' customs and beliefs, the missionaries learned the Native languages and accompanied the tribes in their travel. It was an arduous task for they were not accustomed to the North American way of life. By 1618, the missionaries, as well as Champlain, were convinced that to obtain some results, the Indians would have to become sedentary and educated in the language of the French. These objectives were very similar to the assimilative policies adopted by the British Colonial Office two hundred years later. The Récollets opened three residences: Tadoussac, Québec, and Trois-Rivières, where they began to educate Indian children.

By 1623, the Récollet missionaries were exhausted. They requested and obtained the help of the Jesuit missionaries who arrived in Québec City in the spring of 1625. The latter established their principal residence near Québec and began preaching among the Hurons of Huronia. The missionaries did not stay in New France for very long. The colony was captured by the Kirke brothers in 1629 and the Récollets and Jesuits were transported back to France. The treaty of St-Germain-en-Laye, signed 29 March 1632, returned New France and Acadia to France. The Jesuits went back to New France that same year but the Récollets did not return until 1670. In 1635, the Jesuits opened a little college in Notre-Dame-des-Anges where they gathered a few Indian children and tried unsuccessfully to educate them.

Champlain favored the evangelization and the 'francisation' of the 'sauvages' of New France. In 1637, the Indian 'village sédentaire' of Sillery was founded. The Jesuits were in charge of the settlement which was opened to Christian Indian families. At a time of Iroquois attacks and diseases, the village counted almost three hundred families from Montagnais, Algonquins, and Abenakis tribes. A church, a Jesuit residence, and a hospital were erected and agriculture was introduced. Sillery was the first Indian reservation in Canada.

In 1639 two women's congregations arrived in Québec. The Ursulines and the Congregation of the Hospitalières de la Miséricorde de Jésus respectively devoted their efforts to education and to medical care. The Ursulines founded a boarding school for Indian girls in 1642. That same year, some of these sisters would be among the intrepids who founded Ville-Marie, a settlement in the heart of Iroquois territory. The first religious orders were joined by many others, such as the priests of the Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice in 1657, and the Congregation of Notre-Dame and of the Hôtel-Dieu in 1659.

The missionaries of New France did not attain their conversion ideals. Evangelization was rather slow and education was met with indifference. Unlike the Récollets, the Jesuits did not link evangelization to assimilation. They believed that it was possible to Christianize the Indians without having to frenchify them first. The Jesuits who lived among the Natives were mainly accepted for commercial reasons. As part of the price for their furs, the Algonquins and the Hurons reluctantly agreed to take along the black-robed missionaries. "Their peculiar habits, such as an apparent aversion to women and their obsession with privacy, made them suspect in the eyes of many

Huron."⁵ Furthermore, the missionaries seemed to bring along unknown, devastating diseases. Physically and culturally unprepared to fight European viral and bacterial infections, the Natives were severely hit by contagious diseases. Between 1630 and 1640, a series of smallpox epidemics killed almost 70 percent of the population of Huronia.⁶ In the 300 years of European contact, diseases such as measles, typhus, influenza, and tuberculosis destroyed half the Indian population of Canada.⁷ Nevertheless, the religious groups of men and women who came to New France had the Indians' welfare at heart. They truly believed that Christianization could save their souls. The Catholic Church was also trying to inculcate some morality into the French traders who, unlike the missionaries, appreciated the Natives' relaxed attitude towards matrimony.

The fur trade was important to both the French and the North American Indians. The Natives who dealt directly with the French traders obtained commodities such as firearms, mirrors, glass beads, clothing, and 'eau-de-vie' (brandy). European technology meant superiority and power among the

⁵J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 53-54.

⁶Bruce G. Trigger, The Impact of Europeans on Huronia (Montreal: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969), 29.

⁷Eileen Jenness, The Indian Tribes of Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), 122.

Indian tribes and such items represented a considerable commercial advantage in the trading circuit of the interior. The French traders formed a commercial alliance with the Hurons of the interior. They lived along important waterways and they had an organized trading network. As early as 1609, Samuel de Champlain sided with the Hurons in an attack on the Iroquois Indians. A mutually profitable partnership was sealed, and thereafter the Hurons acted as middlemen between the French and the Indians of the interior. The French traders secured similar alliances with the Algonquins of the St. Lawrence River and the Micmac of Acadia.

The commercial partnership between the French and the Huron was also military since they fought to maintain their fur monopoly and to gain access to new territories. Their worst competitor was the Iroquois-Dutch-British alliance. The Huron and the Iroquois had been enemies long before the coming of the fur traders, as the French and the British had been at odds in many European conflicts. In the eighteenth century France and England became involved in bitter wars to satisfy their national ambitions. The control of the North American fur territories was important to both empires, and what had begun as commercial ties for the Natives evolved into European allegiances. The Natives fought alongside their trading partners to protect the future of their

respective positions. Despite their partnership with the French, the Indians of New France were not given any rights until Britain issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The French government never felt a need for legislation regarding the status of the Natives. The British "not only recognized aboriginal rights to the land but also established the government as a middleman in the settlement."⁸

The Royal Proclamation declared that "all the lands and territories not included within the limits of our said three new governments, or within the territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company" were for the use of the Indians and that "no private person shall purchase any lands of the Indians."⁹ The Indians were allowed to trade with any White person who had obtained "a licence for carrying such trade from the governor or commander in chief of any of our colonies respectively where such person shall reside."¹⁰ The restrictions over the fur trade angered the new class of Montreal English merchants who complained to the British parliament. The Indians, on the other hand, reacted to the

⁸Roger Gibbins and J. Rick Ponting. Out of Irrelevance: A Socio-Political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada (Toronto: Butterworks, 1980), 4.

⁹Francis Maseres, A Collection of Several Commissions, and Other Public Instruments, Proceeding from his Majesty's Royal Authority (London: W. and J. Richardson, 1772), 90-91.

¹⁰Ibid., 91.

discontinuation of the fur trade with the French and "the termination of their presents in an armed resistance led by Pontiac, a chief of the Ottawa."¹¹ In order to minimize the unrest among the Indians of the interior and to curb the complaints coming from the Montréal merchants, the restrictions over the fur trade were lifted in 1768 by the government of Québec. The policy was sanctioned in the Québec Act of 1774. The Indians continued to act as suppliers to the French 'voyageurs' who in turn worked for the British merchants. In 1783, the Montréal merchants formed the North-West Company to compete against the Hudson's Bay Company, created in 1670. Thirty-eight years of fierce rivalry resulted in the absorption of the Montreal Company into the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, thereby ending the Montreal based fur trading system.

In the decades following the Royal Proclamation, the British considered the Indians military allies. They played an important role throughout the American War of Independence and during the War of 1812. The Indians chose their allegiances in accordance with their own interests. They preferred the British commercialists to the agrarian Americans. After all "it was still the Americans who were trying to expand their agricultural frontier onto what the proclamation had termed 'hunting grounds', and it was still

¹¹J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens, 73.

the British who resisted that expansion."¹² With the Treaty of Ghent, signed in December of 1814, the role of the Indians assumed a different trajectory. The end of the war and the beginning of a lasting peace on the North American continent represented a turning point for Indian-White relations.

"By 1830 the British Empire no longer needed the Indians of the two Canadas."¹³ Their traditional role as fur suppliers had been eroded with the disappearance of the North-West Company in 1821 and the end of the continental wars had concluded their military importance. The British Empire was interested in their lands, which were still protected by the Royal Proclamation. Between the years 1815 and 1850, 800,000 immigrants from Britain came to the British North American colonies, and by 1850, the total population of the colonies was close to three million people, with one million living in Upper Canada alone.¹⁴ This influx of settlers made it clear to the colonial government that the Indians had to make room for settlement.

¹²Ibid., 76.

¹³L.F.S. Upton, "The origins of Canadian Indian policy," Journal of Canadian Studies 8 (1973): 51.

¹⁴J.M.S. Careless, Canada: A Story of Challenge (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959), 147-149.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, treaties were negotiated with the Indian tribes of Upper Canada.¹⁵

In 1830, the Colonial Office adopted an assimilative policy towards the Indians of the two Canadas. The first step towards assimilation was a sedentary lifestyle. It was necessary for the success of the policy to establish the Indians in special villages where they could be exposed to agriculture, education, and Christianization. It was also necessary to remove them from the evil influences of White settlers and traders. However, the ultimate goal of the policy was the gradual integration of the Indian people into the White society. Meanwhile the State was "to protect and cherish this helpless Race... [and] raise them in the Scale of Humanity."¹⁶ Such a paternalistic attitude was typical of nineteenth-century Britain. The British believed in the superiority of the White race and especially of their nation. At a time when new technology, social reform, and religious zeal were at a peak, imperialist Britain believed that it was her duty to Christianize and civilize the 'savages'.

¹⁵"Report of Duncan C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 15 August 1922," Sessional Papers (No. 14), 8-10.

¹⁶Quoted in L.F.S. Upton, "The Origins of Canadian Indian Policy," 56.

Day schools were established on or around Indian settlements but their success was superficial. As the children were returning home every day, their home influences were stronger than the school's. They adopted the clothing of the European but they remained 'Indian'. The Bagot Commission, formed in 1842, was authorized to look into the current assimilationist policies of the colonial government, but also into the failure of the Upper Canada day school system. The commission concluded that boarding schools should be established to educate Indian children. These schools would not only do a better job at assimilating their pupils, but they would be adjacent to a farm where the students could learn the art of farming as well as a particular trade. Most Indian chiefs responded positively to the Bagot Commission school proposition. At the Orillia conference of 1846, they "promised the Indian Department one-quarter of their annuities for twenty-five years for support of the institutions."¹⁷ Similarly to the Indians of Western Canada in the 1870's, the Indians of Upper Canada accepted schooling as a means to learn ways in order to survive in the White world. They had no intention to become assimilated.

The Union of the two Canadas in 1840 had an influence on Indian Affairs, but many of the policies were still

¹⁷J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens, 106.

dictated from London. In the early 1850's, the first Canadian acts were passed to secure the protection of Indian lands against trespassing. A few years later, in 1857, the 'Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Canadas' was introduced. "This Act explicitly stated the government's ideological position on the Indian role in Canadian Society. The government felt that Indians must be assimilated in order to survive."¹⁰ It was the first offer of enfranchisement received by the Natives. An Indian could attain full citizenship and obtain twenty hectares of land by proving that he was educated, debt-free, and of good moral character.¹¹ Considering the fact that the conditions were awfully hard to meet and the fact that the Natives were not overly anxious to give up their Indian ancestry, it is no surprise that the 1857 Act failed to enfranchise a great number of them.

On 1st July 1860, the British government bestowed complete control of Indian Affairs on the Province of Canada. Legislation soon brought the management of Indian Affairs under the Crown Lands Department, with the Commissioner of Crown Lands acting as Chief Superintendent

¹⁰James S. Frideres, Native People in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts, 2nd ed. (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1985), 23.

¹¹J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens, 111.

of Indian Affairs. The Indian Department had been created in 1755.

In 1867, Indian Affairs were transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State, headed by the Secretary of State acting as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. In 1873, the Indian Branch was attached to the newly created Department of the Interior, with its Minister acting as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. The Department of Indian Affairs was created in 1880, but "it retained its association with the Department of the Interior by coming under the aegis of the Minister of the Interior until 1936."²⁰ Indian Affairs were then moved to the Department of Mines and Resources where they would remain until 1949.

In 1870, the Conservative government headed by Sir John A. Macdonald acquired the Rupert's land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company. The young Dominion was ready for expansion and western settlement was the key. The eastern provinces were feeling claustrophobic within their own boundaries and new lands were necessary for the growing population. In order to build Canada from coast to coast the Indians had to be settled on delimited

²⁰D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905," Prairie Forum II, (May 1977): 128.

reserves. The resistance of the Red River Métis ²¹ had been quelled in 1870 and the Indians represented the last obstacle to national expansion. However, the tribes of the vast prairies had no desire to give up the land of their ancestors.

Despite their initial reluctance, the harshness of the 1870's forced the Indians of Western Canada to sign treaties with the Canadian government. A series of smallpox epidemics killed almost half of their population and the buffalo herds were rapidly disappearing. Weakened by disease and faced with the spectre of starvation, the Indians negotiated with the representatives of the Canadian government. The Indian bands of Western Canada did not surrender their lands willingly. For the majority of the bands, the treaties were signed out of desperation. Some Chiefs tried to maintain their traditional lifestyle but the changing times forced them to take treaty. Between 1871 and 1877, seven treaties were concluded at little cost to the government. Treaty No. 1 and Treaty No. 2, respectively signed on 3 and 21 August 1871, surrendered the Red River area of southern Manitoba. Treaty No. 3, called the Northwest Angle Treaty and dated 3 October 1873, covered the south east corner of Manitoba. Treaty No. 4, the Qu'Appelle

²¹For the sake of simplicity, the author uses the terms 'Métis' and 'mixed-blood' interchangeably. The term 'halfbreed' is only used in quotations.

Treaty, sealed on 15 September 1874, dealt with the southern region of what is now Saskatchewan. Treaty No. 5, the Lake Winnipeg Treaty, signed on 20 and 24 September 1875, included all of central and western Manitoba. Treaty No. 6, 24 and 28 August 1876, conceded the central lands of the future provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Treaty No. 7, concluded on 22 September 1877, embraced the southern parts of Alberta.

The treaties were similar and provided the bands with farming land, an annual payment of \$5.00 to each man, woman and child, as well as cattle, farm implements, ammunition, twine, and a school on each reserve if the Indians wanted it.²² Treaty No. 6 differed from the previous five as it contained a clause promising help in times of famine and pestilence as well as a medicine chest for the Indian agency. This new clause disconcerted some officials of the Indian Branch who feared that "it may cause the Indians to rely upon the Government instead of upon their own exertions for sustenance, especially as their natural means of subsistence [were] likely to diminish with the settlement of the country."²³

²²"Report of Duncan C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 15 August 1922," Sessional Papers (No. 14) 1923, 12.

²³"Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year ended 1876," *ibid.* (No. 7) 1877, XI.

The signing of the treaties was a relatively peaceful process. The Indian leaders realized that their buffalo-hunting culture was endangered and they sought protection for their uncertain future. With the disappearance of the bison, the Plains tribes were losing their main source of food, clothing, teepee hides, ornaments, and tools. They felt that the representatives of the great Queen could help them adapt to a new way of life.

The majority of Indian leaders of the 1870's, like those at Drillia in 1846, were willing to try White ways in order to survive. They needed an alternative to the buffalo to provide for their families. Agriculture and education were new concepts for the wandering bands. Most bands asked for a school on their reserve so their children could learn the ways and the language of the White people. The Indian leaders knew that the society of the Canadian officials would soon reach the prairies. They wanted education for their children so they could be on equal footing with their new neighbours. The regular day schools were what they had been promised, not these schools to which missionaries would take their children for months at a time, even years sometimes. The Indians were willing to integrate education and agriculture into their way of life, but they did not want to stop all of their traditional activities. Neither did they want to lose their cultural identity.

As the Natives gradually settled on their reserves, government agencies, schools, and Churches were being built. These buildings and their occupants were to shape the local history of all Indian reservations. Onion Lake, located forty-eight kilometres north of Lloydminster, is an Indian reserve where the schools, the government agencies, and the Churches played an important role as instruments of assimilation.

CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS OF THE ONION LAKE AGENCY, 1880-1890

In September of 1878, two years after Chief Seekaskootch and Chief Makao had put their mark on Treaty No. 6, a survey of the Indian reserves near Fort Pitt was undertaken.¹ Fort Pitt was an important Hudson's Bay Company post located along the North Saskatchewan River, in the southwest corner of the District of Saskatchewan. Chief Seekaskootch's band was allotted 38,400 acres of land east of the fourth meridian, and Chief Makao received 14,080 acres to the west. The Seekaskootch and Makao reserves were respectively numbered 119 and 120. These two adjoining reserves were closely connected and were together known as the Onion Lake reserve.

The land set aside for the Onion Lake reserve had been known long before the coming of the government officials. The name of 'Onion Lake' had been borrowed from a little lake, no larger than a slough, located near the centre of

¹Saskatchewan Herald, 9 September 1878.

the reserve and called 'Wehahuskooseya Sakayekun' (Stinking Grass Lake) in the Cree language.² Prior to the treaties, its marshy edges were familiar to the wandering Crees and the fur traders for the wild onions that grew in such profusion. These tasty bulbs, a welcome change after a winter diet of meat, established Onion Lake as a popular meeting place in the late 1700's and early 1800's.³

Onion Lake was also known for its location on the Fort Carlton - Fort Edmonton trail. After the erection of Fort Pitt in 1829, a small herd of horses was pastured at Onion Lake, twenty-two kilometres to the north. The Hudson's Bay Company employees could obtain a fresh mount before continuing their overland journey. Over the years, the Onion Lake horses were used by missionaries, travellers and pioneers. After 1875, the herd was also used by the North West Mounted Police officers, riding from Fort Battleford, to patrol the Fort Pitt - Frog Lake area.⁴

Despite the signing of the treaties, the late 1870's did not witness a massive settlement of Indian bands on

²Ruth M. Buck, "Onion Lake," Unpublished Paper, n.d., Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina (photocopy of typescript), 1.

³E.L. Lifeso, "The Outpost at Onion Lake, Royal Canadian Mounted Police 1886-1974," Unpublished Paper, n.d., Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina (photocopy of typescript), 1.

⁴Ibid.

assigned reserves. Most of the bands from the Fort Pitt area maintained their traditional way of life. They continued to move their camps according to the game and the seasons, making their way back to the reserve in early July only to receive their annuities.

However, life on the prairies was changing rapidly. The 1880's were crucial for the Cree Indians of the Fort Pitt - Onion Lake areas. The buffalo were rapidly becoming a food staple of the past, the winters were unusually harsh, and many providers, weakened by disease, were unable to support their families. As early as 1880, reports of starvation were received in Ottawa from all parts of the North-West Territories, including Fort Pitt.⁵ Rations were distributed but "strict instructions [had] been given to the agents to require labor from able-bodied Indians for any supplies given them."⁶ The department was anxious to teach the Indian that he had to provide something in exchange for the goods he received. This concept was difficult to understand, especially by those men who brought their starving families to the reserve hoping to receive some help. Furthermore, "there was seldom enough work to be done, and ... often the Indians lacked the clothing and

⁵"Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 1880," Sessional Papers (No. 8) 1881, 12.

⁶Ibid.

footwear to withstand the sub-zero temperatures."⁷ The ration policy was very unpopular among the Indians and led to many incidents, the most tragic one being the Frog Lake Massacre of April 1885. The killings that took place on that morbid day had a profound influence on the subsequent development of Onion Lake as a reserve.

In Ottawa, the 1880's had begun with a certain degree of enthusiasm. The Conservatives of John A. Macdonald had been back in power since 1878 and the taming of the West was essential to the National Policy. The Department of Indian Affairs was created in 1880 to improve the "control of the wandering, starving bands and to make them settle on reserves and learn to depend on their own farming for sustenance."⁸ In order to establish such a control, it was necessary to have more government officials on the reserves.

Prior to 1880, only a handful of officials had been sent to the Northwest Territories. In November of 1876, David Laird, the former Minister of the Interior, had been appointed first Lieutenant-Governor of the entire area. He had brought with him three subalterns, Amédée Forget as

⁷Quoted in Laurie F. Barron, "Indian Agents and the North-West Rebellion," 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition, ed. F. Laurie Brown and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), 148.

⁸Jacqueline Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: White 'Rites' for Indians of the Old North West," (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1970), 30.

Private Secretary and Clerk of the Territorial Council, W. J. Scott as Registrar, and M. G. Dickieson as Indian Secretary. In the winter of 1877, Laird was appointed Indian Commissioner and Dickieson, Assistant-Commissioner and Indian Agent for Treaty No. 6.

As Indian Agent for Treaty No. 6, Dickieson was given an impossible task. His territory covered 120,000 square miles and contained an Indian population of about 5,000.⁹ He was responsible for the issuance of all annuities, the distribution of presents, and the teaching of farming skills. He was also supposed to ensure that all bands were adapting smoothly to the new life on the reserves.¹⁰ The area was simply too great for one man based in Battleford. Finally, in 1879, two more agents were assigned to Treaty No. 6, one for the Prince Albert district and the other for the Edmonton area. A large number of farming instructors was also hired to introduce farming on the reserves. Dickieson resigned his position in the summer of 1881. In that same year, David Laird left Battleford, leaving behind the titles of Indian commissioner, which he had resigned in 1879, and Lieutenant-Governor to his successor, Edgar Dewdney. Meanwhile, the Native traditional way of life was

⁹"Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 1876," Sessional Papers (No. 7) X1.

¹⁰A. J. Looy, "Saskatchewan's First Indian Agent: M. G. Dickieson," Saskatchewan History 32 (Winter 1979): 104.

being undermined by natural causes and by the evergrowing White population. More officials were being assigned to the West and new policies affecting the daily lives of thousands of Indians were being created.

In the spring of 1883, a little settlement was started at Frog Lake. Thomas Trueman Quinn was appointed sub-Indian Agent for the Fort Pitt district of the Battleford Agency. Born in Minnesota around 1845, T. T. Quinn was of Irish, French, and Sioux ancestry and was married to a Cree woman with relatives at Frog Lake. Quinn had begun his career with the Indian Branch in 1878 as a clerk in Battleford. Sub-Agent Quinn was killed by Wandering Spirit on 2 April 1885. The Frog Lake Massacre has been attributed to the poor living conditions on the prairies and to the feeling of uncertainty among the Indian bands. Ten people were killed and other White people were taken prisoners, including the Manns and the Quinneys of the Onion Lake reserve.

George Gwynne Mann had been appointed farming instructor for the Onion Lake reserve in April of 1882. Born and raised in Bowmanville, Ontario, Mann was Anglican and of British descent. He was working under the supervision of sub-Agent T. T. Quinn, of the Frog Lake sub-Agency. In his diary, kept from 1st October 1885 until 13 December 1886, Farming Instructor Mann wrote about his daily activities. His regular duties included the

distribution of blankets, clothing and rations, the supervising of house and fence building, as well as the teaching of farming and cattle raising. Regularly, he would ride throughout the reserve to talk to the Indians, to feel their moods, and to make sure that everything was fine. Every three weeks, he would travel to Fort Pitt to get the mail.

In the fall of 1885, Instructor Mann wrote an account of his experience during the Frog Lake Massacre and as a prisoner of the Big Bear band. On 1st April 1885, after a winter of holding councils,

all the Indians on my reserve came to my house with guns and commenced firing them and shouting acting in a very suspicious manner. I asked them what they were up to. They had taken off the government clothing and put on britch clouts they wanted to kill some cattle but I talked them out of it and had them go home. Afterwards I hear they had intended to kill me that day -- The next day they came back and were very quiet but I could see that they were very excited. They expected to see the Ind. Agent Quinn from Frog Lake, who did not arrive as he was killed that morning with others.¹¹

On the evening of 2 April, Instructor Mann was warned by Seekaskootch, Chief of the Onion Lake reserve, "to escape quickly since some of Big Bear's Indians were coming to kill

¹¹Alma Dorcas Hewitt, The Fort Pitt Trail: Mostly Tales of Pioneer Day (Saskatchewan: n.p., 1968), 5.

them."¹² The instructor left everything and took his wife and three children to Fort Pitt. The next day, 3 April, the Onion Lake Church of England missionary, Reverend Charles Quinney, and his wife arrived at the Fort. After a few days of quietness, the Indians took over Fort Pitt, killing one officer of the Mounted Police. The White people were taken prisoners and forced to follow the Indians for weeks. They were eventually released, uninjured, in Loon Lake, two hundred and ten kilometres from Onion Lake.

Reverend Charles Quinney, who had also been a prisoner of Big Bear, came to Fort Pitt in 1880. He opened the first school in Onion Lake and his first quarterly report indicates that in March of 1881, the Onion Lake Church of England school had twenty-nine pupils enrolled and an average attendance of fifteen.¹³ The school was open until the Rebellion of 1885 except during the September quarter of 1882 when Reverend Quinney was in Winnipeg.¹⁴ In his diary, Instructor Mann does not mention any school in

¹²Fort Pitt History Unfolding 1829-1985 (Altona, Manitoba: Fort Pitt Historical Society, Friesen Printers, 1985), 42.

¹³Memorandum to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 24 March 1882, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C10132, Volume 3752, File #30429.

¹⁴Memorandum from John McGirr to the Acting Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 26 February 1883, *ibid.*

operation in the year following the Rebellion. That particular year was entirely dedicated to the reconstruction of Onion Lake. After their surrender at Fort Pitt, the Indians of the district were taken to Onion Lake by Instructor Mann.¹⁵ They were put to work and within a year, they had rebuilt eleven farm buildings that had been destroyed at the time of the outbreak.¹⁶ Schooling was not a priority at such a time of reorganization. Consequently, all references to Reverend Quinney, the last one being 5 September 1886, are strictly related to Sunday activities. However, on 7 February 1887, in a letter to the Indian commissioner, Indian Agent Mann¹⁷ suggests that a Protestant schoolmaster should be sent in the spring when the school house will be ready.¹⁸ The Protestant day school was reopened around 1st July 1887, by Mr. D. D. McDonald who had some previous experience and who was not an

¹⁵"Report of G.G. Mann, 13 July 1886," Sessional Papers (No. 5) 1887, 128.

¹⁶"Report of T.P. Wadsworth, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, 1st December 1886," *ibid.*, 170.

¹⁷Instructor Mann was appointed Agent for the Onion Lake Agency by Order-in-Council on 13 December 1886. Indian Commissioner Dewdney to the Right Honorable Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 22 June 1887, RG 10, Black Series, C10128, Volume 3733, File #27115.

¹⁸Indian Agent Mann to Indian Commissioner, 7 February 1887, *ibid.*, C10146, Volume 3834, File #65138.

ordained clergyman.¹⁹ Meanwhile, "the Roman Catholic Church has a mission here and a resident Priest, as yet he has not opened a day school."²⁰

The first Catholic priest to come to Onion Lake had been Father Félix Marchand, O.M.I. Born in France in 1858, he had been ordained a priest in 1883 and had founded a mission in Onion Lake in 1884. Father Marchand did not work for very long at Onion Lake as he was one of the ten victims of the Frog Lake Massacre. He had joined Father Fafard at the Frog Lake Mission to celebrate Holy Thursday when the killings occurred.

In February of 1884, permission was asked by Father Fafard and Father Marchand to build a Roman Catholic school at Onion Lake. It seems that their request, as well as previous ones, had been either ignored or answered negatively. In a somewhat frustrated letter addressed to sub-Indian Agent Quinn, Father Fafard wrote,

I think that it would be useless for my companions and me to build school houses in the hope of the school grant as Father Nerre, LeGoff and I made application two years ago to have the grant for our own school houses and we did not get one cent yet. Probably they will have always new regulations to invoke not to give us the promised grant. What I find strange is that with all their new regulations they could find the means to give the school grant

¹⁹Indian Agent Mann to the Honorable E. Dewdney, 15 October 1887, *ibid.*, C10138, Volume 3785, File #41783-6.

²⁰*Ibid.*

to a missionary of the Church of England when his school house was not built and will never be built probably and they refuse us that same grant for our school houses that are used presently to teach the children that frequent them."²¹

Despite the refusal of the Department of Indian Affairs to concede a grant for a Roman Catholic day school at Onion Lake, Father Marchand went ahead and instructed children at the Mission.²²

It was not until the beginning of 1888 that another request for a school was mentioned. Father Nerre, the resident priest at Onion Lake since 1885, requested a grant for a Catholic day school to instruct the many Catholic children on the reserve.²³ A few weeks later, a newcomer, Father Hercule Vachon O.M.I., opened a school and asked Indian Agent Mann to accept him as the teacher of the Roman Catholic school.²⁴ Indian Agent Mann did not appear too enthusiastic about the Catholic school. In a letter to the Indian commissioner, Agent Mann wrote that he did not

²¹Father A. Fafard O.M.I. to Sub-Indian Agent Quinn, 19 April 1884, *ibid.*, C10146, Volume 3834, File #65138.

²²Father George Tétrault O.M.I., Oblates at Rest, ed. Antonio Duhaime, O.M.I. (Edmonton: Inland Printing Ltd, 1983), 124.

²³Father Nerre O.M.I. to the Honorable E. Dewdney, 9 January 1888, RG 10, Black Series, C10146, Volume 3834, File #64138.

²⁴H. Vachon O.M.I. to Indian Agent G.G. Mann, 24 February 1888, *ibid.*

"consider [that] there is any necessity for another Government school on this reserve unless purely on account of religion."²⁵

The day school was recognized by Indian Commissioner Reed who sent a series of books to Father Nerre.²⁶ The Catholic day school became eligible for a government grant to cover the teacher's salary. The school house belonged to the Catholic mission as it was not built with a government grant.

Teachers in the Northwest Territories were guaranteed \$300 per annum if the school was supported jointly by the Department of Indian Affairs and by a Church. Each teacher could also receive "an additional \$12.00 per annum for each pupil over the number of 25 and up to the number of 42."²⁷ Non-denominational teachers were paid \$12 per pupil attending, to a maximum of \$504 per year. This method of per capita payment did not work very well "owing to the

²⁵Agent Mann to Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed, 26 January 1888, *ibid.*

²⁶Reed sent enough to start a school: 12 Golden Primers, 12 1st Books (Canadian), 6 2nd Books (Metropolitan Readers), 3 3rd Books, 2 4th Books, 4 Spelling Books, 3 Grammars, 3 Arithmetics. Hayter Reed to Father Nerre, 10 February 1888, *ibid.*

²⁷Letter from Winnipeg to Indian Commissioner Dewdney, 2 May 1882, *ibid.*, C10102, Volume 3577, File #468.

migratory habits of most Indian Bands."²⁸ An unstable daily attendance could not guarantee a regular, decent salary for the teacher. It was therefore very difficult to attract efficient teachers to the West and the schools were often opened by missionaries supported by their Church.

The salary was not the only unappealing factor; the travelling expenses from the East to the West were considerable. Even though the Department offered to refund the cost of the journey after two years of faithful service, the "uncertain stipend guaranteed the teachers [was] not sufficient to induce them to incur it."²⁹ Moreover, in many cases the teacher on an Indian reserve had to work in a poorly built school that lacked furniture and teaching materials. The job was a tough one, too, as none of the children could speak English. Since most of the reserves were located in remote areas, the children's contacts with White people had been restricted to a few officials. The teacher was stuck teaching concepts that were so abstract to the experiences of the Indian children that success was very limited. Not only were the pupils instructed in a new language, they were taught from books that related to White

²⁸Report of a Committee of the Honorable the Privy Council to the Right Honorable the Privy Council of Canada, 24 March 1882, *ibid.*

²⁹Indian Commissioner Dewdney to the Right Honorable Superintendent General, 9 March 1882, *ibid.*

children's experiences. Needless to say, the interest in schooling dwindled rapidly. Children and their parents were not interested in subjects that had so little to do with their daily lives. The distribution of daily biscuits did more for the school attendance than the desire to learn the ways of the White society.³⁰

The Department of Indian Affairs was aware that the salary paid to teachers was too low and that it had to be supplemented out of the funds of the Churches. The department knew that the "grant allowed for the building of School and Teacher's Residence on Reserves [was] utterly and most miserably insufficient for this purpose."³¹ Still, little was done to improve the situation. It was beneficial to the department to let various Church bodies assume a good part of the financial responsibilities involving the schools. The department wanted to educate the Indians but was not willing to spend great amounts of money. The federal government began to rely on missionaries to educate the Indians. After all, they were dedicated and willing to work for very little. By leaving the task of educating the

³⁰Report of Agent Mann, 1st June 1892, *ibid.*, C10153, Volume 3868, File #88046.

³¹Bishop of Qu'Appelle to the Honorable E. Dewdney, 23 February 1886, *ibid.* See also Dewdney to the Right Honorable Superintendent General, 24 February 1886, *ibid.*

children to the Churches, the government was opening the door to religious rivalries on the reserves.

In Onion Lake, in the summer of 1888, thirteen complaints were filed against Indian Agent Mann regarding his handling of the rations for the Catholic school. These complaints were written by three Catholic priests in confidential letters to Inspector Alex McGibbon, who investigated and wrote a special report. The inspector found the complaints ill-founded and attributed them to misunderstandings between the Catholic school and the agent. Complaint No. 5 summarizes the feelings of the Catholic priests:

That the agent gave flour, bacon, tea and serge to the Protestant school to the injury of the Catholic school and that he had told some of the children that if they did not attend the Protestant school he would give them no rations.³²

Inspector McGibbon concluded his report by saying that George G. Mann was a good agent who had accomplished a lot on the reserve.³³ Nevertheless, it is probable that Agent Mann was partial towards the Anglican school. After all, he was Anglo-Protestant and the priests were all French and Catholic. No other complaints were made against Agent Mann

³²Report of Alex McGibbon, 27 August 1888, *ibid.*, C10140, Volume 3804, File #50774-6.

³³*Ibid.*

during the twelve remaining years of his appointment at Onion Lake.

By 1890, Onion Lake had gone through many changes. It was now a central agency, replacing Frog Lake, which had not been rebuilt after its destruction in 1885. The Post Office and the Hudson's Bay Company store were relocated from Frog Lake and the saw mill had been dismantled and reorganized at Onion Lake. A detachment of five constables of the North West Mounted Police was stationed on the reserve. A Protestant and a Roman Catholic mission had been established as well as "two well equipped schools."³⁴

The two schools were fairly well attended, but progress was rather slow in both.³⁵ They each had a new teacher, John Hope for the Protestant school and W. M. Todd for the Roman Catholic school.³⁶ The reasons that provoked the departure of Mr. D. D. McDonald and Father Vachon are not mentioned in any sources. The Protestant school had seventeen pupils enrolled with an average daily attendance of nine, while the Roman Catholic school had thirty-six pupils enrolled and an average attendance of

³⁴"Report of J. Ansdell Macrae, Inspector of Protestant Schools, 12 August 1890," Sessional papers (No. 18) 1891, 63.

³⁵"Report of Indian Agent George G. Mann, 30 June 1890," *ibid.*, 51.

³⁶"Tabular Statement No. 2 Showing the Conditions of the various Indian Schools in the Dominion for the Year ended 30 June 1890," *ibid.*, 232-233.

twenty-nine pupils.²⁷ These numbers are minimal when compared to the 529 people living on the Onion Lake reserve in 1890.²⁸

However, the Onion Lake schools were on the eve of a significant expansion. The last decade of the nineteenth century would witness the reorganization of the schools by dedicated missionaries of the Anglican and Catholic Churches.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸"Report of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed, October 1890," *ibid.*, 138.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF THE UNION LAKE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND CHURCH OF ENGLAND BOARDING SCHOOLS, 1891-1900.

In the 1880's, the Department of Indian Affairs had realized that the day schools were not as successful as originally anticipated. A number of factors, such as the inadequate number of competent teachers, the insufficiency of funds and materials, the irregular attendance of pupils, and the lack of commitment from many Indian parents, contributed to the inefficacy of the day schools. The pupils were progressing rather slowly, often missing school to take care of other family members or to follow their parents on hunting trips. English was never spoken outside the classroom and the children continued to follow the traditions of their parents. As the schools were only in operation during the day, the pupils returned to their home environment every evening. The Department of Indian Affairs believed that as long as the children were exposed to their Indian way of life, they would never change their traditions. After all, the government had a very definite

goal: "to redeem from a state of partial savagery a horde of Indians dominated by tribal law and aboriginal customs and to transform them into competent agriculturalists, ranchers or mechanics."¹ This objective, it was felt, could be achieved through education and Christianization. It was also believed that the process of acculturation would never take place if the children remained under the influence of their parents. They had to be removed from reserve life in order to learn and adopt the ways of the White people. As the day schools failed to civilize, Christianize, and assimilate their Indian pupils, the government had to divert its energy and capital to other kinds of educational institutions.

During the 1880's, the Department of Indian Affairs had opened two other types of schools in the Northwest Territories. Created to isolate the children from their parents, industrial and boarding schools were supposed to "produce a generation of English-speaking Indians accustomed to the ways of civilized life, ..., capable of holding its own with its White neighbours."² The industrial schools specialized in the teaching of trades and were originally

¹"Report of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed for the Year ended 30 June 1893," Sessional Papers (No. 10) 1894, xvii.

²"Report of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Hayter Reed, 2 December 1895," *ibid.* (No. 10) 1896, xxiii.

geared towards older children, usually between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. All boys were taught farming, but they could also learn carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, blacksmithing, baking, harnessmaking, printing, painting, and tinsmithing. The girls were taught cooking, homemaking, sewing, and knitting.

Industrial schools were also considered boarding schools as the pupils came from all over the Northwest Territories. They were subsidized by government grants to cover salaries and maintenance. They were quite costly for the government, with an average annual per capita expenditure of \$121.75.³ The schools were chronically underfunded and ultimately pupils were used as maintenance labor. Boys were fixing, building, and farming while girls were assigned to the kitchen, the laundry or the sewing room.⁴ As a result, academic progress was very slow.

Industrial schools were rather unpopular amongst Indian parents. Many were reluctant to send their children because of the distance between home and school. Visits were infrequent and parents felt that they were losing touch with their own offspring. They were also unpopular because

³"Report of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed, 31 October 1892," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1893, 52.

⁴Jacqueline Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: 'White Rites' for Indians of the Old North West," (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1970), 150.

of the high mortality rate among the students and the cases of abuse suffered by some pupils.⁵ The Onion Lake Indians were unwilling to send their children to industrial schools. Since the recruiting of pupils was largely done by the officials of the department working on the reserves, acting Agent Mann tried on several occasions to convince the Onion Lake Indians to send their children to the industrial school.

Mr. Clark [the principal of the Battleford Industrial school] has written to me on three different occasions to send some boys to his school, and I have tried to induce the Indians to send some down as I knew they would be well taken care of, but my answer from them on every occasion has been 'no'.⁶

By 1893, only eight boys and three girls from the Onion Lake Agency were attending the Anglican Industrial school at Battleford. Two boys and two girls were going to the Catholic Lac la Biche school.⁷

⁵In the six industrial schools of the Northwest Territories, forty-two pupils had died by 1900. "Annual Report of Indian Commissioner David Laird, 1st December 1900," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1901, 226. Also, "Summary of School Statement for the Year ended 30 June 1899," *ibid.* (No. 11) 1900, 450-451.

⁶Acting Indian Agent G.G. Mann to Assistant Commissioner, 22 October 1886, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C10135, Volume 3767, File #33170.

⁷"Report of Alex McGibbon, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, 28 June 1894," Sessional Papers (No. 14) 1895, 109.

The few Onion Lake Indians who attended industrial schools over the years returned home with skills that could not be used to their full potential. Located far away from any major centres of White settlement, Onion Lake and its surroundings did not offer much in terms of employment. It was almost impossible for the graduates to find work. Consequently, the majority of them readopted the lifestyle of their forefathers. The officials living on reserves were urged to "exert all their influence to counteract any tendency to revert to the old mode of living."² However, even if the ex-pupils had acquired some skills, they did not all possess the adequate tools or enough funds to purchase the materials.

Boarding schools were established throughout the Northwest Territories to act as "stepping stones to the Industrial Institutions."³ In some instances the boarding schools pre-existed the creation of industrial schools. Boarding schools were supposed to accustom the children to boarding life until their transfer to industrial schools at the age of fourteen. This policy changed over the years as the government realized that both institutions were

²"Report of Deputy Superintendent General Indian Affairs Hayter Reed, 2 December 1896," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1897, xxxix.

³Report upon the Management of Indian Schools in the Northwest Territories, Inspector Macrae, 18 December 1886, RG 10, Black Series, C10113, Volume 3647, File #8128.

achieving the same results and that boarding schools, with an annual per capita grant of \$72, were much cheaper to run than industrial schools. Funding to industrial schools was slowly reduced after the turn of the century and in 1923 industrial schools were amalgamated with the boarding schools under the new name of 'residential schools'. These institutions remained in operation until the early 1970's.

The boarding schools were smaller than the industrial schools and were located on or near the reserves. They were jointly funded by the government and by a Church denomination, either Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist. The sharing of the financial responsibility created frequent conflicts between Ottawa and the Churches. Ottawa was anxious to 'civilize' the Indians, but at the same time was reluctant to spend money as "parliament was forever complaining about the heavy costs of Indian Affairs."¹⁰ This pressure to restrain spending put the Churches in an awkward position. They were the ones having to deal with restricted budgets and they often had to defray the costs of maintenance and tuition. Regrettably, the shortness of funds generally affected the quality of life of the children. Their menus were often skimpy and monotonous, their clothing was not always adequate, the equipment of the

¹⁰J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 197.

buildings was not elaborate, and the school supplies were sometimes old and scarce. Furthermore, physical chores such as wood cutting, water hauling, cow milking, gardening, as well as various household tasks were assumed by the pupils.

Since the Department of Indian Affairs was funding the boarding schools through a per capita grant system, the Churches made great effort to find as many children as possible. Each school was allocated a maximum enrolment known as 'the pupilage'. Their endeavour to enrol a high number of pupils made them unpopular with many parents. The latter did not want to separate from their children and were often forced to do so by officers of the police force, especially after the introduction of the 1894 compulsory school regulations by Ottawa. All Indian children, age seven and up, were to attend school. The North West Mounted Police was as well involved in locating recalcitrant children who refused to return to school after a holiday, and in searching for runaway pupils.

Children entering the boarding schools were automatically put under the tutelage of the principal. By signing the admission forms, parents were making the principal legal guardian of their child. "As guardian, the principal was able to prevent the children from returning home and to control the number of visits parents made to the

school."¹¹ For that reason, parents were often "unwilling to sign the forms of application for admission required by the Department."¹² However, the admission forms were only a formality as the compulsory schooling regulations of 1894 enabled the department to educate Indian children without the consent of their parents.¹³ The regulations were not strictly enforced at Onion Lake. One of the principals complained that

the teacher or missionary is entirely powerless in the matter of persuading or forcing the parents to send their children to school... The Indians either simply laugh or point blank refuse or in some instances take the children away. The teacher or principal here is simply at the mercy of any squaw or Indian who wishes to take a child away.¹⁴

On 8 September 1891 Bishop Grandin of the Prince Albert diocese, arrived at Onion Lake reserve with three

¹¹Document relating to Indian Education in Saskatchewan (Saskatoon: Education Liaison Department of the Cultural College, 1977), 5.

¹²"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., Principal of the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding School, 26 July 1897," Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1899, 263.

¹³John Leslie and Ron Maguire, eds. The Historical Development of the Indian Act (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 97.

¹⁴J.R. Matheson, Principal of the Church of English Boarding School to Frank [Pedley?], 22 January 1906, RG 10, Black Series, Volume 6321, File 658-1.

Sisters of the Assumption.¹⁵ Sister St. Ignace, Sister St. Patrick and Sister St. Stanislaus had travelled from Nicolet, Québec, to take over the Catholic school on the reserve. Each sister had a particular role. Sister St. Ignace was the Superior, Sister St. Stanislaus was responsible for the household chores and Sister St. Patrick was in charge of teaching. Sister St. Patrick was a trained educator with a First Class High School Certificate from the province of Québec.¹⁶ The sisters worked in conjunction with fathers and brothers of the Oblate Order. Father Adéorat Therien, O.M.I. was at Onion Lake from 1889 until 1891, and he served as principal of the school from 1894 until 1896. Father Walter Comiré, O.M.I. occupied the position of principal from 1896 until 1900. Over the years, a number of lay brothers and ordained fathers worked at the school, either as principals, dormitory supervisors or as maintenance staff.

Shortly after the arrival of the sisters, a new school house was built by the Indians of the reserve under the supervision of Agent Mann. The thirty by eighteen frame building was erected to replace the old log house that

¹⁵Ruth Matheson Buck, Personal Papers (Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, File R-20).

¹⁶"Report of Albert Betournay, Inspector of Roman Catholic Indian schools, 22 July 1892," Sessional Papers (No. 14) 1893, 195.

Father Nerre had constructed.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the new school house and all its materials burnt to the ground on Saturday, 17 February 1894. The cause of the fire remained undetermined. A new building,

"35' by 45' three stories, begun in November 1894 was terminated in November 1895.... The ground floor divided in two rooms is intended for the classroom and for the girls' workroom; the second story is also divided in two, one for the boys' dormitory, the other for the girls, the top story is not yet finished."¹⁸

Three years later the interior of the new school had not yet been painted. Since a grant from the department was not available, the principal of the school, hoping to get a little money, suggested that "the painting could be done by the children of the school [and] as for the ceiling, a man or two should have to be employed at about \$1.00 a day."¹⁹

By 1900, owing to successful recruiting, the school was already too crowded. Requisitions to the department for a building grant were refused. The school was in need of "a second classroom, a convenient and suitable kitchen, at least one additional recreation room and a larger dining

¹⁷"Report of Indian Agent Geo. G. Mann, 1st July 1892," *ibid.*, 172.

¹⁸Father J.A. Therien, D.M.I. to Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget, 3 December 1895, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5.

¹⁹Father W. Comiré, D.M.I. to Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget, 2 April 1898, *ibid.*

room and boys' dormitory."²⁰ The department did not provide any funding on the grounds that the school was the property of the Catholic Church. It was the department's policy not to give grants to buildings it did not own. It was therefore suggested that the expansion be carried out by "utilizing the labor of the senior boys under the instruction of a competent and skilled carpenter."²¹

The Churches and the Department of Indian Affairs were constantly bickering over building and maintenance costs. The lack of money usually meant that the boarding schools were not always well built as students or cheap labor was often used to do the work.

Upon their arrival at Onion Lake, the Sisters of the Assumption had continued to operate the regular day school on the reserve. By September 1892, they had "opened a boarding school attended by some 20 children."²² On 1st July 1894 after two years of regular correspondence with the department, the Onion Lake Roman Catholic school was officially recognized as a boarding school. The school, sometimes referred to as St. Anthony school, was finally allowed to receive an annual per capita grant of \$72 for

²⁰Martin Benson to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 28 April 1900, *ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²H. Leduc, O.M.I. to Hayter Reed, 21 September 1892, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1.

boarding and lodging , as well as \$12 per annum per day pupil. Rations were also issued to boarders who were not grant earners.

for all pupils of the Onion Lake Boarding School, in excess of 20 authorized earners of the \$72.00 grant, rations will be given up to 20 pupils in accordance with a scale. ... a per capita allowance per diem of 1 lb. flour, 3 to 4 ozs beef, 1/4 lbs biscuits and a little soap, besides an annual allowance per pupil of 10 lbs rice.²³

A midday meal of rice and biscuits was also provided for the daily pupils, "that is those not clothed or lodged at the school, but [who] come for tuition and go home after school hours."²⁴

The school management was regularly asking the department to authorize a higher number of grant earners. The number was increased to twenty-five in 1895, to forty-four in 1897, and to fifty by 1899. Such a rapid augmentation could be explained by the positive accomplishments of the boarding school and by the fact that the Onion Lake reserve was predominantly Roman Catholic. "In that area, as in most settlements along either branch of the Saskatchewan River, there was something of a ready-made congregation, descendants of French voyageurs, whose life as

²³Assistant Commissioner Forget to the Deputy of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 31 July 1894, *ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

buffalo-hunters was closely linked to the Indians."²⁵ The Roman Catholic school could recruit its pupils among the population of the reserve. When given a choice between the industrial school and the boarding school located at Onion Lake, Indian parents opted for the latter as they preferred "to keep their children in the schools nearest their home."²⁶ A third factor could explain the number of grant earners allocated to the Roman Catholic school. The Department of Indian Affairs, in its mission to 'civilize' cheaply, realized that "the larger the number of pupils handled by the same staff of officers and employees the smaller ... the cost of each individual pupil."²⁷ It was more economical to allow as many pupils as possible in one large school, rather than build and maintain smaller schools.

The school was regularly praised by the officials of the Department of Indian Affairs. In the fall of 1893, Inspector Betournay wrote that the school was "now the best of all the Roman Catholic Indian ... schools and it used to

²⁵Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck (Saskatchewan History Lecture Series, Museum of Natural History, Regina, 10 February 1972), 12.

²⁶"Report of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Jas. A. Smart, December 1900," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1901, xxxiii.

²⁷"Report of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed, 31 October 1892," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1893, 52.

be one of the poor ones. The attendance is large and the average almost reaches the maximum of pupils that could properly attend."²⁸ The buildings of the school premises were clean, the teachers were enthusiastic and the pupils presented "a prompt and cheerful obedience to every command."²⁹

"The well-being of the pupils [was] carefully looked after as to food and cleanliness, while their clothing [was] comfortable and neat, even so far as to be quite attractive."³⁰ Despite all the positive comments written by the officials, the true feelings of the pupils were never taken into consideration. Nobody 'inspected' the emotional development of the pupils. In all the reports ever written it was never mentioned that the Indians were people with feelings and that a long-term separation could be emotionally devastating for both the children and the parents. It is as if the White officials did not even consider that aspect of the boarding schools. They had an objective in mind and family bonds were not to get in the way.

²⁸"Report of Albert Betournay, Inspector of Roman Catholic Indian Schools, 21 November 1893," *ibid.* (No. 10) 1894, 57.

²⁹"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 17 November 1898," *ibid.* (No. 12) 1899, 319.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 4 November 1899, "Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1900, 366.

The attitude of the officials could perhaps be explained by the fact that a century ago, many White children had to go to boarding school in order to receive an education. Boarding schools were an accepted feature of the Canadian educational system. The main difference, aside from the acculturation that was taking place in the Indian schools, was that White boarders were allowed to go home for holidays and summer vacations. Indian children were kept at school 364 days of the year. The pupils of the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding school were allowed to go home on Dominion Day. The "first of July was the biggest ever - when we were allowed to go to our various homes from eight o'clock in the morning until seven in the evening."³¹

A number of pupils might have been better off living at the school rather than suffering on the reserve. Some pupils were orphans and others were members of very large families. Times were hard for the Indians and sometimes the school was the best solution for the welfare of the children. That could explain why some of "the parents [were] glad and willing to give their children to us, most of them have come and offered them."³²

³¹Joseph G. Dion, My Tribe the Crees, ed. H.A. Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979), 119.

³²"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 26 July 1897," Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1899, 263.

Joseph Dion spent nine years at the Roman Catholic Boarding school. He was pupil No. 7 from 1894 until 1903, when he was discharged at the age of fifteen with the equivalent of a grade eight education. In his book My Tribe the Crees, Dion talks about his school life. Those days were happy ones and he does not mention anything negative about the sisters or the priests in charge of the school. He writes that his "nine years of ... happy school life were marred by the occasional death among the children."³³ The Indians were very susceptible to tuberculosis or consumption as it was often called. Dion tells the story of his friend Lazare, a Chipewyan pupil, who died of TB.

His bed in our dormitory was next to mine and I could hear him at all times of the night coughing and tossing around while he gasped for breath, yet he never whimpered. As the boy got worse and weaker the sisters moved him to their own house where one of them watched over him continually. How those nuns could ever stand the ordeal is beyond belief for there were but a very few of them and each one had a heavy list of daily duties to perform.³⁴

The sisters did everything possible to save the lives of the children. Since there was no doctor on the reserve yet, they had to do what they thought was best. They were quite successful as epidemics were regularly hitting the reserve.

³³Joseph F. Dion, My Tribe the Crees, 129.

³⁴Ibid., 30.

It seemed that any new disease took its toll on life. Diphtheria for one killed a great many young children ... Four of my little brothers and sister died one after another of this malady, but lucky for me I was then under the care of the good sisters in the convent school. They pulled us successfully through several epidemics like measles, chicken pox and scarlet fever, but they were practically helpless against the scourge of TB.²⁵

In order to maintain good health, the school was thoroughly ventilated daily and the pupils took a weekly bath on Saturday.²⁶ The children washed their hands and face and combed their hair everyday, but toothbrushes were not available. Open air exercises were also part of the daily routine. Activities such as "skating, football, baseball, swing, croquet and arrow-shooting [were] the principal outdoor amusements."²⁷ A set of lawn-tennis equipment was also donated to the pupils by a friend of the school.²⁸ Father Comiré affirms in one of his reports that the pupils were given three and a half hours of recreational time daily.²⁹ However, Joseph Dion states in

²⁵Ibid., 129.

²⁶"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 1st July 1898," Sessional Papers (No. 12) 1899, 305.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 31 July 1899," *ibid.* (No. 11) 1900, 334.

²⁹"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 26 July 1897," *ibid.* (No. 11) 1899, 264.

his book that "the greater part of our time outside of school hours was spent in sawing and splitting firewood."⁴⁰ It is possible that in principle the students were allowed three and a half hours of free time, but that in reality they had to complete their chores before they could enjoy it.

The summer and holiday schedule was different from the regular school year.

four hours a day [were] given to industry and the rest of the time to play, rest or any other pastime. Thursday, however [was] regarded as a grand holiday; there [was] no work and the day... [was] spent in the woods. Boys and girls in different directions and sisters with each. Here the children recover all the liberty of their old life, they run, hunt and swim from early morn to dusk.⁴¹

Every day began with an early morning mass and "a certain time each day [was] devoted to Christian doctrine."⁴² The reports do not mention the exact amount of time spent on religion but it was probably an important component of the daily routine.

⁴⁰Joseph F. Dion, "Early History of Onion Lake, Saskatchewan," Unpublished paper, n.d., Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina (photocopy of typescript), 3.

⁴¹"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 26 July 1897," Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1899, 264.

⁴²"Report of W. Comiré, O.M.I., 24 July 1900," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1901, 359.

The programme of studies was prescribed by the Department of Indian Affairs and it remained the same throughout the 1890's. The recommended subjects were English, General Knowledge, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, Ethics, Reading, Recitation, History, Vocal Music, Calisthenics, and Religious Instruction.⁴³ The main emphasis of the curriculum was on learning the English language.

Every effort must be made to induce pupils to speak English and to teach them to understand it; unless they do, the whole work of the teacher is likely to be wasted. Pupils must be taught to read loudly and distinctly. Every word and sentence must be fully explained to them and from time to time they should be required to state the sense of a lesson or sentence, in their own words, in English and also in their own language if the teacher understands it... It will be considered a proof of the incompetency of a teacher, if pupils are found to read in 'parrot fashion' only, i.e., without in the least understanding what they read.⁴⁴

The quality of English taught in the boarding schools was a concern of the Department of Indian Affairs. In his annual report of 1900, Indian Commissioner Laird mentioned that

Some complaints have been made of the defective English taught; but on my notifying the principals of the desire of the department that the pupils should be taught to read and speak English

⁴³"Programme of Studies for Indian Schools for the Year ended 30 June 1897," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1898, 312-315.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

qualified teachers in most cases have been promptly secured.⁴⁵

The English taught at the Onion Lake Catholic school was not questioned, but French was very present in the daily routine of the school. The sisters and priests were all francophones and they most likely spoke French to each other. From 1894 on, an annual concert was organized and parts of the programmes were presented in French. For instance, of the eleven presentations featured at the 1900 concert, five songs and one dialogue were performed in French.⁴⁶ The sisters of the school kept the concert register in English and French, but their chronicles, which began in 1913, were all written in French. Nonetheless, the presence of the French language did not interfere with the progress of the children. Indian Agent Mann noted that "the pupils have improved in speaking the English language."⁴⁷

By the end of the 1890's, the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding school was well established. The Sisters of the Assumption had managed to turn an unsuccessful day

⁴⁵"Annual Report of Indian Commissioner David Laird, 1st December 1900," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1901, 225.

⁴⁶Reverend Father Cunningham's Feast, 13 October 1900, *Registre pour servir à l'inscription des Programmes des Soeurs de L'Assomption de la Ste-Vierge, Onion Lake, Provincial Archives of Alberta*, 10.

⁴⁷"Annual Report of Indian Agent Geo. G. Mann, 30 June 1895," Sessional Papers (No. 10) 1896, 84.

school into a well-organized, flourishing boarding school. "The work done at this school [was] unquestionably meritorious."⁴⁸

In July 1892, John and Elizabeth Matheson arrived at the Onion Lake Church of England mission. They had come to educate and Christianize the Indians in the Anglican faith. "They found very little to begin work on. There was a small Mission-house, 24 by 20 feet, -- a Catechist's house, a little church almost broken down, and at least a foot out of plumb. There was also a little day - school."⁴⁹ The day school had "an attendance of only two or three children at best [and] often there were none."⁵⁰ Seeing that the day school was nothing more than a failure, the couple decided to open a boarding school. "In November, the Mathesons visited every home on the reserve, offering to take children into the Mission house, to train and teach them."⁵¹

John and Elizabeth Matheson formed an amazing pair. Not only were they very dedicated to their work, but they came from very different backgrounds. Elizabeth had been a

⁴⁸A.E. Forget to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 16 April 1898, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5.

⁴⁹Reverend Edward Ahenakew, "Onion Lake," The Canadian Churchman, 31 January 1918.

⁵⁰Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck, 28.

⁵¹Ibid.

teacher, a missionary, and a medical student while John had been quite an adventurer. He was born in 1848 at Kildonan, Manitoba where he was educated and taught for five years. At the age of twenty-one, he moved to Edmonton where he

was engaged in various callings, sometimes on the prairie chasing the wild buffalo, sometimes freighting between Winnipeg and Edmonton and other points in the North-West, and at other times conveying the mail between those points - frequently in winter by dog train ... In January, 1885, he left Edmonton and went to British Columbia, where he resided during the following seven years. While there he was frequently engaged in bridge building on the railways, ... He also did a good deal of prospecting and mining in British Columbia and the adjoining States of Idaho and Washington.⁵²

John Matheson opted for missionary life shortly before his marriage to Elizabeth Beckett Scott in December of 1891. He was ordained to the Anglican Diaconate in 1894 and to the priesthood in 1897. Reverend Matheson was principal of the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding school, sometimes referred to as St. Barnabas school, for twenty-four years.

Elizabeth Beckett Scott was born in Campbellford, Ontario, in 1866 and taught school in Manitoba from 1882 until 1887. She attended the Women's Medical College of Kingston, Ontario for the 1887-1888 school year and then served as a Presbyterian missionary in India until 1891.

⁵²J.R. Matheson to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 4 July 1899, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

Mrs. Matheson left Onion Lake in 1895 to complete her medical studies. She spent one year at the Manitoba Medical College and two years in Toronto where she graduated from the Women's Medical College, in 1898. Dr. Matheson returned to Onion Lake and became the "first woman to practise medicine in the NorthWest Territories."⁵³ Her work among the Indians and the White settlers was not easy.

At first no other doctor was nearer than Battleford, one hundred miles, but with the arrival of the Barr colonists at Lloydminster a doctor settled there. John built a hospital with an operating room and four wards. In 1901 Dr. Elizabeth was appointed a government doctor for the Indians at \$300.00 a year.⁵⁴

Dr. Matheson was a blessing for a remote reserve like Onion Lake. Outbreaks of smallpox, mumps, influenza, and measles were regular occurrences, but her presence at the mission saved the lives of many people. Her husband wrote in his 1902 report that "only one death has taken place in nearly ten years of this work, and that not of an Indian child."⁵⁵ The mortality rate at the Anglican Boarding

⁵³George R. Johnson, M.D. to Ruth Matheson Buck, 11 April 1939, Ruth Matheson Buck Personal Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina, File R-20.

⁵⁴Ross Mitchell, M.D., "Pioneer! Dr. Elizabeth Beckett Matheson, 1866-1958," The Manitoba Medical Review, October 1960, 619.

⁵⁵"Annual Report of J.R. Matheson, 8 July 1902," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1903, 348.

school was therefore not a concern of the Department of Indian Affairs.

The Mathesons had nine children of their own and they adopted five from the reserve.⁵⁶ They also provided shelter and food for many abandoned children. The boarding school was never short of pupils but most of them "were of mixed race, sons and daughters of men whom Matheson had known from his earlier days."⁵⁷ In the summer of 1893, Matheson requested permission to teach mixed-blood children at the boarding school.⁵⁸ The department was not in favor of accepting Métis children in Indian schools but Matheson was never openly told not to teach them. He educated them at his own expense, rarely asking the department for any support. He did on two occasions, demanding either rations or per capita grants. In 1895, the department agreed to provide one pound of flour and one pound of beef for two year-old Sarah Cherase and two-year-old Samuel Money. Both infants were illegitimate children of mixed race who had

⁵⁶"First Woman to Practice Medicine in the Northwest Dies, Body Brought From Texas for Burial in Onion Lake," Star-Phoenix, Saskatoon, 18 January 1958.

⁵⁷Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck, 29.

⁵⁸George G. Mann to the Indian Commissioner, 19 December 1893, RG 10 Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

been living with the Mathesons since they were babies.⁵⁹ The records do not indicate how often the rations were distributed.

On another occasion, Reverend Matheson asked to put William and Ethel Dillon on the school register, in order to receive the \$72 per capita grant provided to Indian pupils. The two children were born of a treaty Indian woman and a White man who had deserted them.⁶⁰ The Department of Indian Affairs agreed to pay the \$72 per capita grant for each child, but warned the reverend that this was not to create a precedent as it was simply "an isolated case."⁶¹

The presence of Métis children on Indian reserves put the Department of Indian Affairs in a dilemma. On the one hand, these children were not considered wards of the federal government as they were not treaty Indians, but on the other hand, they were living on the reserves according to the traditions of the Indian people. The Métis children were not the responsibility of the department, but letting them wander on the reserve was not setting a very good example for the treaty children. Theoretically, Métis were

⁵⁹J.R. Matheson to the Honorable [illegible], 2 September 1895, *ibid.*

⁶⁰J.R. Matheson to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 22 August 1898, *ibid.*

⁶¹J.D. McLean, Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs to Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget, 9 September 1898, *ibid.*

not supposed to frequent Indian schools, but there was no other school for them to attend. A memorandum written by the Honorable Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, and dated 18 October 1899 states that

all children, even those of mixed blood, whether legitimate or not, who live upon an Indian reserve and whose parents on either side live as Indians up in a Reserve, even if they are not annuitants, should be eligible for admission to the schools ... Boarding and industrial schools were not established for the purpose of carrying out the terms of the treaty or complying with any provision of the law, but were instituted in the public interest, so that [Indians] should not grow up upon reserves as [an] uneducated and barbarous class... The North West Government cannot provide for the education of non-annuitants upon reserves; and if we exclude them from our schools, they will practically be debarred from all means of education.⁶²

The Department of Indian Affairs attempted to solve the problem by allowing the school authorities to admit Métis children as day pupils. In some circumstances, principals could receive per capita grants if they kept non-treaty children as boarders, but generally, "only Indian pupils were recognized as grant earners."⁶³

The pressure to admit Métis children to Indian schools usually came from the principals. Anxious to increase their

⁶²Martin Benson to the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 6 April 1906, *ibid*.

⁶³J.D. McLean to D.P. McColl, Deputy Commissioner of Education, 8 January 1907, *ibid*.

per capita grants, principals were inclined to take in Métis children hoping that the department would eventually recognize them as grant earners. In the case of the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding school, Métis were accepted as there were not very many Indian children of the Anglican faith on the reserve. (See APPENDIX A.) In 1895, only six were of school age.⁶⁴ Not only was Reverend Matheson keeping Métis children as boarders, but he also had a few White day pupils. In 1900, fourteen per capita earners and twenty non-treaty pupils consisting mainly of Métis and White children, were attending the Church of England school.⁶⁵ That same year the Roman Catholic Boarding school had forty-nine treaty Indians on the school roll and thirteen non-treaty pupils.⁶⁶

There was considerable jealousy between the Anglican and the Catholic schools.⁶⁷ The rivalry arose partly from theological differences, but most importantly, perhaps, from the inequality of their per capita grants. "The majority of

⁶⁴"Annual Report of Alex McGibbon, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, 16 September 1895," Sessional Papers (No. 10) 1896, 302.

⁶⁵"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 31 October 1900," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1901, 409.

⁶⁶Ibid., 410.

⁶⁷Memorandum, 20 May 1897, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

the Indians of the Onion Lake agency [belonged] to the Roman Catholic Church."⁶⁸ By 1892 there were already fifty-five Roman Catholic school age children on the reserve.⁶⁹ It was therefore difficult for the Mathesons to recruit a large number of pupils. The Anglican school was allowed an annual per capita grant of \$72 for five pupils from 1893 until 1898, when it was increased to fifteen.⁷⁰ Reverend Matheson complained about discrimination and used it as a means to increase his number of grant earners.⁷¹ It worked in 1898 but the Church of England Boarding school's pupilage remained between fifteen and twenty for more than a decade.

The Department of Indian Affairs was trying to avoid discrimination by adopting an equal footing policy.⁷² It was felt that "when a concession [was] made to a boarding

⁶⁸"Report of the Superintendent of Indian Education with Tabular Statements and Reports from Inspectors and Principals of Boarding and Industrial Schools appended for the Year ended, 31 March 1910," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1911, 317.

⁶⁹Report of Albert Betournay, Inspector of Roman Catholic Industrial Schools, 22 July 1892," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1893, 195.

⁷⁰"Annual Report of Alex McGibbon, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, 16 September 1895," *ibid.* (No. 10) 1896, 302. Also H.C. Ross to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 6 September 1898, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁷¹J.R. Matheson to T.O. Davis, M.P., 12 May 1897, *ibid.*

⁷²A. Stuart, Acting Deputy Superintendent General to T.O. Davis, M.P., 21 May 1897, *ibid.*

school a similar one [had] to be made to its neighbour of a different denomination."⁷³ The slow beginning of the Church of England Boarding school cannot be explained by the attitude of the government. It was due to a combination of factors such as the higher number of Catholic children on the reserve, the size of the buildings, and the generally poor reports written by the Indian agent and the inspector.

The Church of England school buildings were not constructed to accommodate a large number of pupils. A new building was completed in 1895, but by 1898 it was too small again, due to the large number of Métis pupils attending. Another building was erected in 1899 and "this was much needed for the entire school accommodation was, and still is, over-taxed."⁷⁴ This three-storey, twenty-four by thirty log building, was one of the six separate constructions that formed the boarding school.⁷⁵ All of these were jointly owned by the Church and by the Department of Indian Affairs. As in the case of the Roman Catholic Boarding school, Reverend Matheson had to provide the labor

⁷³Martin Benson to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 28 April 1900, *ibid.*, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5.

⁷⁴"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 4 November 1899," Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1900, 366.

⁷⁵"Annual Report of J.R. Matheson, 5 July 1900," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1901, 360.

if he wanted to obtain anything from the department. The new building erected in 1899 was a good example of the compromise existing between the principal and Ottawa. "The Department furnished rough lumber and shingles sufficient for the erection of the buildings..., and the mission and mission workers [have to do] all the work and paying all other expenses connected with it."⁷⁶ This compromise did not please the reverend, and many of the school expenses incurred during his principalship were covered by his trading and ranching enterprise. He "kept a herd of cattle of about one hundred."⁷⁷ "His theory was that, as he had earned a good living in serving the devil there was no reason why he should not earn quite as much as he needed serving God."⁷⁸ The school received assistance and funds from the Woman's Auxiliary of Eastern Canada as well.

The progress of the pupils of the Anglican school was always qualified as poor or fair. The children attending were very young and after the departure of Mrs. Matheson, "the class-room work ... suffered much from change of

⁷⁶"Report of J.R. Matheson, 7 July 1898," *ibid.* (No. 12) 1899, 302.

⁷⁷Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck, 16.

⁷⁸"Rev. 'Jack' Matheson," Edmonton Journal, 28 August 1916.

teachers."⁷⁹ The children were taught to read and write both Cree and English, but when Indian Agent Mann "asked several questions in English [he] could not get a reply."⁸⁰ Reverend Matheson defended himself by saying that the questions asked by Indian Agent Mann were too difficult for the children.⁸¹

The Church of England Boarding school followed the curriculum assigned to Indian schools with a fair amount of time devoted to religion.⁸² The routine of the school was similar to that of the Catholic school. The pupils spent their holidays at school, but they could enjoy "an outing lasting from two to four weeks in July and August, when, camped on the bank of some creek or lake, fishing, boating, berry-picking, swimming and picnicking, [was] the order of the day."⁸³ The Mathesons tried to make boarding life as enjoyable as possible for the pupils of their school. Their

⁷⁹"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 4 November 1899, Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1900, 366. Also "Report of Indian Agent Geo. G. Mann, 30 June 1896," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1897, 192.

⁸⁰Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to His Lordship, the Bishop of Saskatchewan and Calgary, 26 November 1894, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁸¹Bishop of Saskatchewan and Calgary to the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 28 December 1894, *ibid.*

⁸²"Report of J.R. Matheson, 7 July 1898," Sessional Papers (No. 12) 1899, 303.

⁸³*Ibid.*

ideology was family oriented. There is no evidence to show if parents and children agreed with this philosophy.

The children are brought up as if this were their home, and, as far as possible, we strive to bring them up carefully and religiously, without the feeling that school is a sort of barracks or place of restraint. The idea is to make the place a home they will love, and they are managed with very little corporal punishment. They are very docile and obedient; they try to please.²⁴

During the 1890's, the Church of England Boarding school did not experience the same growth as its Roman Catholic counterpart. However, both were successful in their own way and both worked for the education of the Onion Lake Indians. The members of the Church Missionary Society, a prominent organ of the Church of England, were pleased with the progress made by the Mathesons. A report, published in Indian Missions, summarizes the evolution of the Church of England Boarding school.

It grew out of a day school which had been carried on for some years with indifferent success. Of the 69 children in the Boarding School only seventeen receive any grant from the Indian Department. The Territorial Government has given a grant towards the salary of a school teacher, in consideration of the number of non-treaty children who are maintained and instructed there. The work

²⁴"Report of J.R. Matheson, 18 October 1897," *ibid.* (No. 11) 1898, 262.

is simply a work of faith, but of faith which hitherto has been abundantly rewarded.^{es}

^{es}"St. Barnabas Boarding School," Indian Missions.
Diocese of Saskatchewan, 1901, 20.

CHAPTER IV
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY
AND NEW FEDERAL POLICIES, 1901-1910

By the turn of the century, Onion Lake was well established. It was considered a model agency because of "its churches, its schools, its grist and saw mills, commodious and comfortable houses and stables, and carpenter and blacksmith shops, splendid herds of cattle and every care taken of man and beast."¹ The Onion Lake Agency consisted of five surveyed reserves, two at Onion Lake, two at Frog Lake, and one at Long Lake. Another reserve, not surveyed yet, was located at Cold Lake, sixty-five miles north of the agency headquarters. The headquarters and the two boarding schools were situated on the Onion Lake reserve, the only reserve of the agency that was regularly occupied. There was also a little White settlement right on the reserve and called Onion Lake as well. The White people

¹"Annual Report of Alex McGibbon, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, 12 August 1895," Sessional Papers (No. 10) 1896, 245.

of Onion Lake did not socialize with the Native residents. Their interactions were limited to the necessities of work.

All the bands of the agency were Cree except for the Cold Lake band, which was Chipewyan. These Indians were all Roman Catholic and had a resident missionary. Despite many attempts at securing regular attendance, the day school on that reserve had to be closed because of a chronic lack of interest. The Chipewyans were hunters and trappers who did not require much help from the Department of Indian Affairs. From an agricultural standpoint they had not made any progress as a farming instructor was not appointed until 1910. Two hundred and forty people made up the band in 1900 and out of ninety-six children, ten were attending the Roman Catholic Boarding school at Onion Lake.² By 1907, only one Chipewyan child was at the boarding school.³ The Chipewyans did not like to have their children in the same school as the Cree. It was not because of "any rivalry between the bands, but they say that in a community of children of different breeds, it is sure to grow, and, as

²"Annual Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 1st July 1900," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1901, 177. In January 1900, William Sibbald had replaced Agent G.G. Mann who had been transferred to the Saddle Lake Agency in Alberta.

³"Annual Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 1st April 1907," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1908, 133.

the Crees out-number the Chipewyans their children would feel inferior."⁴

The Cree Indians of the Onion Lake Agency had not all reached the same level of 'civilization'. According to the Indian agent, the Indians living on the Onion Lake reserve were the most advanced. Their houses were neater and more comfortable, and even though they opted for the tent in the summer, they kept their camps quite clean. "The majority of these Indians are industrious and seldom lose the opportunity of earning money ... [as] they wish to be self-supporting."⁵ The Frog Lake and Long Lake Indians, although nominally Christians, were reported to be mostly paganish in their habits and indolent.⁶ They did "not understand the benefits of education" and in 1906 only two children were attending the Roman Catholic Boarding school.⁷ As far as agriculture was concerned, the soil conditions of the agency were not really propitious for grain raising. The Indians were "encouraged to confine their attention in the farming industry to the cultivation

⁴"Report of Duncan C. Scott, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 1st June 1912," *ibid.* (No. 21) 1913, 366.

⁵"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 27 April 1904," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1905, 166.

⁶"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 1st April 1907," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1908, 132.

⁷"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 1st July 1906," *ibid.* (No. 11) 1907, 136.

of oats and barley, in preference to wheat."⁸ Stock-raising, which was more suitable for the area, was slowly replacing horticulture. The Chipewyan Indians of Cold Lake were considered the least 'civilized' Indians of the agency as they were quite remote from the headquarters. Usually quiet and obedient, they were on their own except for the annual visit of the Indian agent to distribute the annuities.

Between 1901 and 1910, the Onion Lake Agency as well as the two boarding schools were hit by various epidemics. Smallpox, measles, mumps, influenza, and whooping cough were recurrent among the Indians but usually not fatal. The health of the pupils at the Onion Lake Boarding schools was fairly good. In his report as Ottawa Chief Medical Officer, P.H. Bryce stated that many boarding and industrial schools displayed very poor sanitary conditions, causing the death of many pupils. The spreading of disease was due to the careless practice of 'pupil-hungry principals' who admitted sick children in their schools, but also to the "inadequate ideas as to the necessity for sunlight, ventilation and fresh air."⁹ All children were supposed to pass a medical examination prior to their school admission, but some

⁸"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 20 April 1908," *ibid.* (No. 15) 1909, 138.

⁹"Report of P.H. Bryce, Chief Medical Officer, 19 September 1906," Sessional Papers (No. 11) 1907, 282.

principals did not abide by the rule. Records of medical examinations are not available for Onion Lake between 1900 and 1910. However, the reports of the principals show that twelve children died at the Roman Catholic school of diseases such as liver complaint, hemorrhage, consumption, anaemia, influenza, and whooping cough. Five more died at home after being discharged ill from the school. As for the Church of England Boarding school, the records are not as clear. Two deaths occurred between 1900 and 1910, but Reverend Matheson did not mention the causes. Furthermore, the number of deaths was not indicated for the years 1903 and 1910.

The mortality rate was higher at the Catholic school, but it must not have been alarming at the time. The non-resident medical attendant from Lloydminster, Doctor Amos, inspected the Onion Lake Catholic school and "was quite surprised to find such healthy Indian children and so free from tubercular glands."¹⁰ The ventilation of the school was appropriate but the staff was asked to open the windows more regularly.¹¹

¹⁰"Report of E.J. Cunningham, Principal of the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding School, 20 July 1906," *ibid.*, 373.

¹¹"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 22 May 1909," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1910, 353.

Reverend Matheson was angered by the conclusions of Chief Medical Officer Bryce.

In view of the present exaggerated, and in some cases, most unfair agitation, regarding the unhealthy condition of Indian Schools in general, I would like to draw attention to the fact that for the past year in this school, with a roll of over 60 children, half-breeds, Indians and Whites, gathered from different places throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan, hundreds of miles apart, there has not been a single case of sickness serious enough to prevent attendance of the child at school and dining table for any two days in the year, and all this without any change in the system of ventilation and sanitation pursued by this school for the last fifteen years.¹²

The lower mortality rate for the years that we have records of the Anglican Boarding school may have been a result of Dr. Matheson's presence. As a doctor she was assigned to the agency, but the fact that she lived at the school allowed for prompt intervention. Furthermore, her medical background made her sensitive to proper sanitary conditions.

Indian parents' attitude towards boarding schools did not change noticeably between 1892 and 1910. Factors such as the weather, the season, the health of the family, and the home and school conditions influenced Indian parents in their decision to send or keep their children at school. Despite a few positive reports by the agent and the principals, the high numbers of school age children who did

¹²"Report of J.R. Matheson, 31 March 1908," *ibid.* (No. 15) 1909, 350.

not attend school suggest that it was generally difficult for the principals to recruit pupils. In 1910, one hundred and ninety children of school age were living on the Onion Lake reserve. Only seventy-two were attending school.¹³ Indian Agent Sibbald explained that one cannot generalize about the outlook of Indians on schooling.

Indians are very changeable in their disposition regarding schools; at present time they are pretty well united in admitting the advantages of having their children educated but there are times when it is difficult to keep parents from taking children away from the school.¹⁴

In some cases, rations were withheld by the agent until the parents sent their offspring to school, but this pressure measure was not applicable to self-sufficient families. By 1910 however, the general consensus among the officials was that once the children had entered the schools, parents generally did not try to take them away. At the Church of England Boarding school, "the parents or the guardians do not give much trouble in trying to get the children out of school when once they put them in, nor are

¹³"Report of the Superintendent of Indian Education with Tabular Statement and Reports from Inspectors and Principals of Boarding and Industrial Schools appended for the Year ended 31 March 1910," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1911, 316.

¹⁴"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 20 April 1908," *ibid.* (No. 15) 1909, 139.

there many attempts at desertion on the part of the pupils."¹⁵ The same situation prevailed at the Roman Catholic school where "no trouble [had] been caused throughout the year by pupils deserting."¹⁶

Running away was not a regular habit of the Onion Lake pupils, but occasionally there was "a little trouble caused by desertion, caused at times by the parents, but as a rule they [were] persuaded without much difficulty to send the truants back."¹⁷ The Indian agent and the school principal had to retrieve the deserter, probably with the help of an officer of the Mounted Police stationed at Onion Lake. The latter could force runaways to return to school, but no documentation shows how often the constables used that power in Onion Lake. Pupil desertion became more common as the years went by, but it was never a major concern for the Onion Lake schools.

The pupilage of the Roman Catholic Boarding school did not increase in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Department of Indian Affairs paid \$72 per capita for fifty pupils. This voted grant was disbursed annually

¹⁵"Report of the Superintendent of Indian Education with Tabular Statement and Reports from Inspectors and Principals of Boarding and Industrial Schools appended for the Year ended 31 March 1910," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1911, 317.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷"Report of W. Sibbald, 1st July 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 156.

regardless of the average attendance, which could fluctuate considerably throughout the year. Between 1901 and 1910, the enrollment of treaty Indian children varied between forty-one and fifty-four. (See APPENDIX B.) The school also admitted non-treaty children and occasionally, a few White pupils, sons and daughters of Catholic settlers. The numbers of non-treaty children attending the school are not available for every year. Records show that thirteen were enrolled in 1902, ten in 1903, fourteen in 1904, and twenty-five in 1909.¹⁸ The school did not receive any grant for these pupils. Nonetheless, their parents were quite supportive of the boarding school and when the buildings were enlarged in 1907, "a substantial sum [was] contributed by the parents of non-treaty pupils."¹⁹ Apart from this, it is not known if non-treaty parents paid a nominal fee to get their children educated at the Catholic school. Some of the non-treaty pupils were orphans or abandoned children entirely supported by the boarding school. As for the White pupils, their numbers are difficult to determine as they do not appear on the school records. They were most likely

¹⁸"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 16 October 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 374. "Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 28 September 1908," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1904, 461. "Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 30 September 1904," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1905, 437. "Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 22 May 1909," *ibid.* (No. 17) 1910, 352.

¹⁹"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 22 May 1909," *ibid.*, 353.

included in the non-treaty group. At the beginning of 1911, Indian Agent Sibbald mentioned the presence of White children at the Catholic Boarding school.²⁰

The Church of England Boarding school's per pupil subsidy increased from sixteen to twenty in 1905. The number of treaty Indians registered fluctuated between fourteen in 1903 and thirty-one in 1910. (See APPENDIX C.) The average attendance was at its highest in 1910 with twenty-three pupils. The Anglican school kept a high number of non-treaty children at the school. Records indicate the numbers of non-treaty children in attendance but White pupils are not mentioned. There were forty-nine non-treaty children attending the school in 1902, sixteen in 1903, twenty-two in 1904, thirty in 1905, forty-one in 1907, thirty-six in 1909, and twenty-seven in 1910.²¹ These

²⁰Indian Agent Sibbald to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 20 February 1911, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1. Also, Sibbald to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 24 March 1912, *ibid.*

²¹"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 16 October 1902, Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1903, 374. "Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, 28 September 1903," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1904, 462. "Report of W.J. Chisholm, 30 September 1904," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1905, 436. "Report of J.R. Matheson, 11 July 1905," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1906, 409. "Report of W.J. Chisholm, 28 May 1907," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1908, 350. "Report of W.J. Chisholm, 22 May 1909," *ibid.* (No. 17) 1910, 352. "Report of the Superintendent of Indian Education with Tabular Statements and Reports from Inspectors and Principals of Boarding and Industrial Schools appended for the Year ended 31 March 1910," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1911, 317.

pupils were kept at the expense of the principal as their parents "[contributed] nothing appreciable toward their maintenance."²² The pupils of the Church of England Boarding school came from different areas.

The treaty children [belonged] to the Onion Lake and Saddle Lake reserves, while those not in treaty [came] from various settlements, nearer and more remote from Moose Lake, Victoria, Beaver Lake, Edmonton, and other points to the west, and from Duck Lake, far to the east.²³

The majority of the pupils at the Catholic and Anglican Boarding schools were in Standards One, Two or Three. Some were in Standards Four and Five, and few, if any, made it to Standard Six. (See APPENDICES B and C.) According to the federal classification, a Standard indicated the progress of the pupils according to the Reader they were using. Standards were also supposed to show the general level of achievement in all the subjects prescribed by the curriculum. Standard One was equivalent to the First Reader, Part I, Standard Two to the First Reader, Part II, Standard Three to the Second Reader, Standard Four to the Third Reader, Standard Five to the Fourth Reader, and

²²"The Report of Mr. W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies and reserves, on the schools in the North Saskatchewan inspectorate for the Year ended 31 March 1911," Sessional Papers (No. 20) 1912, 479.

²³"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 28 May 1907," *ibid.* (No. 14) 1908, 350.

Standard Six to the Fifth Reader. The pupils did not pursue their studies any further than Standard Six as they often needed more than one school year to be promoted to the next Standard.

The slow progress of the pupils was clearly not related to a lack of intellectual abilities. Academic achievement was hindered by a combination of factors. Indian pupils needed time to adapt to the boarding school. They had to learn a new language, they had to adjust to a totally new way of life, and they were completely immersed in a new culture. In their new institutional environment, children wore school uniforms, adapted to regular beds, ate at a table, used cutlery, and followed a strict routine to which they were not accustomed. Prior to his school days, the Indian child had been "free to create his own routines for eating, sleeping, playing; there were no specific mealtimes, no bedtimes, so that it was impossible to be late. He was free to listen, observe, experiment."²⁴

The Indian approach to education was very informal compared to the rigid routine of the boarding schools. Knowledge was transmitted to the youngster by the elders, through oral history. The child was expected to copy the behaviour of the adult as "the content of education

²⁴Ontario, Ministry of Education, People of Native Ancestry: A Resource Guide for Primary and Junior Divisions (Toronto, n.d.), 34.

consisted of adult tasks miniaturized and simplified for the child to accomplish."²⁵ The purpose of education was to prepare children of each sex for their future roles as adults. Indian parents "trained their children to survive in the environments in which they found themselves and to maintain the traditional methods of coping with those environments."²⁶ Corporal punishment and discipline were not components of the Indian educational system. Instead, the entire system was based on praise and ridicule. The whole band played an active role in the education of the children and "no private chastisement in the home could have produced more effect than the outspoken reproof of the entire community."²⁷

Indian children received a holistic education that "emphasized such values as respect for all living things, sharing, self-reliance, individual responsibility and proper conduct."²⁸ White teachers with limited knowledge of the Indian culture could not teach successfully. Their formal,

²⁵John W. Friesen, People, Culture and Learning (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1977), 115.

²⁶T.T. Whyte, The Education of the Non-Adult Canadian Indian (Paper, Ontario College of Education, 1960), 2.

²⁷Jenness Diamond, The Indians of Canada, 7th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 152.

²⁸Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert and Don McCaskill, eds., "The Legacy of the Past: An Overview," Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press and Nakoda Institute, 1980), 3.

lecturing approach did not suit the learning process of the Indian pupil. The Indian child was accustomed to take an active part in his own learning where hands-on activities allowed him to acquire knowledge at his own pace. The traditional classroom where pupils sat for hours did very little to stimulate the Indian mind.

The slow progress of the pupils was also due to the amount of time spent on learning the English language. Only once the basic language skills of speaking, reading, writing, and comprehending had been acquired, were the pupils ready to absorb other subject materials. The ability to understand did not mean that they were interested in the subjects. The lack of interest in the materials taught at the schools was another factor that interfered with academic performance. In most cases, students could not relate to the topics taught. Stories and lessons about White people, White values, and White cities did not mean much to Indian children who had never left the Onion Lake area. Life for the pupils consisted of the here and now. Therefore, many subjects were alien to their conception of the world.

Academic progress was also hampered by the amount of time dedicated to religious studies and religious activities. One of the major goals of the missionaries was to convey their love of God. The missionaries' "foremost ambition appeared to be the creation of good Christians

rather than the creation of self-confident, well-educated and ethnically proud Indians."²⁹ A great deal of time was spent on teaching respectable habits such as tidiness, punctuality, and cleanliness.³⁰ It was also important for the missionaries to inculcate the faith deeply enough so that the pupils would continue practising after leaving the school.

The length of residency at the boarding school influenced educational progress as well. Depending on his/her age upon admission, a child spent between a few months to twelve years at the school. Pupils who stayed longer had a better chance at attaining higher Standards than pupils who boarded for shorter periods of time. Pupils stayed at the school "according to age and not according to academic achievements."³¹ In other words, Indian pupils were discharged when they had put in their time, not because they had reached a particular Standard.

The average age for dismissal was sixteen, but depending on the student's abilities, the conditions at

²⁹Gerda Kaegi, A Comprehensive View of Indian Education (Toronto: Canadian Association in Support of the Native Peoples, 1974), 6.

³⁰Eric Porter, "The Anglican Church and Native Education: Residential Schools and Assimilation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1981), 34.

³¹National Conference on Indian and Northern Education, Proceedings (Saskatoon: n.p., 1967), 27.

home, and the space available at the school, some pupils were kept until eighteen, while others were discharged at a younger age. The Roman Catholic Boarding school dismissed boys earlier than girls.

It is the policy of this school, as was the original intention regarding all boarding schools, not to keep boys in attendance beyond fifteen years of age, since after that age they appear to grow discontented and to have a bad influence over the younger pupils, while in many instances they receive but little, if any, additional benefit from their attendance.³²

Discharged pupils were not given many options. A few were able to find work at the boarding schools while some found employment with White settlers. With the arrival of the Barr Colonists in Lloydminster in 1903 and the increasing number of settlers around Onion Lake, there was a growing demand for house servants and farm helpers. However, very few ex-pupils were willing to take advantage of these employment opportunities. According to the Department of Indian Affairs, ex-pupils were simply influenced by their parents who wanted to keep them at home.³³ After years of separation, it was only natural for parents to want their children nearby. The department did not mention that ex-

³²"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 30 September 1904," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1905, 438.

³³"Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year ended 31 March 1911," *ibid.* (No. 20) 1912, 354.

pupils were probably far more comfortable at home on the reserve than with a White family. Even if they had spent years at the boarding school learning the White ways, most graduates felt inadequate in a White environment. Their life at the school had been quite sheltered and their encounters with White people limited to the principal, the teachers and helpers, a few pupils, and officials from the Department of Indian Affairs. It is also possible that some White settlers treated Indian ex-pupils as inferior, making their life difficult and therefore forcing their return to the reserve.

In view of the fact that "too many ex-pupils [were going] back to the ways of the old teepee life," the principals and the officials in Ottawa became concerned about the future of the boarding schools' graduates.³⁴ In an effort to counteract the 'retrograde influences' of the reserve upon the graduates, a colony system was implemented to keep ex-pupils of boarding and industrial schools together. It was up to the principal and the Indian agent to decide who was worthy of living on the colony. The Indian agent was to choose a favourable location on the reserve where the graduates could settle away from the older

³⁴"Annual Report of Indian Commissioner David Laird, 15 October 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 189.

Indians. A colony of graduates was basically a little reserve within a bigger one.

The method adopted does not involve the expense of setting apart separate reserves for ex-pupils; but of selecting a portion of some of the larger and more fertile reserves, some distance from the Indian villages or settlements, and under the immediate eye of a farming instructor and the almost daily visits of the agent himself.²⁵

The File Hills Colony, located near Lebret, was the only official colony operated in the province of Saskatchewan. However, the agent and the principals of the Onion Lake Agency tried to guide and assist their ex-pupils as much as possible. A detailed report for the 1909-1910 school year shows the occupation of all Onion Lake graduates. Eleven pupils were discharged that year, the first eight being from the Roman Catholic Boarding school and the remaining three from the Church of England Boarding school.

Mary Paquette. - Has been working for several months as general servant at the Hudson Bay Co.'s store here. Has now left but intends going back; promising. 'Lilly McGarty. - Married to an Indian of this agency, and shortly afterwards separated from him. Now living with parents; not promising. 'Paul Chocan. - Living and working with father, who is an industrious Indian; is a very promising boy. 'Ellen Waskawitch. - Married to an Indian of this agency, but is now separated from him and living with parents. 'Patrick John. - Living and working with father, who farms and raises cattle, is a very

²⁵Ibid.

promising boy.' 'Cecile Viviers. - Married to an Indian of this agency. Has poor health; not promising. 'Adelaide Callingbull. - Living with parents on reserve; promising. 'Louise Paul. - Living with brother on reserve. Sickly; not promising. ... 'Ellen Singer. - This girl was for some time employed by the [Anglican] boarding school and was afterwards transferred to the staff of the Battleford industrial school. She, however, has now severed her connection with that institution, and is, I believe, now working with a married cousin who was a fellow pupil at the school and is married to a white settler. 'Eli Singer. - At present living on the reserve with no steady occupation. Has been working with survey parties during the summer. He is not disposed, as yet, to settle down on the reserve. 'Jane Paynter. - This girl had every opportunity of remaining in the employment of the [Anglican] mission; in fact, was employed for a short time, but would not stay. She is now working for the agency interpreter.³⁶

This report shows that most graduates lived on the reserve, or with people of their own cultural background. Moreover, it demonstrates that not one pupil was working for White settlers and that despite the opportunity, one girl refused to work at the Anglican Boarding school and another quit her job at the Battleford Industrial school. They were perhaps ready to sever all ties with educational institutions after years of boarding. Their decision could have been based on other factors as well, such as wages, working conditions, and personality conflicts.

Agents and principals were instructed to bring about matrimonial alliances between pupils, either at the time of

³⁶"Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent of Indian Education, 1st June 1911," *ibid.* (No. 20) 1912, 354.

their discharge or shortly afterwards.²⁷ It was hoped that married graduates would retain and carry on the teachings of the boarding schools. Such weddings did not occur in Onion Lake in 1909-1910 as most girls married Indian men from the agency.

Because of a nineteenth-century male chauvinistic mentality and because of the polygamous activities still prevalent on Indian reserves, the department felt that "most careful thought should be given to the future of female pupils; the special difficulties of their position should be recognized and they should be protected as far as possible from temptations to which they are often exposed."²⁸ The education of Indian girls was important as they would eventually be in charge of their own households. Their knowledge of personal hygiene, balanced diets, and proper sanitation could influence the attitudes, the living conditions, and the health of an entire family. Indian Agent Sibbald noticed a difference in neatness between

²⁷"Report of Deputy Superintendent General Hayter Reed, 2 December 1896," *ibid.* (No. 10) 1897, xxxviii. Also Copy of circular sent by Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to Indian Agents and Principals of Boarding or Industrial Schools, 2 July 1909, *ibid.* (No. 27) 1912, n.p.

²⁸Copy of circular sent by Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, to Indian Agents and Principals of Boarding or Industrial Schools, 2 July 1909, *ibid.* (No. 27) 1912, n.p.

households in which either the wife or the husband had attended a boarding school.

The influence of education is also seen in the tidiness of the homes of ex-pupils, especially where the wife is the one that has been to school, for in cases where the husband only has been, it is not so noticeable.³⁹

Male graduates who intended to farm could receive financial help from the department. Only deserving ex-pupils who had proven their good intentions during their school years were recommended by the principal and the Indian agent. Suitable graduates were granted money when "any assurance [could] be given that a loan [would] be repaid, ... [and used] to purchase stock, building materials, implements and tools."⁴⁰ The type of assurance required by the department is not described, but it is doubtful that many Indian graduates possessed enough collateral to obtain a loan.

A few graduates, however, left the school with money. In some cases, the Indian agent kept the annuities of a pupil residing at the boarding school. The money was

³⁹"Report of Indian Agent Sibbald," Quoted in "Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent of Indian Education, 1st June 1912," *ibid.*, 365.

⁴⁰Copy of circular sent by Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, to Indian Agents and Principals of Boarding or Industrial Schools, 2 July 1909, *ibid.*, n.p.

deposited at the Post Office Savings Bank and given to the student upon discharge. The records do not indicate the reasons behind this practice. The department's policy on the matter was "that all boarding school pupils annuities were to be paid to their parents at the time of payments."⁴¹ It is possible that the money was invested when a pupil was orphaned. However, the case of Mathilda Black proves that the Indian agent could withhold the annuities even when a pupil's parents were alive. Mathilda Black spent six years at the Battleford Industrial school and two years at the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding school. After leaving the school to live on the reserve with her parents, she received \$51.92 as annuity payments.⁴² The Roman Catholic Boarding school had pupils with arrears as well. Josephine Young Chief, pupil No. 7, claimed \$15 for annuity payments after her dismissal from the school.⁴³ It is not mentioned whether or not her parents were alive.

When money was given to a graduate, the Indian agent was advised to "kindly supervise the expenditure of [the]

⁴¹Indian Agent G.G. Mann to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 13 April 1899, RG 10, Black Series, C10195R, Volume 3889, File #95833-15.

⁴²Indian Agent G.G. Mann to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 15 March 1898, *ibid.*

⁴³Josephine Young Chief to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 8 January 1898, *ibid.*

money: it should be used in buying tools and other supplies ... no portion of [the] money should be spent for clothing unless the same is absolutely required.⁴⁴ In the cases where annuity payments were made to a pupil's parents, the Indian agent attempted to convince them to put the money in the bank so the child could use it upon completing school.⁴⁵

In the first decade of the twentieth century, many "bureaucrats had come to acknowledge the apparent failure of the boarding - industrial school format."⁴⁶ It was becoming obvious that years of 'White education' were not transforming Indian children into White adolescents. The officials realized that despite all their efforts to erase the students' cultural identity, the latter remained "Indians, with all their deepest interests, affections, and ambitions centered on the reserve."⁴⁷ This phenomenon could "only be explained by the lack of internalization of

⁴⁴J.D. McLean to Indian Agent Mann, 18 May 1899, *ibid.*

⁴⁵J.D. McLean to Indian Agent Mann, 9 May 1899, *ibid.*

⁴⁶Kenneth Coates, "Betwixt and Between: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross Residential School, 1911-1954," B.C. Studies 64 (Winter 1984-1985): 30.

⁴⁷"Annual Report of James A. Smart, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 12 December 1901," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1902, xxviii.

the white cultural values."⁴⁸ While at school, the pupils submitted to the rules of the White authority, but once their school days were over, they returned to the value system of their Indian community. Furthermore, there was still a great number of children who were not sent to school by their parents. The "schools were languishing for want of scholars, [while] there [were] bands of children running all over the reserves of school age."⁴⁹ Bureaucrats were therefore wondering whether

the existing method of education by day, boarding and industrial school as at present distributed and conducted is the best that can be devised for the education of the Indian youth, and again as to whether the potentialities of these schools are being exhausted.⁵⁰

Boarding schools remained open in spite of the 1908 proposal by Deputy Frank Pedley to close them down. Industrial schools, on the other hand, were slowly "phased out ...

⁴⁸Canada, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Indian Residential Schools: A Research Study of the Child Care Programs of nine Residential Schools in Saskatchewan, by George Caldwell, M.S.W. (Ottawa: The Canadian Welfare Council, 31 January 1967), 61.

⁴⁹J.R. Matheson to Frank [Pedley?], 22 January 1906, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁵⁰"Annual Report of Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 1st December 1904, " Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1905, xxvii.

partly because they were costly but also because they were a failure."⁵¹

Educators and church representatives were also unhappy with certain aspects of Indian education. They wanted an increased per capita grant, enforced compulsory education, a right to retain brilliant pupils past the age of eighteen, an input in the federal policies affecting Indian education, and the appointment of teachers by the Churches. In November of 1910 after five years of negotiations between the superintendent general of Indian education and delegates from the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, a new federal policy was introduced. Boarding school buildings were divided into three categories, Class A, B, and C. The class of the building determined the annual per capita grant allocated for each pupil. (See APPENDIX D.) The per pupil subsidy varied from \$100 to \$125 per annum in the western division and from \$80 to \$100 per annum in the eastern division. Both Onion Lake Boarding schools were entitled to \$100 per pupil as the Roman Catholic school belonged to Class B and the Church of England school to Class C.

⁵¹Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984), 160.

The 1910 policy introduced new regulations to limit the overcrowding of some boarding schools. The number of pupils was henceforth fixed by

consideration of air space and ventilation systems, and floor space in class-rooms. In the dormitories the air space must be at least 500 cubic feet for each child. In the class-rooms the limit is to be fixed by the floor space for seats and the air space for pupils, the latter to be not less than 250 cubic feet for each pupil, and the former 16 square feet for each pupil.⁵²

The Department of Indian Affairs agreed to maintain school buildings and school premises, "when they [were] the property of the government, in good condition and repair, and provide for proper sanitation and sanitary appliances."⁵³ Medicines and classroom supplies such as books, stationery, and appliances were to be provided by the government as well. The 'Management of Indian Boarding Schools', formed by the representatives of the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches, agreed to follow the department's regulations in order to improve the administration of the boarding schools. Children under the age of seven were not allowed as pupils and those over eighteen needed special permission from the superintendent

⁵²"Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent General of Indian Education, 1st June 1911," Sessional Papers (No. 20) 1912, 295.

⁵³Ibid., 442.

general to continue their studies at the school. A certificate of health was required upon admitting a new pupil. This was only applied when circumstances permitted and when a physician, named by the superintendent general, was available.⁵⁴ An official policy regarding Métis children was stated. Métis children were not to be educated in the boarding schools "unless Indian children [could not] be obtained to complete the number authorized ... but the superintendent general will not pay any grant for any such half-breed ... nor any part of the cost of its maintenance or education whatever."⁵⁵

The management of the boarding schools were responsible for the health of the children and for keeping the school buildings and premises "free from flies, insects and vermin."⁵⁶ Pupils were allowed one month of holidays between the first of July and the first of October. It was left to the discretion of the principal to decide if a child was eligible to go home. His permission depended on the student's attitude during the school year and on the school budget. The cost of transportation to and from the home was defrayed by the school. Between 1901 and 1910 many pupils of the Onion Lake Boarding schools spent the summer at the

⁵⁴Ibid., 440.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 441.

institutions. The Anglican children spent six weeks camping a few miles away from the reserve.⁵⁷

In the summer times we went camping for holiday. Riema and the others of the [Matheson] family went too. They would send one teacher with us. We would camp at Long Lake ... the little Long Lake (only a few miles from the Mission on the trail to Fort Pitt) or at the Ranch (near Frenchman's Butte on the Pipestone Creek, where John Matheson established a successful ranch about 1905, on land that he claimed as soon as that area was surveyed).⁵⁸

The Roman Catholic pupils enjoyed a similar outing, although Father E. J. Cunningham, O.M.I., the principal of the school between 1903 and 1917, does not mention it in his reports.⁵⁹ Father Cyprien Boulène, O.M.I. was principal in 1901 and 1902.

The curriculum for the boarding schools proposed a new emphasis on the teaching of Hygiene. Copies of a new Health textbook adopted by the Ontario Department of Education were sent to each institution. As a regular subject Hygiene was

⁵⁷"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 28 September 1903," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1904, 463.

⁵⁸Maria Rivard, *Recollections of Years 1896-1914 in the Onion Lake Anglican Mission*, Recorded by Ruth Matheson Buck, Handwritten Script, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina, May 1975, 12.

⁵⁹During the 1908 harvest, the sisters set up camp five miles away from the school. Emma Demers Lefebvre, Notes de voyage, Sherbrooke à Onion Lake, 1er Juillet -10 Septembre 1908, Saskatchewan Archives Board. Saskatoon, Microfilm R-9.46.

to be taught to pupils in the fourth Standard and higher, but regular talks on the matter needed to be addressed to the younger pupils. "Not less than twenty minutes each day [were to be] devoted to this subject."⁶⁰

The rest of the curriculum remained the same, stressing the teaching of trades, English, Religion, Physical Education, and the History of Canada and the British Empire. The boarding schools were to hire qualified teachers who were able to give

religious instruction at proper times; to instruct the male pupils of the said school in gardening, farming, and care of stock, or such other industries as are suitable to their local requirements; to instruct the female pupils in cooking, laundry work, needlework, general housewifery and dairy work, where such dairy work can be carried on; to teach all the pupils in the ordinary branches of an English education; to teach calisthenics, physical drills and fire drill; to teach the effects of alcoholic drinks and narcotics on the human system, and how to live in a healthy manner; to instruct the older advanced pupils in the duties and privileges of British citizenship, explaining to them the fundamental principles of the government of Canada, and training them in such knowledge and appreciation of Canada as will inspire them with respect and affection for the country and its laws.⁶¹

⁶⁰J.D. McLean, "Memorandum for the Guidance of Teachers in Indian Schools, 14 January 1911," Sessional Papers (No. 20) 1912, 439.

⁶¹"Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent General of Indian Education, 1st June 1911," *ibid.*, 440-441.

Despite the new policy, no fundamental change was made to the traditional structure of Indian education. The government and the churches' officials still believed that Christianization and civilization were "the best way to prepare Natives to enter the rapidly industrializing, larger Canadian society."⁶² Furthermore, the government was still parsimonious with its money. The per capita grant had finally been increased, but compared to other departments, "the amount of money made available to [Indian] education at that time was meagre."⁶³ Between 1896 and 1905, "the national budget [had] more than doubled, the Department of the Interior budget [had] nearly quintupled, but that of Indian Affairs [had] increased by less than 30%."⁶⁴

The curriculum was not complied with by all the boarding schools. A 1912 official inspection reported that at the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding school "hygiene [had] not latterly been taught; and physical exercises [had]

⁶²James S. Frideres, Native People in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts, 2nd ed. (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1983), 31.

⁶³Verna J. Kirkness, "Education of Indian and Metis," in Indians Without Tipis, ed. Verna J. Kirkness and D. Bruce Sealey, (Agincourt, Ont.: The Book Society of Canada Ltd, 1974), 143.

⁶⁴D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905," Prairie Forum 2 (May 1977): 128.

been neglected."⁶⁵ One of the curriculum components that was not neglected by the Anglican school was religion. According to Reverend Matheson's annual reports, religious instruction was the key to successful Indian education. He believed that "without careful moral and religious training, all the other training [was] simply wasted, or worse than wasted."⁶⁶ He instructed his staff not to teach the doctrine of the Anglican Church as the children should learn about "the simple old Gospel, 'The old, old story': Christ first, the church afterwards."⁶⁷ Reverend Matheson's philosophy rested on the certitude that all pupils eventually "find the proper church for themselves."⁶⁸ His attitude was somewhat unusual for an Anglican clergyman who belonged to the Church Missionary Society. This evangelical organization of the Church of England strongly advocated

⁶⁵"The Report of Mr. W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, on the Schools in the North Saskatchewan Inspectorate for the Year ended 31 March 1912," Sessional Papers (No. 21) 1913, 463.

⁶⁶"Annual Report of J.R. Matheson, 18 July 1906," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1907, 352.

⁶⁷"Annual Report of J.R. Matheson, 5 July 1901," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1902, 360.

⁶⁸"Annual Report of J.R. Matheson, 8 July 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 349.

that "to be civilized meant, ... to be Protestant, and to be truly Protestant was to be Anglican."⁶⁹

The religious rivalries existing between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Boarding schools disappeared with the appointment of Father E.J. Cunningham, O.M.I. as principal of the Romanist school. Reverend Matheson and Father Cunningham "conducted the work of their competitive Missions with respect, indeed with affection each for the other."⁷⁰ The two men called one another cousin as Reverend Matheson's "stepfather and Reverend Cunningham's father were brothers."⁷¹ Father Cunningham was Métis and had been ordained to the priesthood 17 March 1890.

Over the years, the staff of the Roman Catholic Boarding school increased to ten sisters, including two teachers. Sister St. Patrick remained in charge of the senior room until she was transferred and replaced by Sister St. Isabelle in 1907. Sister St. Mary of Nazareth had taught the junior pupils since 1899.

By 1910 the Catholic Boarding school consisted of three separate buildings that could accommodate seventy

⁶⁹Eric Porter, "The Anglican Church and Native Education", 19.

⁷⁰Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck (Saskatchewan History Lecture Series Museum of Natural History, 10 February 1972) 14.

⁷¹Ibid.

pupils and ten staff. The buildings were heated by eighteen wood stoves and "the danger of fire from such a system [was] very great."⁷² The dormitories were clean, well lighted, and adequately ventilated, but there was a lack "of modern sanitary arrangements."⁷³ Eight acres of reserve land were fenced off for the school. Three acres were used for a vegetable garden where all pupils worked.

The boys were in charge of the horses and cattle as well as preparing the wood for the numerous stoves. Some of these boys were "very handy with hammer and saw and [did] a large part of the repairing about the buildings."⁷⁴ The girls helped with all the household chores except for the laundry. "The bigger girls [took] turns at general housework parts of days."⁷⁵ This system was similar to the Church of England schools where "a few of the senior

⁷²"The Report of Mr. J.A. McKenna, Inspector of Roman Catholic Indian Schools in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, for the Year ended 31 March 1911," *ibid.*, 457.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴"Report of E.J. Cunningham, Principal of the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding School, 10 July 1905," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1906, 330.

⁷⁵"The Report of Mr. J.A. McKenna, Inspector of Roman Catholic Indian Schools in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, for the Year ended 31 March 1911," *ibid.* (No. 20) 1912, 456.

pupils [attended] school only half time, devoting the other half to trades or to household duties."⁷⁶

Most of the children of the Catholic school were members of the choir. They sang in Latin, Cree, French, and English. A traveller from Sherbrooke, Québec, was mesmerized by their Sunday performance.

J'ai entendu la messe dans l'église d'Onion Lake ... J'ai pleuré pendant presque tout l'office divin; je ne pouvais contenir mon émotion. En outre du chant liturgique, que les enfants rendent si bien que je me serais crue dans la chapelle de l'une de nos écoles de Québec, ces petits Cris ont chanté un cantique dans leur langue.⁷⁷

Half a day per week was dedicated to music and half a day to religious instruction. Furthermore, "morning and evening devotions [were] attended in the chapel."⁷⁸ Other subjects taught were Geography, History, Arithmetic, Spelling, Grammar, Composition, Drawing, Reading, Writing, and Hygiene, which received particular care.⁷⁹ "Considerable time [was also] given to prepare entertainments and concerts which the pupils [gave] now and

⁷⁶"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 16 October 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 376.

⁷⁷Emma Demers Lefebvre, Notes de voyage, Sherbrooke à Onion Lake, 1er Juillet - 10 Septembre 1908.

⁷⁸"Report of Reverend E.J. Cunningham, 9 April 1909," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1910, 338.

⁷⁹"Report of Reverend E.J. Cunningham for the Year ended 31 March 1911," *ibid.* (No. 20) 1912, 479.

then to parents and friends of the institute."⁸⁰ The sisters kept a monthly honour roll and prior to the summer vacations prizes were distributed to the best pupils by Indian Agent Sibbald. According to Mr. Sibbald, the children of the school were happy and comfortable.⁸¹

The Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding school was definitely a stable, well-organized institution. One official summarized the situation adequately. "For many years this school has been exceptionally well conducted and it is difficult for me to single out any subject for special mention."⁸²

The Anglican school and mission grounds covered thirty acres of reserve land comprising a three-acre garden. A new boys' dormitory was erected and painted with some financial help from the department. This thirty by forty, three-storey building was ready in 1906. The department also granted \$75 to build ceilings and to repair the floors of

⁸⁰"Annual Report of Cyprien Boulene, Principal of the Roman Catholic Boarding School, 10 July 1902," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1903, 347.

⁸¹"Report of Indian Agent Sibbald," Quoted in "Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent of Indian Education, 1st June 1911, *ibid.* (No. 20) 1912, 353.

⁸²"Report of the Superintendent of Indian Education and Reports from Inspectors for the fiscal Year ended 31 March 1915," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1916, 176.

the existing buildings.⁸³ Still, the Anglican school failed "to comply in some particulars with the department's standard for residential school buildings ... as there [was] no automatic arrangements for the removal of foul air."⁸⁴ By the end of the decade the school could accommodate seventy pupils and eight staff.

The Anglican Boarding school was not doing as well as its Roman Catholic neighbour. Apart from the difference in pupilage, Reverend Matheson was having serious problems with staffing. There was "a lack of permanency which [impaired] the efficiency of the work throughout."⁸⁵ Reports repeatedly deplored the constant change of teachers, which interrupted class work and pupils' progress. Not only was it difficult to find teachers for such an isolated reserve, but it was not always possible to secure a teacher properly trained for the work.⁸⁶ There was one teacher for the whole school but in 1910, Reverend Matheson mentioned that

⁸³J.D. McLean to Indian Commissioner David Laird, 3 May 1900, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 1.

⁸⁴"The Report of Mr. W.J. Chisholm Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, on the Schools in the North Saskatchewan Inspectorate for the Year ended 31 March 1911," Sessional Papers (No. 20) 1912, 479.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶"Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies, 22 May 1909," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1910, 354.

he hoped "to have a second [one] about the middle of May."⁷

On 8 November 1906, Reverend Matheson was faced with a complaint of physical mistreatment. Mr. and Mrs. Badger went to see Indian Agent Sibbald about the treatment of their children at the Anglican school. The complaint was sent to the Indian commissioner who replied promptly.

Not only putting the boys to help at washing, overworking young girls when nearing maturity, but the ear-twisting for punishment should be dropped, the latter absolutely. When the children have sore necks or are tender about the throat, this sort of punishment is cruel.⁸

Corporal punishment was an accepted feature of the Canadian educational system. Yet, the Indian commissioner felt that in this case, another punishment would have been more appropriate. This complaint was an isolated case as no others were ever filed against the management of the two Onion Lake Boarding schools.

Reverend Matheson was truly devoted to the Anglican school and mission, but he was also a shrewd businessman. He conducted freighting trips between Edmonton and Onion Lake, from 1892 until 1912. In Edmonton he traded furs and

⁷"Report of J.R. Matheson for the Year ended 31 March 1910," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1911, 468.

⁸David Laird to Indian Agent Sibbald, 28 November 1906, RG-10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #651-1.

seneca roots for whatever supplies were needed at the school. In 1906, he established a successful ranch near Frenchman's Butte where he raised cattle and steers. A good percentage of his business profits were used to provide for the boarding school and its pupils.

Doctor Matheson was as busy as her husband. Not only did she give birth to nine children between 1892 and 1910, she was a full-time medical officer as well. She had been practising medicine in Onion Lake since 1898 even though she was not registered with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Northwest Territories. She had refused to pass the Calgary examination, maintaining that she was being discriminated against. Male doctors were registered automatically, without examination.⁸⁹

With the arrival of the Barr Colonists and of other doctors in the area, Elizabeth Matheson decided to secure registration. In order to prepare for the examination she completed, for the second time, her fourth year of medicine. She spent the 1903-1904 school year at the Winnipeg Medical College, away from her family. She returned to her Onion Lake duties and shortly afterwards received registration for the Northwest Territories.⁹⁰

⁸⁹Ruth Matheson Buck, The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), 104.

⁹⁰Ibid., 111, 114.

By 1910 the Onion Lake boarding schools had been operating under the same managements for almost twenty years. Government officials never openly compared the two institutions, but the Church of England school consistently ranked second in their reports. The latter was never described with the same enthusiasm and positiveness as was the Roman Catholic school. The various interests of the Mathesons impaired the school's quality of instruction. The Sisters of the Assumption on the other hand, vested all their energy in their educational cause.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST DECADE OF THE OLD BOARDING SCHOOL, 1911-1920

By 1912 two new reserves near Island Lake had been surveyed and adjoined to the Onion Lake Agency. Located northeast of the agency's headquarters, the reserves were inhabited by 183 Wood Cree Indians.¹ Mostly hunters and non-christians, they were not 'civilized' and dwelled in primitive shelters.² These bands had not claimed their annuities since signing treaty in 1876. In 1916 two other reserves were surveyed. Joseph Bighead's Cree band was established on the west shore of Island Lake and Makwa reserve was created near Loon Lake. These Cree Indians lived in "buildings [that were] chiefly pole and sod shacks."³ Eventually, children from these four reserves were sent to the Onion Lake Boarding schools.

¹"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald, 23 April 1912," Sessional Papers (No. 21) 1912, 154.

²Ibid.

³"Report of Indian Agent W. Sibbald for the Year ended, 31 March 1916," *ibid.* (No. 18) 1917, 66.

The second decade of the twentieth century was a turning point for the Mathesons and consequently for the Church of England Boarding school. The year 1910 had been a happy one, but sickness and death soon plagued the Matheson family. In 1911, John and Elizabeth's four-month-old baby boy died of meningeal croup. Later that year, Reverend Matheson underwent surgery to remove a malignant lip sore caused by pipe smoking. In 1912 he survived two cerebral haemorrhages and accidentally pierced his right eye. From then on his health faded steadily. Despite a few periods of remission, Reverend Matheson was unable to manage the school as he had prior to his unhealthiness.

Mrs. Matheson was unofficially in charge of the school during her husband's sickness. After his death in August 1916, she agreed to take on the principalship of the institution for the 1916-1917 academic year. Following her resignation in August 1917, Dr. Matheson left for Winnipeg where she became assistant medical supervisor for the Public School Board.

The years 1912-1917 were determinative for the Church of England Boarding school. Mrs. Matheson, overwhelmed with work as a full-time doctor, mother, wife, and care-giver,

was unable to supervise the school efficiently.⁴ Understaffing was worse than ever before and the annual pupil average attendance dropped to a low of ten in 1913. (See APPENDIX E.) Staffing data are only available for a few years. In the fall of 1911, Joseph Chamberlain, an ex-pupil of the Battleford Industrial school was hired as teacher. In the winter of 1914 six people were listed as staff members: Reverend Matheson as principal, Dr. Matheson as matron, Reima Matheson as assistant-matron, Leita Matheson as teacher, Mrs. Hanson as housekeeper, and an ex-pupil, Miss Money as cook.⁵ A new teacher, Miss Cunningham, was hired in the fall of that year. She had four years of experience in Indian schools, but she, like the Matheson girls, had no teaching training. The staff for the 1915-1916 school year consisted of Reverend Matheson, who was paralyzed, Dr. Matheson, Miss Cunningham, and a cook, Miss Tandy.⁶ The listing of Reverend Matheson, whose contribution as a staff member was either minimal or

⁴W.B. Crombie, Inspector of Indian Agencies to the Department of Indian Affairs, 4 March 1916, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁵W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Duncan C. Scott, 31 March 1914, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6.

⁶Inspection, 4 March 1916, *ibid.*

nonexistent, indicates that the school was short on personnel.

Correspondence relating to the closing of the Church of England Boarding school began in early August 1913. Because of the fact that "the school was not sufficiently staffed and had a very small list of pupils,"⁷ the Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan, Reverend J.A. Newnham, proposed the closure of the boarding school and its reopening as an improved day school. He further argued that because of Reverend Matheson's condition, "the school [was] almost a farce."⁸ Bishop Newnham's viewpoint was shared by school inspector W.J. Chisholm. He reported in 1914 that "owing to advancing years and failing health Mr. Matheson is not by any means as energetic in the management of his affairs as he once was ... [and it would] probably be best, that [the boarding school] should be continued as a day school."⁹ The following year the inspector wrote that "under present

⁷Reverend J.A. Newnham, Bishop of Saskatchewan to Duncan C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 20 October 1914, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁸Bishop J.A. Newnham to J.D. McLean, Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 22 July 1914, *ibid.*

⁹W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies to D.C. Scott, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6.

conditions the school is not being maintained within its revenue."¹⁰

The suggestion was considered by the Department of Indian Affairs and inquiries were made with Indian Agent Sibbald. When asked by Ottawa if an improved day school could be viable in Onion Lake, the agent replied that it would most likely be a failure. Mr. Sibbald pointed out that many parents "are away from the reserve, hunting and on other pursuits, taking their families with them; so that a very regular attendance could not be looked for."¹¹ Furthermore, many pupils lived too far away from the school and would not be able to attend on a regular basis. In 1915, Agent Sibbald advised the department that because of the rumors of the Anglican Boarding school closing, "the Indians have been (sic) evinced a desire to place their children there."¹² The number of pupils registered rose from fifteen in 1914 to twenty-seven in 1915 and the average attendance increased from eleven to sixteen. (See APPENDIX E.) These numbers were not prodigious, but, considering that it had always been difficult to recruit pupils for the

¹⁰Inspector [Chisholm?] to D.C. Scott, 16 March 1915, *ibid.*

¹¹Indian Agent Sibbald to J.D. McLean, 24 October 1913, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

¹²Indian Agent Sibbald to J.D. McLean, 14 March 1915, *ibid.*

Anglican Boarding school, it was enough children to keep the institution open. As a result, the Department of Indian Affairs raised the pupilage from twenty to thirty.

The available documentation fails to illustrate the reasons behind the Indians' sudden interest in the Protestant Boarding school. They might have feared that the closing of the Anglican Boarding school would leave them with no option other than the Catholic school. Those interested in education might have seen an advantage in two denominational boarding schools as they offered them a choice between two religions and two institutions. Also, in the eventuality that the Anglican Boarding school did not evolve into an improved day school, Protestant Indians would have to send their children to another boarding school further away from home. It is rather difficult to explain how the Indians felt at the time and if the fate of the Protestant school was really that important to them. Nevertheless, the boarding school had been a permanent feature of the agency since 1892, and it is possible that they were somewhat attached to it.

The Department of Indian Affairs and the Anglican Church had decided to maintain the boarding school. Their decision was primarily based on Agent Sibbald's observations, but also on the fact that "Rev. J.R. Matheson

[had] always been hard to handle."¹³ Neither the department nor the Church authorities was willing to ask Reverend Matheson for his resignation.¹⁴ Both felt that "he should be retired as soon as possible but he [was] a worthy man, and sensitive, and [had] done long and assiduous work, so that he [should] be dealt kindly with."¹⁵ This deference and the Church's difficulty in finding a replacement explain why Reverend Matheson remained principal while incapacitated.

Before leaving the Onion Lake reserve, Dr. Matheson tried to secure financial compensation for the twenty-five years of work and money that she and her late husband had invested in the school and mission.

Mrs. Matheson [claimed] ownership of all the school buildings including the hospital building, together with all horses and cattle at the mission, and that she [had] given to the mission the two school buildings but still retains the stable, hospital, and live stock.¹⁶

¹³Bishop J.A. Newnham to D.C. Scott, 27 January 1916, *ibid.*

¹⁴J.D. McLean to Bishop J.A. Newnham, 28 July 1914, *ibid.* Also Bishop J.A. Newnham to D.C. Scott, 20 October 1914, *ibid.*

¹⁵Bishop J.A. Newnham to J.D. McLean, 22 July 1914, *ibid.*

¹⁶W.B. Crombie, Inspector of Indian Agencies to D.C. Scott, 30 November 1917, *ibid.*, C10184-10185, Volume 4081, File #481279.

The school buildings had been erected on reserve land, borrowed for the purpose of education. The buildings belonged neither to Dr. Matheson, the Church, nor the department. According to the policy of Indian Affairs, school buildings constructed on reserve land could not be bought or rented; they were the sole property of the reserve.

Dr. Matheson also requested "compensation for the remodelling of the old log building used as a hospital."¹⁷ She could not supply the renovation vouchers and consequently was unable to receive money from the Department of Indian Affairs. She then offered to sell the hospital for two thousand dollars. Indian Affairs refused to buy, indicating that without a doctor, Onion Lake would not need a hospital.¹⁸ Following Ottawa's decision, Dr. Matheson "arranged to have [the hospital] taken down and rebuilt on land to which she had clear title, in the hills just outside the Reserve, to the north-west of the Mission."¹⁹

The Mathesons had met most of the expenses incurred by the Church of England Boarding school. Aside from its annual per capita grant, the Department of Indian Affairs

¹⁷D.C. Scott to W.B. Crombie, 1st October 1917, *ibid.*

¹⁸Memorandum to D.C. Scott, 28 February 1918, *ibid.*

¹⁹Ruth Matheson Buck, The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), 167.

had not provided much financial support. In a letter to the department, Anglican Bishop Newnham depicted the involvement of his Church in Onion Lake and sympathized with Dr. Matheson.

The Church as a Corporation could do and did comparatively little for these buildings and stock. Various church members may have contributed at times, but the Rev. J.R. Matheson was responsible for the revenue and expenditures. He never once called on the Indian Department to pay his deficit or overdraft, but put his own personal income and earnings into the school property for the time being. Neither the Church nor the Indian Department had the right to expect him to do this. We owe a debt to him and his family.²⁰

Mrs. Matheson was allowed to keep and sell the cattle and horses. Everything else, except for the hospital, was left behind for the new principal and his wife.

In August 1917, Henry Ellis and his wife Anna arrived at Onion Lake. They had been appointed by the Church of England authorities to replace the Mathesons. The young couple had little experience in Alberta Indian schools. Nonetheless, school Inspector W.B. Crombie was quite impressed with their potential.

Mr. Ellis is a young man, who appears to possess business ability, is most enthusiastic in his work and I am of the opinion that with the assistance of Mrs. Ellis, who appears to be a competent matron,

²⁰Quoted in Ruth Matheson Buck, The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle, 163.

he will succeed in improving the living as well as the financial conditions of this school.²¹

Henry Ellis had emigrated to Canada from his place of birth, Surrey, England, as a very young man. Living in Alberta prior to 1914, he enlisted in the Canadian Army when the First World War broke out. Discharged from the army in 1916, he married Anna Ada Campbell in Calgary. Anna was born in Maxville, Ontario but had moved to Stettler, Alberta, with her family. The couple had eight children and remained in charge of the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding school for twenty-eight years. At the time of his appointment, Ellis was a lay member of the Anglican Church. He became deacon in 1921 and priest in 1922.

Mr. and Mrs. Ellis continued the school routine implemented by their predecessors. The school was attended by boarders and an average of ten day-pupils, "the majority of whom [were] the children of employees at the Onion lake Agency."²² By December 1917, the school had two teachers. Miss Leake was in charge of Standards One and Two while Miss Cunningham taught Standards Three, Four, Five, and Six. Miss Johnson was assistant-matron and Miss Smith was the cook. According to school Inspector Crombie, "the general

²¹W.B. Crombie, to the Department of Indian Affairs, 13 December 1917, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, volume 6323, File #658-6.

²²Ibid.

health of the pupils was good and they were provided with comfortable clothing."²³ The boarding school was used to capacity and Crombie recommended that "the total number of pupils should not be allowed over 37."²⁴

On 7 February 1918, Mr. Ellis wrote to Agent Sibbald asking for a pupilage of fifty. The principal justified his request by pointing out the school's improvements. A hot air furnace had replaced the wood stoves, and semi-modern sanitation had been installed in the boys' home.²⁵ The Department of Indian Affairs refused and the pupilage remained at thirty. Fourteen months later, Ellis applied for a pupilage of forty-five, indicating that he had twelve applications from orphans, semi-orphans, and children who were not properly looked after by their parents.²⁶ In his letter to the department, Agent Sibbald suggested a pupilage of forty, but the request was rejected because of a lack of funds. The per capita grant was eventually increased to thirty-three in October 1919 and to thirty-six in January 1920.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Henry Ellis to Indian Agent Sibbald, 7 February 1918, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

²⁶Henry Ellis to Indian Agent Sibbald, 3 April 1919, *ibid.*

Mr. Ellis was continually recruiting children. However, he did not admit new pupils unless he had been granted permission to do so by the Department of Indian Affairs. The principal sent all applications to the Indian agent who forwarded them to Ottawa. The department's replies followed a similar pattern. Admission was approved "provided [the] children [were] not in excess of the number for which grant [was] allowed this school."²⁷ In other words, the school's per capita grant was not to be raised every time the principal had found new pupils. By continuously sending Ottawa the names of potential pupils, Mr. Ellis was hoping to prove that his school's per capita subsidy was too low. He was successful. Less than a decade later, a brand new Anglican school, accommodating more than one hundred boarders was built in Onion Lake.

Morality was a great concern of the new principal. Reverend Ellis attempted to lay charges against a Roman Catholic pupil who had lured away three girls from the Anglican school for immoral purposes.²⁸ The case was dismissed as the girls had misbehaved with the same boy before and were not of previously chaste characters.²⁹ On

²⁷J.D. McLean to Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald, 17 November 1919, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10.

²⁸Bishop Newnham to D.C. Scott, 13 February 1919, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6323, File #658-1.

²⁹J.D. McLean to Bishop Newnham, 20 February 1919, *ibid.*

21 March 1919, pupil no. 26, Agnes Waskahat was discharged at the age of fifteen. She had been "found to be of unchaste character."³⁰ She had been at the school for seven years and her state of education was described as 'very low'. It is impossible to know if Agnes was one of the three girls involved with the Roman Catholic boy. Another girl, Jessie Brown, was discharged on 30 August 1920 because of her bad character.³¹

Because of his participation in the world conflict of 1914-1918, Mr. Ellis brought war awareness to the boarding school. Records show that at least one patriotic pageant was performed by the Anglican pupils.³² However, only one of Ellis's pupils was personally affected by the Great War. On 9 August 1920, application for a three-month leave of absence for pupil Edith Dreaver from the Mistawasis reserve was forwarded to the Department of Indian Affairs.³³ The girl was needed at home as her father, a returned soldier from France, was not physically fit and her mother was sick. Principal Ellis inquired if "the Department [would] still

³⁰Discharge Sheet, 21 March 1919, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10.

³¹Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 30 August 1920, *ibid.*

³²W.B. Crombie to the Department of Indian Affairs, 13 December 1917, *ibid.*, File #658-6.

³³Henry Ellis to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 9 August 1920, *ibid.*, File #658-10.

allow this child to remain as a grant earner during her leave of absence, as the school will be put to an expense for travelling in getting the child returned when the leave has expired."³⁴ The grant was allowed but it was specified that "this action [was] not to form a precedent for future cases."³⁵

The Great War of 1914-1918 seemed to have little impact on the daily conduct of the Roman Catholic school. The conflict was mentioned only once in the school's Chronicles. On the first day of January 1919 the entry reads, "Nous saluons la nouvelle année dans le calme, le bonheur et la paix _ _ _ En effet, la guerre est finie."³⁶ The sisters had limited interest in the outside world and their routine was interrupted only by the occasional visits of fellow sisters, Church dignitaries, and government officials.

As for the White population of the Onion Lake settlement, its interest was comparable to other communities in Saskatchewan. Young men enlisted, socks and Balaclava hats were knitted, and war news was anxiously awaited.³⁷

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵A.F. Mackenzie to Lang Turner, 15 August 1920, *ibid.*

³⁶Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, Onion Lake, Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1st January 1919, 93.

³⁷Ruth Matheson Buck, The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle, 163.

The Indians of the agency showed little interest in the overseas conflict. Although the agency bands contributed \$25.70 to the 1916 War Fund and \$100.50 in 1917, their effort was quite small when compared to other agencies.³⁸

Many bands and agencies showed extreme generosity. By 1918, the File Hills bands had raised \$8,562.00 for the Red Cross and Patriotic Funds. The Touchwood bands donated \$2,000.00, and in the Qu'Appelle agency, the Pasqua band voted \$1,000.00 from its capital fund, and Muscowpetung \$500.00.³⁹

A total of one hundred and seven Saskatchewan Indians enlisted between 1914 and 1918.⁴⁰ Only two of these men, Adam Mongraw and Ed Swanson, were from the Onion Lake Agency.⁴¹ Both had children who might have attended the Onion Lake Boarding schools.

Canada's war effort put a strain on Indian Affairs expenditure. Funds were limited and Indian education was clearly not a priority as the Dominion was fighting for King and country. All "expenditures for new buildings and

³⁸"Report of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs for the Year ended 31 March 1916," Sessional Papers (No. 18) 1917, xxxvii. Also "Report of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs for the Year ended 31 March 1917," *ibid.* (No. 27) 1918, 18.

³⁹Alastair Sweeny, "Government Policy and Saskatchewan Indian Veterans," Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, November 1979, 5.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 10-13.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

repairs to old buildings [were] curtailed to as great an extent as possible."⁴² Nothing was spent on the Onion Lake Boarding schools.

The aftermath of the Great War was difficult for both schools. Prices had increased since the pre-war period but the per capita grant had remained unchanged. In a letter to the secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, the principal of the Roman Catholic Boarding school exposed the difficulties experienced by his institution and probably many others.

I beg to draw your attention to the arduous problem we are confronted with, in the successful management of our Boarding school namely:

The ever increasing cost of living, and as a result, the inefficacy of the actual per Capita school grant as an adequate mean (sic) to give our children committed to our care the rational and healthy comfort they are entitled to

A return to the pre-war state of things is not to be dreamed of, as prices for everything are still soaring and the top has not been reached yet

I feel bound to inform you that henceforth, it would be impossible to keep up to our standard, unless an increase in the per Capita grant is allotted to us by the Department, substantial ~~enough~~ to enable us to run our school without incurring an annual deficit.⁴³

⁴²"Report of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 3 September 1918," Sessional Papers (No. 27) 1918, 24.

⁴³Father J.A. Therien to the Secretary, 20 May 1920, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1.

The department had no funds to increase the per capita subsidy. In response to the principal's plea, Indian Affairs offered sympathy and a possible advance on quarterly payments.

The difficulties the residential schools have in meeting the demands, owing to the increased cost of supplies, etc., are fully understood, and the strictest economy should be exercised by the Principals in order to meet their obligations ... the Department would be prepared to make an advance on the grant each quarter, on receipt of a request from the principal.⁴⁴

Mr. Ellis was also having financial difficulties at the Anglican Boarding school. He was "under the very great difficulty of trying to make ends meet with insufficient means."⁴⁵ Indian parents complained that the food was in short supply and of poor quality. The bread was limited and very dark, well water was the only available drink, and pupils had no utensils other than spoons.⁴⁶ According to the Indian agent, a typical meal consisted of beef stew, potatoes, carrots, not enough bread, and water.⁴⁷

⁴⁴A.D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary to Agency Clerk Lang Turner, 27 May 1920, *ibid.*

⁴⁵Reverend Canon S. Gould, M.D., General Secretary, Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, to Duncan C. Scott, 5 April 1921, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁴⁶Indian Agent Lang Turner to the Department of Indian Affairs, 23 March 1921, *ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Principal Ellis was advised by the Department of Indian Affairs to provide the children with

good, substantial and well cooked food. The bread should be made from a good quality of flour and the children should be given tea, cocoa or milk at their meals, also the necessary table utensils, including knives and forks, should be supplied.⁴⁸

Comparatively, the pupils at the Roman Catholic Boarding school had utensils and seemed to enjoy a better diet. Chief Robert of the Onion Lake band

occasionally visited the Roman Catholic school, ... and observed that the children there were provided at meals with knives, forks, napkins, and other table equipment which he found were wanting when he visited the Church of England school ... the children in the Roman Catholic School were better fed, being given butter, or a substitute of butter.⁴⁹

Ellis argued that the Sisters of the Assumption were always advised of Chief Robert's visits two weeks in advance and that the Chief had visited his school unexpectedly. According to his argument, the sisters had time to prepare a special table for the coming of their guest.⁵⁰ This statement could be true to a certain extent as serviettes

⁴⁸D.C. Scott to Reverend Canon S. Gould, 1st April 1921, *ibid.*

⁴⁹Report Concerning Inspection of St. Barnabas School, T.B.R. Westgate, Field Secretary, and Archdeacon Mackay, May 1921, *ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

might have been used only on special occasions. Still, the sisters were never accused, either by the Indians or the department, of poorly feeding the children under their care.

Concerns regarding the food at the Church of England Boarding school had been expressed by Indian parents as well as Agent Sibbald and Agent Turner. The matter was sufficiently disturbing to prompt Archdeacon MacKay from The Pas, Manitoba, and T.B.R. Westgate, the Winnipeg Field Secretary of the Missionary Society of the Church of England, to visit the Onion Lake Boarding school. After evaluation of the situation, the two Church officials found Ellis satisfactory as principal. They recognized his financial predicament and decided that the Church of England would provide proper cutlery for the children.⁵¹ Ellis promised to serve tea, cocoa, and good bread.⁵²

The years 1911-1920 were not as eventful for the sisters of the Roman Catholic Boarding school. The school's pupilage remained the same (See APPENDIX F.) and so did its routine. The sisters and the pupils frequently went on picnics at their camp. Children went home from the end of June until the middle of August, on Easter Sunday, and for a week following New Year's Day. Orphans and children with

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Indian Agent Lang Turner to the Department of Indian Affairs, 23 March 1921, *ibid.*

no place to go stayed at the school with the sisters. Monthly rewards were given to pupils who had achieved special results. The recompense consisted of a special snack, a free afternoon, and a buggy ride. Throughout the school year, the pupils were kept busy preparing special presentations for the celebration of various Saints' day. The sisters were very pious and so were the pupils as they followed the same religious routine.

The Onion Lake sisters represented an element of stability at the school and on the reserve. Most sisters stayed at the mission for years before being appointed to another institution.⁵³ The ten sisters kept close contact with their 'Maison-Mère' in Nicolet, Québec, where all important decisions were made by their Mother Superior.⁵⁴ Transfers and appointments were decided in Nicolet and every

⁵³On 19 August 1914, Sister St. Praxède left Onion Lake after twelve years. *Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, 19 August 1914, 22. On 27 December 1921, Sister Marie de Nazareth celebrated twenty-five years at the mission, 27 December 1921, *ibid.*, 119. On 22 June 1922, Sister St. Isabelle, the Sister Superior, left Onion Lake after fifteen years, *ibid.*, 22 June 1922, 121. One of the Oblate fathers who worked at the mission, Father Dupé, died after fifteen years in Onion Lake, *ibid.*, 29 August 1925, 139.

⁵⁴In the fall of 1914, the Onion Lake sisters received permission from their Mother Superior in Nicolet to travel to Long Lake for the blessing of the church, *ibid.*, 18 October 1914, 25.

summer, one or two sisters were granted permission to return to Québec for a visit.²⁵

The Sisters of the Assumption's indefatigable dedication to God, the school, and the Indian children is clearly expressed through their chronicles, which they faithfully kept until 1962. These chronicles represent a valuable source of information. The recorders carefully noted all the religious feasts and celebrations, the coming and going of visitors, special and regular trips, changes in staff, illnesses among boarders, mail arrivals, and seasonal activities. Most importantly, the recorders were able to transmit contemporary feelings. The chronicles' only shortcoming is the infrequent entries relating to pupils' routines and everyday classroom activities.

One of the tragic events related in the chronicles was a fire that almost destroyed the sisters' boarding school. On 19 September 1913 around 10:30 p.m.

pendant que tout le monde était plongé dans un profond sommeil, un incendie se déclare à la closette des filles. Monsieur Sibbald restant un peu éloigné du Couvent accourt aussitôt pour nous avertir, il va à toute hâte donner l'alarme en sonnant la cloche de l'Eglise. Aussitôt tout le monde est sur pied, les gens accourent à toute hâte, il y avait au moins une trentaine d'hommes pour aider les Soeurs et les enfants les plus capables prêtent leur concours en charroyant de l'eau, heureusement nous avions de l'eau douce dans

²⁵For examples see *ibid.*, 23 August 1913, 3 and 19 August 1914, 22.

tous nos barils près de la cuisine. Nous avons admiré le zèle et le dévouement du Rév. Père Dupé qui était sur la couverture de la buanderie pour préserver le feu de se rendre plus loin, et c'est grâce à Lui si les flammes n'ont pas embrassé notre couvent et la buanderie. Les gens ont très bien fait cela, ils se sont montrés tout à fait gentils.⁵⁶

The buildings were saved but damages were estimated at \$250.⁵⁷ Reports indicate that the fire began in the girls' lavatory room, but do not show whether or not the fire was investigated.

On 8 August 1917, Father Cunningham was replaced by Father A.H. Bigonnesse, O.M.I. as principal of the school. Less than a year later, Father Bigonnesse, too ill and too old to meet his responsibilities, was succeeded by Father Adéorat Therien. The latter was familiar with Onion Lake as he had been the school principal twenty-two years earlier.

The departure of Reverend Matheson and Father Cunningham ended the comradery between the two schools. There was no open rivalry yet between Mr. Ellis and the Onion Lake Catholic clergy, just indifference. The two denominations had no praise for one another and they ignored each other's existence.

⁵⁶Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 20 September 1913, 5-6.

⁵⁷Ibid.

In 1918 the boarding school was severely hit by the epidemic of influenza. Thirty-nine children and three sisters were sick with the virus. The sisters diligently cared for the sick, but exhaustion soon forced them to seek help. Four sister-members from Saint-Paul des Métis came to the rescue. Doctor J.T. Hill, the non-resident medical attendant from Lloydminster, regularly visited the school, but he was very busy as the disease was rapidly spreading to the reserve. The school was quarantined on 19 October and a total of nine pupils died between 5 November and 23 November.

The first victim, Jean B. Viviers died in the afternoon of 5 November. The following day two other children "Daniel Desrochers and Josephine Harper partent ... pour aller coucher chez le bon Dieu; leur mort est douce et paisible."⁵⁰ A second girl, Agnes Budakunk died on the seventh. The sisters were sad but "[leur] consolation est de savoir qu'elle part pour le ciel."⁵¹ On 9 November, at noon, "c'est au tour de notre petit Paul Wolf à nous faire ses adieux; c'est avec le sourire sur les lèvres qu'il ferme les yeux à la lumière de la terre pour contempler les beautés célestes."⁵² Four days later, a six-year-old boy,

⁵⁰Ibid., 6 November 1918, 92.

⁵¹Ibid., 7 November 1918, 92-93.

⁵²Ibid., 9 November 1918, 93-94.

Jean Jackknife [?] was called into heaven. Before his death, "il a eu le bonheur de faire sa lère communion, ce qui le rendit joyeux au milieu de ses souffrances."⁶¹ On 17 November,

vers trois heures ce matin, nous avons la douleur de voir s'éteindre un de nos bons grands garçons, Gabriel Desrochers, qui n'a pu, malgré son embonpoint et ses forces physiques combattre cette terrible maladie qu'il redoutait tant — — — cependant il a fait le sacrifice de sa vie avec une admirable résignation ce qui lui obtiendra le ciel sans trop de retard, espérons-le!..⁶²

The next day, another little boy, Paul White Fish, closed his eyes forever. On 23 November, the last child, Gabriel Masson, died and the sisters hoped "que ce sera le dernier. En effet, s'il n'y a pas de rechute, ils sont tous certainement hors de danger. Deo Gratias!"⁶³

One can only be saddened by all the suffering that occurred at the school during that terrible month of November 1918. The sisters were genuinely concerned and each death deepened their sorrow. They nursed all their patients and prayed fervently, carrying the "Très St-Sacrement deux fois par jour, passant par tous les endroits

⁶¹Ibid., 13 November 1918, 94.

⁶²Ibid., 17 November 1918, 94.

⁶³Ibid., 23 November 1918, 95.

où il y a des malades ... afin d'implorer tout particulièrement la pitié et la miséricorde de Dieu."⁶⁴

The Spanish 'flu invaded the Church of England Boarding school as well, but no death occurred.⁶⁵ The number of cases is not recorded in any sources, but according to the sisters' chronicles, "le Ministre anglican Principal de l'école [fut] atteint de la terrible grippe."⁶⁶

Other viral infections, however not as deadly as the Spanish influenza, afflicted the pupils of the boarding schools. In the winter of 1911, an outbreak of diphtheria forced the Roman Catholic school into quarantine. The "sickness was of a very mild type and the children ... all recovered."⁶⁷ A few months later a case of typhoid fever was diagnosed at the school. The patient was "Veronique Blachman, No. 060, for whom a government grant [was] allowed, but she [was] non-treaty and [was] a halfbreed; it [was] the first case of typhoid fever ... ever heard of on

⁶⁴Ibid., 9 November 1918, 93.

⁶⁵Report Concerning Inspection of St. Barnabas School, T.B.R. Westgate, Field Secretary, and Archdeacon MacKay, May 1921, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁶⁶Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 24 October 1918, 91.

⁶⁷Indian Agent Sibbald to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 24 March 1911, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1.

an Indian Reserve."⁶⁶ In 1913 a typhoid fever outbreak was subdued at the Anglican school. The disease had been "brought over by halfbreeds from Vermillion."⁶⁷ No deaths were reported.

Tuberculosis is mentioned only twice in all the available sources for the period 1911-1920. In his 1913 report, Father Cunningham noted that one little girl had been sick with the disease.⁷⁰ Five years later, on 13 April 1918, six-year-old orphan Christine Dumont passed away surrounded by all the sisters of the school.⁷¹ She was buried two days later. It is very unlikely that these were the two schools' only cases of tuberculosis. It is probable that more students suffered from tuberculosis, particularly since Agent Sibbald reported many cases of TB on the agency.⁷² Other children's diseases such as smallpox and measles periodically forced the schools into quarantine, but were not considered life threatening.

⁶⁶Sibbald to the Secretary, 16 September 1911, *ibid.*

⁶⁷"Report of J.R. Matheson for the Year ended 31 March 1913," Sessional Papers (No. 23) 1914, 572.

⁷⁰"Report of E.J. Cunningham for the Year ended 31 March 1913," *ibid.*

⁷¹Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 13 April 1918, 85.

⁷²"Report of Indian Agent Sibbald for the Year ended 31 March 1914," Sessional Papers (No. 23) 1915, 60.

Aside from the deaths resulting from the Spanish influenza and from tuberculosis, only two pupils died at the Roman Catholic Boarding school. The causes of the deaths are not divulged, but the entries suggest that both were natural, not accidental. On 5 September 1914 Marissis died peacefully around noon hour. All the sisters "assistent à ses derniers moments, le Révérend Père Dupé lui donne une dernière absolution."⁷³ She was interred the following day at two o'clock, with no one from her family present. Josephine Dumont died at 3:30 a.m. on 7 June 1916 and was buried two days later. Her mother arrived at the school on 10 June only to find out that her daughter had already been buried.

Vers onze heures Madame Laboucane accompagnée de Marie Dumont soeur de notre petite défunte, c'est bien regrettable qu'elles arrivent une journée trop tard, elles n'ont pas reçu la nouvelle assez tôt, tout de même elles se montrent bien généreuses dans l'épreuve.⁷⁴

The circumstances of Josephine's family life are not described, and it is not known how early Mrs. Laboucane was advised of her child's condition. Nonetheless, it must have

⁷³Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 5 September 1914, 23.

⁷⁴Ibid., 10 June 1916, 57.

been hard for a mother to miss her daughter's death and funeral.

Four Catholic pupils died at home after being discharged from the school. Whenever possible, non-contagious sick children were sent home "dans l'espoir de se remettre."⁷⁵ The sisters regularly visited their sick pupils and prayed for their health to return. Records do not indicate how many Church of England Boarding school pupils died between 1911 and 1920.

Runaways were not a major problem for the Onion Lake schools. Only one instance of pupil desertion took place at the Catholic Boarding school. On 20 September 1917 four boys left the school at about 9:00 a.m. Reverend Dupé who worked at the mission, went after the children but was unable to locate them. Two days later,

A 5 1/2 ce matin le bon Père Dupé se dirige vers les tentes dans l'espoir de trouver nos déserteurs mais il ne peut mettre la main que sur un qui est encore au lit. Comme c'est l'heure de sa messe, il revient avec celui-là seul. Pendant le déjeuner un deuxième arrive; dans l'après-midi, les deux pauvres égarés nous sont ramenés par un bon Métis.⁷⁶

The principal did not punish the boys but made them promise not to try again.

⁷⁵Ibid., 10 June 1917, 74.

⁷⁶Ibid., 22 September 1917, 80.

Two accounts of desertion occurred at the Protestant school. In both cases Mr. Ellis requested the assistance of a constable from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to find the deserters. It was at no expense to the boarding school as the Department of Indian Affairs assumed the costs. On 17 March 1919, Alfred Peechow, pupil number 49 from the Thunderchild reserve, was returned to the boarding school by an RCMP constable.⁷⁷ On 3 November 1920, Norman Bird and George Jayshaste were escorted from Battleford to Lloydminster and were handed over to Mr. Ellis by Sergeant F.R. Hassey.⁷⁸ The boys were travelling southeast after deserting the school. It is worth noticing that all escapees were boys. It was probably more difficult for boys to adapt to the rigidity of the institutionalized routine. Considering the number of students who attended the Catholic and the Anglican Boarding schools between 1911 and 1920, the number of desertions is decidedly insignificant.

In 1914 the Alberta Department of Education in Edmonton began sending orphaned children to the Catholic Boarding school. The sisters received two dollars per week for the upkeep of each orphan. Two children had arrived in

⁷⁷H. Ellis to Indian Agent Sibbald, 17 March 1919, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10.

⁷⁸Report on Norman Bird and George Jayshaste, Indian boy truants, 3 November 1920, *ibid.*

1914 and five others came in June of 1915.⁷⁹ The youngest of the five Dumont children was only two years old, but it was believed that the family should be kept together. In April 1916 two other orphaned boys arrived at the boarding school.⁸⁰ In October of that year, Inspector Hill from the Edmonton department visited the school to determine the well-being of the orphans. No complaints were recorded.⁸¹

The Department of Indian Affairs inspector visited the school annually. The sisters were usually advised of his arrival a day in advance. A typical visit began early in the morning and continued until after supper. However, in 1917, the inspector visited the school on a Saturday and finished his examination earlier in that afternoon.

Vers 9 1/2 heures Mr. Sibbald ainsi que Mr. Crombie nous arrivent, les enfants lui souhaitent la Bienvenue par une chanson de circonstance, les filles exécutent quelques morceaux de mandoline ensuite ils se rendent à la classe, ils prennent leur dîner avec le Révd. Père Dupé. Dans l'après-midi, c'est l'examen des petits, ils terminent par la visite de la maison et nous quittent vers 3 1/2 ils ont paru très satisfaits de tout. Pour avoir fait la classe le samedi il donne un beau congé. Nous sommes heureuses que tout se soit passé aussi

⁷⁹Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1st June 1915, 35.

⁸⁰Ibid., 24 April 1916, 54.

⁸¹Ibid., 20 October 1916, 65.

bien que nous puissions l'espérer, nous en remercions le bon Dieu de tout coeur.^{e2}

The monotony of the school routine was broken by the holidays and also by the treats brought by some visitors. Oranges, religious images, and candies were always appreciated by the pupils. The Christmas holidays were also a special time of the year. Midnight Mass and a special meal highlighted the religious importance of Christmas Day. New Year's Day was celebrated according to the French-Canadian tradition. In Québec, each father formally blessed his family. The pupils and the sisters were blessed by the principal, and best wishes for the new year were exchanged by everyone. Stockings were filled with candy and each pupil received a little present. The sisters were able to spoil the children "grâce à la générosité des Dames de charité qui font des heureux en envoyant chaque année une grosse boîte de joujoux, chacun a sa large part."^{e3} Children who lived closer to the school were able to go home between Christmas and New Year's.

^{e2}Ibid., 13 January 1917, 68-69.

^{e3}Ibid., 30 December 1916, 67.

An average of fourteen children stayed at the school during the holidays.²⁴ Over the summer months they went camping, fishing, and berry picking. There was no school for them but they kept busy helping around the mission. Strenuous jobs such as wood and ice cutting, building repairs, and well digging were done by hired hands. Water, which became a more serious issue in the 1920's, was already difficult to find around the Catholic school. In 1914 a team of men dug for six weeks to find potable water at a depth of 256 feet.²⁵

The decade 1911-1920 had offered many challenges to the Onion Lake Boarding schools. However, the future was looking bright. The war was over, the Spanish 'flu was a plague of the past, and the federal government was finally willing to spend money. Both Onion Lake Boarding schools would benefit from Ottawa's new financial disposition.

²⁴The available data indicate that thirteen orphans stayed at the school in the summer of 1914 and fifteen in the summer of 1919. Ibid., 2 July 1914, 20 and 1st July 1919, 100.

²⁵Ibid., 28 November 1914, 27.

CHAPTER VI

NEW BEGINNINGS, 1921-1930

The 1920's were a period of reconstruction. By then both Onion Lake Boarding schools had been around for more than thirty years. The buildings were old, unsafe and lacking modern conveniences. New construction was necessary to improve the living conditions of the staff and the pupils.

The Church of England Boarding school was the first to be rebuilt. A 1921 visit from the travelling nurse¹ indicates that the ventilation was poor, the floor was worn at places, the cellar stairs were dangerous, and that generally, the buildings were unsafe for children.²

¹The travelling nurses' program was implemented in 1922 by the Department of Indian Affairs. Two nurses were appointed to the province of Saskatchewan with headquarters in Regina. Their duty was to prevent the spreading of diseases through regular inspections of residential schools and visits to Indian homes. The program was not very successful and was already phased out by 1930.

²Report of Travelling Nurse E.P. Johnston on the Church of England Boarding School, 1st December 1921, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

Another report, written in 1923 outlined the general situation.

- a) The present buildings are old, unsafe, antiquated in design, and incapable in every way of accommodating the number of children awaiting admission.
- b) The site which they occupy on the seepage side of a slough renders the basement of both buildings liable to flooding, a condition which has already existed, and is, in consequence, unhealthy.
- c) The land attached to the School at present is inadequate and unsuitable for extensive farming operations.
- d) No out-buildings of any consequence such as stock-barn, granary, poultry-house, piggery, implement-shed, etc., have ever existed at this School.³

Construction began in January 1925. The lowest tenderer, James Priel of Saskatoon, was awarded the contract with an estimated bid of \$58,500.⁴ The actual cost upon completion amounted to \$63,021.61.⁵ When the new school was finished in November 1925, it had "complete and up-to-date heating, plumbing, lighting and water supply

³Report on Onion Lake School, 30 November 1923, *ibid.*, File #658-5.

⁴Architect [illegible] to D.C. Scott, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 26 August 1924, *ibid.*

⁵W.A. Hamilton, Inspector of Construction for the Indian Department, 19 November 1925, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 3.

equipment."⁶ Other buildings such as a principal's residence, a pump house, a root house, a laundry house, a garage, a piggery, barns, and granaries were erected before the end of the decade. The buildings, the furniture, the farm machinery, and the equipment necessary to the functioning of the school were paid for by the Department of Indian Affairs.

The construction of the Church of England Residential school was disturbing to the staff of the Roman Catholic school. Father Therien, principal until August 1927, feared that the Anglicans would use the modernity of their new school to rob souls from the Catholics.⁷ To counteract this, Father Therien asked for a new Roman Catholic school.⁸ The Oblate fathers felt that the Department of Indian Affairs "a toujours commencé par construire l'école protestante, nous accordant ainsi le deuxième rang."⁹

The construction of a new Roman Catholic Residential school was announced in December 1925. The contract was

⁶Paulin and Swayze, Sanitary and Heating Engineers to W.M. Graham, Indian Commissioner, 29 October 1925, *ibid.*, File #658-5, part 2.

⁷Father Therien to Reverend Father Blanchin, Provincial, 8 September, 1924, Archives Deschâtelets, Fonds d'archive du conseil oblat des oeuvres indiennes et esquimaudes, Ottawa, 1921-1974.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Father Joseph Guy to Reverend Father Therien, 25 November 1924, *ibid.*

awarded to Brown and Hudson, a contracting company from Winnipeg. Their bid was estimated at \$79,891, but the final cost of the school totalled \$86,580.92.¹⁰ The school was equipped with modern conveniences and it had similar outside buildings as the Church of England school's. The Catholic principal, however, could not obtain his own residence. Father Therien was not pleased with the department's decision and argued that

the Principal should have a residence of his own, on the ground that being a missionary in charge of the Indians on the Reserve, his activities therefore are not exclusively limited to the administration of the school, but also to the spiritual welfare of the Indians on the Reserve on which the school is located. This fact necessitates on his part almost daily relations with the Indians in matters out of his concern as Principal.¹¹

The Oblate father offered to make the house plans and arrange for the construction if the department disbursed the necessary \$10,000.¹² Indian Affairs refused to spend the money and replied that "on account of discipline, it [was] necessary for the Principal to reside in the building."¹³

¹⁰S. Brown to D.C. Scott, 3 August 1928, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6325, File #659-5, part 3.

¹¹Father J.A. Therien to D.C. Scott, 12 April 1928, *ibid.*, File #659-5, part 2.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³D.C. Scott to Father J.A. Therien, 18 April 1927, *ibid.*

Principal Ellis had been provided with a house to accommodate his large family.

The Catholic and Anglican missionaries were chronically suspicious of each other. In the summer of 1925, a rumor circulated that the two Onion Lake schools would be joined under the roof of the new Protestant building. Upset with such a scheme, Father Therien deemed it "bon d'avoir l'oeil ouvert [car] les protestants ne demanderaient pas mieux car ils n'ont pas beaucoup d'enfants dans cette réserve."¹⁴ He also complained that "les protestants font une propagande endiablée pour avoir des enfants. Je les retiens [les enfants] par la promesse d'une école au printemps."¹⁵ Father Therien basically admitted that Indians were more influenced by the size and the comfort of a school, than by the denomination of its missionaries.

An ardent rivalry had begun between the Anglican and the Catholic missionaries of Onion Lake. They watched one another and if one school was getting something from the department, the other usually wanted it, too. When the Church of England school got a truck, the sisters of the Catholic school demanded one. They were told by the

¹⁴Father Therien to Father Guy, 31 August 1925, Archives Deschâtelets, Fonds d'archive du conseil oblat des oeuvres indiennes et esquimaudes, Ottawa.

¹⁵Father Therien to Father Guy, 19 November 1925, *ibid.*

department that the truck had been "paid for by the Church Missionary Society and ... that ... if they desire a truck, [they] should pay for it themselves."¹⁶ The department eventually met "one-half the cost of a one ton truck, last year's model."¹⁷ When the Church of England school authorities were refused extra shelves for the pupils, Reverend Ellis "personally inquired at the new R.C. School at Onion Lake and find that amount for shelving and cupboards put in at the Institution other than their plans specified exceed the \$2300 mark."¹⁸ In an effort to be fair the department paid for new cupboards and shelving at the Anglican school.¹⁹ In a way, the religious rivalry between the two institutions, and Indian Affairs' desire to treat both schools equally, helped the principals in getting what they wanted. Both principals could resort to accusations of religious favouritism on the part of the departmental officials.

The two schools were involved in many disputes over pupils. These disputes, which often turned into real

¹⁶W.M. Graham to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 31 March 1928, RG 10, Black Series, C9807, Volume 6327, File #659-14, part 1.

¹⁷J.D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary to Indian Agent Lang Turner, 14 January 1929, *ibid.*

¹⁸Reverend Ellis to R.T. Ferrier, 15 September 1928, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 4.

¹⁹Reverend Ellis to Lang Turner, 1st April 1929, *ibid.*

imbroglios, were always based on religious grounds. They usually stemmed from a parental change of faith and a desire to transfer one's offspring from one school to the other. Such a situation arose in the fall of 1919. Eva and Edna Bugler had been attending the Onion Lake Church of England school for four and six years respectively when their father requested permission to transfer them to a Roman Catholic Boarding school. According to the Catholic clergy, "the mother of these girls [had] always been a (sic) catholic, the father, Jos. Bugler [had become] a catholic a year ago. Both parents [desired] that their children be brought up in a school of their own denomination, either at Onion Lake, or at Delmass."²⁰ The transfer was encouraged by Father Lacombe, principal of the Delmas Catholic school, who had apparently been given all powers by Joseph Bugler to act on his behalf.²¹

Reverend Ellis, needless to say, was not too keen on losing two souls to the Catholic faith. He placed the Bugler girls "on the working staff of the school during the summer vacation, intending that they should receive their holiday afterwards."²² Father Lacombe accused Ellis of

²⁰Father H. Grandin, O.M.I. to D.C. Scott, 5 November 1919, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 1.

²¹W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, 19 September 1919, *ibid.*

²²Reverend Ellis to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 2 December 1920, *ibid.*

keeping the girls at the school for fear that they would become Catholic over the summer.²³

Religious controversies involving the transfer of pupils were dealt with by the Department of Indian Affairs. Its policy was clear. It was judged fair that "when a child has been in a school for a year or more without any question being raised as to the religion that, although the parents afterwards change their views, the child should remain in the school to which he was first sent."²⁴ The department could not "adopt the view that every change of religion by the parents should create an obligation ... to transfer their children from one school to another."²⁵ Such a policy would "open the door to considerable trouble ... as the Indian parents change their religion with great frequency."²⁶ The Bugler girls were not transferred from the Anglican school.

Parents with no fixed religion sometimes played one school against the other in an attempt to keep their children home longer. In the cases where the religious

²³W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, 19 September 1919, *ibid.*

²⁴Memorandum, J.S. Sutherland to D.C. Scott, 10 December 1920, *ibid.*

²⁵D.C. Scott to Father H. Grandin, 15 November 1919, *ibid.*

²⁶Memorandum, J.S. Sutherland to D.C. Scott, 10 December 1920, *ibid.*

status of the parents was unclear, the children were not to be "placed in any school until the final decision of the Department [had] been given."²⁷ Considering the amount of correspondence between the local authorities and Ottawa, it was often months before a final decision was reached.

Other parents used the denominational rivalry between the two schools to transfer their children for reasons that had nothing to do with religion. Such was the case of Solomon Medicinechild. This parent, who had failed to send money to cover his daughter Elizabeth's travelling expenses, was angry with Reverend Ellis for keeping her at school over the summer holidays. Three years after the event, he complained to the department that Reverend Ellis had taken his daughter knowing that she was Roman Catholic.²⁸ Medicinechild went to see Father Lacombe who confirmed that Elizabeth had been baptized in the Catholic Church.²⁹ In this particular case, the father used the religious excuse

²⁷R.T. Ferrier to Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald, 20 November 1930, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 3. See also J.D. McLean to T.B.R. Westgate, 8 June 1929, *ibid.* Also R.T. Ferrier to Lang Turner, 26 April 1928, *ibid.*

²⁸Solomon Medicinechild to D.C. Scott, 13 August 1930, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

²⁹Father Emile Lacombe to S.L. Macdonald, 11 August 1930, *ibid.*

to get back at Reverend Ellis and that was "the only reason he had for seeking to transfer Elizabeth."³⁰

Francis Harper, a father whose girls were already attending the Catholic school, wanted to send his boy to the Protestant school. In an interview with the Onion Lake Indian agent he said that

his reason for wanting his boy placed in the Anglican School is because he thinks the boy will obtain a better education there, both in classroom work and in learning to farm.... Francis also told me that he has no fixed religion: as a child he was baptized a Roman Catholic, but has never attended that church since he grew up to manhood, and that for the past two years he has been attending the Anglican Services.³¹

Mr. Harper was probably following the advice of Reverend Ellis and using the better education argument as an excuse to send his younger child to the Anglican school. The request was refused by Indian Affairs, and the boy had to join his sisters at the Catholic school.³² Reverend Ellis was told by the department that he should not have admitted the Harper boy to his school.³³

³⁰Edward Ahenakew, General Missionary to S.L. Macdonald, 6 September 1930, *ibid.*

³¹Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 8 May 1929, *ibid.*

³²J.D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary to Lang Turner, 8 June 1929, *ibid.*

³³J.D. McLean to T.B.R. Westgate, *ibid.*

Unhappy with the department's decision, Reverend Ellis wrote to T.B.R. Westgate, the Field Secretary of the Church of England Missionary Society, that "Francis Harper ... will not allow his boy to attend the Roman Catholic school and if the Department will not approve of him staying here then he will remain at home."²⁴ In a letter to Indian Affairs, Reverend Westgate refreshed the secretary's memory.

You will recall from your letters of May 2, 1927, #115-1-10 and September 6, 1927, #115-8-10, that the pupil Anna Quinney, a child of Anglican parents was permitted by your Department, at the request of the parents, to be allowed to remain in the Roman Catholic School.²⁵

The Department of Indian Affairs was caught in the pupil tug-of-war played by the Onion Lake principals. The Anglican and the Catholic missionaries were always ready to influence the Indians and support them if they wanted to transfer their offspring from the competitor's school to their own school. The Onion Lake principals also made sure that the department was being fair to both institutions.

Indian Affairs documents illustrate that pupil disputes were nonexistent during the erection of the new schools. The principals were too busy with the construction work to pay attention to who was where. However, once the

²⁴Quoted in T.B.R. Westgate to the Secretary, 5 March 1929, *ibid.*

²⁵T.B.R. Westgate to the Secretary, *ibid.*

new Roman Catholic Residential school had been completed in May 1928, and once Father Ernest Lacombe, O.M.I. had replaced Father Therien as school principal in August 1927, the disputes resumed.

The relationship between Reverend Ellis and Father Lacombe was far from being amicable.

There is evidently much enmity between Mr. Ellis and Father Lacombe and each on every possible occasion will say the worst he can about the other and the general result is not doing any good - is certainly not a very good example for the Indians, and makes some bad situations for us to straighten out.³⁶

Reverend Ellis was not the only man who disliked Father Lacombe. The Superintendent General of Indian Education, Duncan C. Scott, in a letter to Indian Commissioner W.M. Graham, stated that he "refused to accept Father Lacombe as principal of this school ... [because] of the trouble we had with him in the past."³⁷ Even Father Joseph Guy had "advised Rev. Fr. Beys of his mistake in appointing Rev. Fr. Lacombe as Principal of Onion Lake Indian Residential School [and] of course the Reverend Provincial [was] not aware of

³⁶Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald to the Secretary, 12 August 1930, *ibid.*

³⁷D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, 8 October 1927, *ibid.*, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1.

Rev. Fr. Lacombe's activities in the past."³⁸ Father Lacombe's 'activities' were described in a letter to D.C. Scott from T.B.R. Westgate dated 27 September 1927, but a copy of that letter is not to be found in the archives materials available to the public.³⁹ The records of the Department of Indian Affairs were censored and a warning concludes many of their files. One can read that "to enable this file to be made available to researchers it has been necessary for officials to exclude some material in accordance with Cabinet Directive No. 46 of 7 June 1973."⁴⁰

The extent of Father Lacombe's so-called activities will never be known. They could include anything, but were possibly related to his proselytizing efforts. Indeed, in a letter sent to the Missionary Society and dated 30 August 1927, the Frog Lake Day school teacher accused Father Lacombe of telling "two Anglican girls that unless they became Catholics they would be killed."⁴¹ The Battleford

³⁸Father Joseph Guy to D.C. Scott, 1st October 1927, *ibid.*

³⁹Reference to this letter of 27 September 1927 was included in T.B.R. Westgate to D.C. Scott, 15 October 1927, *ibid.*

⁴⁰This warning was copied from RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 3.

⁴¹General Synod Archives, GS 75-103, Papers of the Missionary Society of the Church in Canada, Series 2-15, HRSC; Minutes, Box 21, p.9 of Minutes of 4 October 1927.

Indian agent also warned Indian Affairs that "as where [Father Lacombe] goes, there is trouble following."⁴²

Father Lacombe was replaced two months after his appointment by Father Joseph Balter, O.M.I. The latter asked to be relieved of his functions in October 1929 as the responsibilities were too much for him.⁴³ His successor, Father Joseph Portier, O.M.I. arrived in April 1930 and in the interim, Father Therien assumed the principalship.

The principals of the Roman Catholic Residential school were appointed by the Edmonton Father Provincial of the Oblate of Mary Immaculate. The principal was "not responsible for the financing of the institution. The Sisters [were] doing the financing and they [paid the principal] for his services."⁴⁴

The new Roman Catholic school was allowed a pupilage of ninety with a per capita payment of \$165. (See APPENDIX H.) In the spring of 1929 Father Balter applied

for the authorization of the number of pupils we have room for, namely, 110, ... and we ask that the per capita grant be raised to \$170.00 per annum, as

⁴²S.L. Macdonald to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 12 September 1930, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6324, File #658-10, part 3.

⁴³Registre pour servir à l'inscription des Chroniques des Soeur de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, Onion Lake, Provincial Archives of Alberta, 10 October 1929, 173.

⁴⁴R.A. [?] Memo for File, 8 August 1928, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-1.

[with] the distance from the railroad as well as other inconveniences here, it is very expensive for us.⁴⁵

Father Therien made a similar plea in December 1929⁴⁶ and the number of grant earners was increased to one hundred effective the first day of January 1930. The per capita subsidy remained the same.

The new school followed the same routine except that there were more pupils. Twelve sisters were in charge of the institution, including three classroom teachers. One of the new teachers, Sister St. Aldegonde, received a poor evaluation from the Provincial School Inspector, D.L. Hicks, who reported that

Sister St. Aldegonde in my opinion will never make a success of the teaching profession until her command of English improves.... Her accent is so poor that even when she reads to the class I cannot always understand her. I fear that the pupils are making very little progress under her direction.⁴⁷

Sister St. Aldegonde was a qualified teacher, but because of her English she was replaced by Sister St. Hermas.

⁴⁵Father L. Balter, Principal of the Roman Catholic Residential School to Russell T. Ferrier, 18 March 1929, *ibid.*

⁴⁶There were 103 boarders at the school. Father J.A. Therien to D.C. Scott, 11 December 1929, *ibid.*

⁴⁷Extract from the Report of D.L. Hicks, Provincial School Inspector in W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, 20 November 1929, *ibid.*

All other reports concerning the management and the pupils of the Catholic school were positive. The children were "quiet and industrious, ... clean and well dressed, ... orderly and fond of play."⁴⁸ It is interesting to know that "the pupils made just as good as we expect to find in a public school."⁴⁹ However, the children were not provided with toothbrushes until 1924 and in 1930 they were still sleeping on hay mattresses."⁵⁰

The new Protestant Residential school was built to accommodate pupils recruited from the Onion Lake, Battleford, Carlton, Duck Lake, and Saddle Lake agencies. The original pupilage of eighty was increased to ninety in April 1929 and even though "a pupilage of ninety [was] the absolute safe limit of accommodation at this school,"⁵¹ it was raised to one hundred in 1931. (See APPENDIX G.) This increase was granted partly because of the constant demands

⁴⁸Inspector of the Roman Catholic Boarding School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 5 June 1924, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰Lang Turner to the Department of Indian Affairs, 12 December 1923, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 1. See also Report of Inspector Murison to W.M. Graham, 22 March 1930, *ibid.*, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5, part 4. Lang Turner replaced William Sibbald and was Indian Agent from 1921 until 1930. He was succeeded by Dr. J.T. Hill.

⁵¹A.F. Mackenzie, Acting Assistant Deputy and Secretary to Reverend T.B.R. Westgate, Field Secretary of the Church of England Missionary Society, 20 August 1928, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

from the school and Church authorities, but mostly because it was cheaper for Indian Affairs to raise one school's pupilage than to increase the amount of the per capita subsidy. Reverend T.B.R. Westgate persistently requested an increased pupilage for the Onion Lake Residential school. His main concern was financial. He, the Missionary Society, and Reverend Ellis appeared to be more concerned with the monetary benefits of a higher number of grant earners than the comfort of the pupils. In a plea addressed to Indian Affairs, Reverend Westgate argued that

residential schools with an enrolment of 100 pupils or less are practically incapable of being properly staffed and operated without a deficit, on the present per capita basis, ... as a measure towards securing the permanent financial relief required for our Onion Lake School, the capacity of this school should be increased, not later than during the next fiscal year, from 80 to 125 pupils.⁵²

The new Anglican school received \$165 per pupil per annum. A year consisted of three full quarters as grants were also paid during the summer months.

The administration of the Anglican residential schools had changed with the erection of larger, more sophisticated, and more expensive schools. All financing was carried out by the Missionary Society and all per capita grants were

⁵²Reverend T.B.R. Westgate to the Department of Indian Affairs, 20 June 1927, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume, 6321, File #658-5, part 4.

paid to its treasurer in Toronto. The money was distributed between the schools according to their financial needs.

This arrangement raised concerns among Indian Affairs officials:

at certain schools where grants are earned, the amount of the grant so earned is not spent exclusively on that particular school. This seems to me entirely unfair; the grant is only sufficient to finance the school at which it is earned, and if there is a surplus in any one term, such surplus should be at the disposal of that school. No school should be called upon to help out with their grant money the finances of another school where the management is inefficient, at the expense of the children.⁵³

Another concern was with the financial records of the Missionary Society kept in Winnipeg. The department had no way of verifying whether or not its per capita grants were exclusively spent on Indian education. It was feared that grant money "might be diverted to other branches of the church work."⁵⁴

The pupils of the Anglican school seemed not to suffer from the institution's financial problems. Reports on the new school indicated that the children were clean, tidy, and

⁵³W.M. Graham to J.D. McLean, Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 30 October 1929, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1.

⁵⁴W.M. Graham to the Department of Indian Affairs, 5 September 1929, *ibid.*

presented a healthy appearance.⁵⁵ One inspector "was present at the childrens' (sic) evening meal and noted that they had an ample supply of good wholesome food. Meat [was] given to most of them twice a day and they [were] given all the milk they [cared] to drink."⁵⁶

However, a missing report, filed by a travelling nurse who visited the Residential school on 28 November 1929, must have been quite negative. An outraged reply was forwarded to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs:

while we do not admit the existence of sufficient grounds for the statement concerning food, health of children, etc., contained in the report in question, we are unprepared to accept the visit of the travelling nurse in question, or any other travelling nurses, on the status of an inspectress. We accept and are prepared to co-operate with (1) the Local medical officer of the Department (2) the Local Indian Agent and (3) the inspector concerned of the Department at Ottawa.⁵⁷

As far as the quality of education was concerned, progress was generally steady and the teaching staff was qualified and usually satisfactory. Miss E. Turner and Miss

⁵⁵W. Murison, Inspector of Indian Agencies to W.M. Graham, 23 November 1928, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 4. See also Report of W. Murison, 7 March 1930, *ibid.*, File #658-5, part 5.

⁵⁶Report of W. Murison, Inspector of Agencies, 4 April 1928, *ibid.*, File #658-5, part 4.

⁵⁷[S. Gould?], General Secretary of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, to D.C. Scott, [December 1929?], *ibid.*

K.E. Beanland, both holders of a first class Saskatchewan teaching certificate, taught at the school from 1921 until 1926, giving it a much needed stability. Because of their qualifications and their attitude, the school was finally getting positive feedback. One report conceded that

Both teachers use good methods and show fine spirit.... The school is doing very creditable work.... Harmony prevails and good work is being done.... This school seems well conducted. The principal and every member of the staff are enthusiastic. The teachers are superior teachers - well trained and full of enthusiasm.⁵⁸

Between 1926 and 1930, teachers changed every new school year. All were qualified, but the school "had too many changes in the teaching staff to expect normal progress on the part of the pupils."⁵⁹ However, the situation improved after the end of the decade. The "discipline and the character of the written work were very satisfactory ... [and] the average marks in the spelling tests were very high, in fact considerably higher than the usual ones of village and rural schools."⁶⁰

⁵⁸Inspector of the Church of England School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 20 September 1923, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

⁵⁹Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector D.L. Hicks, 25 September 1928, *ibid.*

⁶⁰Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector D.L. Hicks, 29-30 September 1931, *ibid.*

In 1922, Indian school inspection became the responsibility of the provincial Departments of Education. Qualified inspectors evaluated the academic work done in all non-Native and Indian schools. Inspectors realized that "methods to be employed with Indian children [should] differ in many respects from those used with white children."⁶¹ It was suggested that "the lessons in the readers [that] do not appeal to these indian children ... be omitted."⁶² Inspectors were also keen on comparing Indian and White pupils. Indian children were shy and their answers were always brief. They read in a monotonous voice and they were unable to apply mathematical skills to daily situations. Also, "Indian children [were] more particular than white children in the preservation of their desks and other school equipment."⁶³

Despite their educational background, the inspectors did not take into account the immersion situation of Indian pupils before judging some of their abilities. Teachers were told that "in teaching Indian children, care must be taken to present clearly the details and to develop thinking. Indian children do not seem to grasp situations

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 3 June 1926, *ibid.*

⁶³Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector D.L. Hicks, 25 September 1928, *ibid.*

unless [details are] all presented."⁶⁴ This was largely due to a language and cultural barrier.

From an educational point of view, the Church of England Residential school was not properly equipped. The two classrooms were overcrowded, more junior and senior books were needed for the library, and teaching tools such as songbooks, globes, clocks, weights, blocks, printing outfits, and exercise books were lacking. Books and supplies were always slow to arrive. In one instance a grade nine pupil "lost much of her year on account of the non-arrival of books ordered. These were ordered in July and arrived in March."⁶⁵ On other occasions the school received only half of the supplies ordered. The inspector advised Indian Affairs that "if a dozen readers are asked for, the class requires so many. The number should not be cut down."⁶⁶

The Church of England school was not without its share of deaths and sicknesses. John Abraham, ten years old, and Agnes Sinclair, thirteen years old, died of

⁶⁴Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 10 June 1925, *ibid.*

⁶⁵Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 3 June 1926, *ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

tuberculosis.⁶⁷ Adam Kamack, ten years old, and Emily Four Dollars, sixteen years old, died of pneumonia.⁶⁸ Eight-year-old Virginia Bird died of intestinal troubles.⁶⁹ John Chief, Lawrence Benjamin, Adeline Vandell, and G. Brown were listed as dead, but the causes of death were not specified.⁷⁰ Alexander Baptiste, fifteen, and Mary Bird, sixteen, were sent to the Qu'Appelle Sanatorium.⁷¹ At least three pupils, Cecile Mathias, Edward Photographer, and Betsy Smith, were sent home with T.B. or scrofula.⁷²

At the end of each school quarter, the Department of Indian Affairs received a 'Discharge of Pupils' form from the Anglican Residential school. Reverend Ellis noted the

⁶⁷Discharge of Pupils, 30 June 1922, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 1. Discharge of Pupils, 31 March 1923, *ibid.*

⁶⁸Discharge of Pupils, 30 June 1922, *ibid.* Discharge of Pupils, 30 June 1926, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 2.

⁶⁹Discharge of Pupils, 31 March 1927, *ibid.*

⁷⁰Indian Agent Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 2 October 1922, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 1. Discharge of Pupils, 31 December 1926, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 2. Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 28 July 1927, *ibid.*

⁷¹Discharge of Pupils, 30 September 1924, *ibid.* Discharge of Pupil, 30 June 1928, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

⁷²Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 2 October 1922, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 1. Discharge of Pupils, 30 June 1926, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 2.

pupil's name, his/her age, and the reason for departure. Listed medical reasons, apart from death, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and scrofula, varied from eye trouble, spine trouble, fits, blindness, mental deficiency, and general poor health. Some were not 'desirable pupils' and one sixteen-year-old pupil, Flora Snakeskin, was discharged after she confessed to misconduct during mid-summer vacations at home and at the North Battleford Fair.⁷³

During the decade 1921-1930, two epidemics of measles, one in 1925 and the other in 1930, broke out at the Catholic Residential school. One little girl, Mary, died of the virus.⁷⁴ Whooping cough hit the school at the beginning of June 1922. No one died but classes were cancelled for the remainder of the school year. Parents were able to take their children home earlier that year.⁷⁵ In January 1928, "les classes se ferment pour un séjour de quinze jours, car Madame La Grippe a fait son apparition. Trois Religieuses et trente enfants sont au lit."⁷⁶

⁷³Discharge of Pupils, 31 March 1929, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

⁷⁴Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 20 March 1925, 141.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 5 June 1922, 120.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 12 January 1928, 167.

The sisters' chronicles show that only five children were sick with tuberculosis. The first victim of the decade, a girl, died 6 May 1921.⁷⁷ Two other girls, Madeline and Christine, passed away 29 May 1923 and 31 October 1930.⁷⁸ One boy, Arsène Cardinal, was sent to a sanatorium on 28 February 1925 and fifteen-year-old Edward Dumont went to the Lloydminster hospital.⁷⁹ At one point the sister secretary used the plural form and wrote, "une de nos fillettes tuberculeuses,"⁸⁰ hence there might have been more tuberculosis cases at the Roman Catholic Residential school.

Four girls and one boy were diagnosed with pneumonia; one in February 1922, two the following year, one in December 1928 and the last one in April 1929.⁸¹ The children all recovered. Two boys, fifteen-year-old Jean Desjarlais and twelve-year-old Augustin Waskevitch, were sent to the Lloydminster hospital with the 'fevers'.⁸² They returned to the school, "après avoir passé deux

⁷⁷Ibid., 6 May 1921, 115.

⁷⁸Ibid., 29 May 1923, 126; 31 October 1930, 173.

⁷⁹Ibid., 28 February 1925, 134; 15 January 1928, 155.

⁸⁰Ibid., 6 May 1921, 115.

⁸¹Ibid., 20 February 1922, 124; 27 February 1923, 125; 20 March 1923, 125; 6 December 1928, 166; 22 April 1929, 169.

⁸²Ibid., 19 October 1928, 164.

semaines à l'hôpital ... joyeux et parfaitement guéris."⁸³

A little eight-year-old Chipewyan boy, Charlee Grandbois, was sent to the Bonneville hospital where he died two months later of consumption of the intestines.⁸⁴ A seven-year-old girl died suddenly in June 1923 "en se rendant au réfectoir, eut une faiblesse, on la transporta sur la galerie, le Père se rendit, lui donna l'absolution, l'administra, ce fut l'affaire de 5 minutes."⁸⁵

Except for the epidemic of whooping cough that sent most of the pupils home early in June 1922, the sick children of the Catholic school were either kept at the school or transferred to a medical institution.

'Application for Admission' forms were also forwarded to the Department of Indian Affairs.⁸⁶ Each form was accompanied by a medical certificate filled out by the agency's medical attendant and sometimes, in special cases, by some recommendations from the Indian agent. Each application form contained the child's name, age, religion, state of education, level of English, school(s) attended,

⁸³Ibid., 9 November 1928, 165.

⁸⁴Ibid., 26 December 1928, 166; 15 February 1929, 168.

⁸⁵Ibid., 2 June 1923, 126.

⁸⁶The records for the Roman Catholic Residential school do not include any 'Pupil Discharge' or 'Application for Admission' forms, therefore limiting information on pupils. These forms are available after 1930.

and his/her state of morality. Most children were classified as having good morals but some, as in the cases of Alice and Edith Bird of Saddle Lake, were believed to have only fair morals.⁸⁷

The admission form was signed, in most cases with an 'X', by a parent or a guardian. The age of the applicants varied from four to seventeen years old, but the majority were between seven and fourteen years of age. Ivan MacDonald entered the Church of England Residential school one month before his fourth birthday.⁸⁸ In his recommendation to the department, Indian Agent Turner wrote that "the child's father died about three months ago, and as the widow has one younger child to keep, I advised her to place the boy in the school, and asked the Principal to accept it, which he agreed to do."⁸⁹ Ivan's application was accepted by Indian Affairs.⁹⁰

During his first year at the residential school, Ivan was too young to attend classes. He started at the age of

⁸⁷Application for Admission, 30 August 1929, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

⁸⁸Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, Onion Lake, 31 August 1991.

⁸⁹Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 12 January 1928, *ibid.*, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 3.

⁹⁰R.T. Ferrier, Superintendent of Indian Education to Lang Turner, 21 January 1928, *ibid.*

five and by the time he quit at sixteen, he had completed his grade Ten education. Unable to go on because of a lack of school materials and because he did not want to become a preacher, Ivan stayed at the school for two more years doing odd jobs in exchange of his room and board.⁹¹ He left the school at the age of eighteen and lived on the reserve with his uncle. Ivan is currently living on the Onion Lake Reserve and is now a retired teacher. He completed a Teaching Certificate in 1983 and a Bachelor of Education in 1987. He taught for six years.

Ivan's recollections of the Church of England Residential school are happy ones. He does not recall any bad incidents except for the normal bad behaviours occurring when kids hang out together. Around the age of fourteen, Ivan and his friends used to steal eggs from the hen-house and boiled them in the pump house. They also stole potatoes from the root cellar and roasted them in the bush. The children were not hungry but looking for something to do. They were warmly dressed, well-fed, and they slept in good beds. According to Ivan, children at the residential schools were better off than children on the reserve. Onion Lake Indians were very poor and he felt fortunate to be at the school, especially during the 1930's.

⁹¹Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

Ivan's home was the school since he was very young when he was admitted. His first language was English, but once he learned Cree at the age of eight, he preferred his Native language. The pupils were not allowed to speak Cree and got slapped on the face when they were caught. Ivan was able to learn his Native language because children always spoke Cree when there was no staff around.⁹² According to Alice Carter, a pupil of the Roman Catholic Residential school between 1942 and 1948, the sisters of the Roman Catholic school let the children speak their Native language during free time.⁹³

At the age of eight, Ivan was allowed to go home for his first vacation. He was happy to go but he was glad to return to the school. However, some other children were very unhappy, especially those who had entered the school at a later age. They hated classes and missed their families.

Reverend Ellis was an energetic recruiter. Day school teachers from other reserves and agencies were losing pupils to the Anglican Residential school. Reverend Ellis was warned not to recruit from day schools as they "should not be injured by recruiting officers, who would be well advised to make their efforts among those children whose education

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Alice Carter, interview with author, Onion Lake, 31 August 1991.

is being neglected."⁹⁴ Over half of Reverend Ellis's recruited pupils were attending or had attended a day school; the rest had no schooling experience.⁹⁵ The majority of the children who had gone to day school were able to speak some English. Others, like thirteen-year-old Bella Starblanket, were still unable to communicate after four years of day schooling.⁹⁶

An increasing number of the Church of England and of the Roman Catholic Residential school pupils were orphans or abandoned children. More and more, Indian agents used these institutions as shelters for desperate children. Emma Wright, thirteen years old, and her fifteen-year-old sister Annie were sent to the Anglican Residential school by Agent S.L. Macdonald from the Battleford Agency. The girls' mother had died a few months before and the agency thought

⁹⁴J.D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs to Reverend Ellis, 16 February 1926, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 2.

⁹⁵An approximate total of one hundred and forty-six applications were sent to the Department of Indian Affairs between 1921 and 1930. Of that number seventy-eight children had or were still attending a day school and sixty-eight had no education.

⁹⁶Application for Admission, 25 November 1927, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 3.

that it would "be good to get [the girls] away from the reserve, where they [could] get proper care."⁹⁷

Twelve-year-old Ernest Baunaise was another deserted child who was sent to the residential school. His parents were still alive but they had both abandoned him. In fact, "the mother of the boy [was] alive at Poundmaker's married to another man. She gave up the boy to Sam [the father] when she took another man and Sam gave the boy to his father Paul."⁹⁸

The Onion Lake residential schools were also used by Indian parents as relievers during tough times. It was not uncommon for parents of larger families to send some of their children to school because they were unable to provide for them. Eliza and Mary Constant, respectively thirteen and eleven years of age, were admitted to the Church of England school because of their family's situation. In a conversation with the father, the Duck Lake Indian agent asked him.

why he wanted to send his daughters away to Boarding school seeing he had his home near the Fort-a-la-corne South Day School on the reserve. He replied candidly, I am poor, hard up and cannot feed my children properly and I think it will be

⁹⁷Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 28 June 1930, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

⁹⁸E. Ahenahkew to Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald, 4 April 1927, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 2.

better for my older girls to be in a boarding school.⁹⁹

Charles B. Constant had five children alive and his family was "always in rags and dirty, his wife [was] a very poor house keeper and untidy about her person."¹⁰⁰

In some cases, relatives or adoptive parents brought children to the schools. The Department of Indian Affairs became suspicious when children who were not originally from the same reserve as the adult who surrendered them were admitted to a residential school. The department often requested further inquiries into those particular cases.

Louise Quinney

was living the Indian mode of life on the Saddle Lake Reserve until she was six years old, ... She is now eight years old and Quinney is anxious to have her admitted as a grant-earning pupil. Quinney says he is very fond of the child and that he did not adopt her merely for the purpose of having her admitted to the school.¹⁰¹

Another child, Nellie Sahyese, a non-treaty girl, was adopted by an aunt who sought her admission to the Anglican Residential school. The department asked Agent Turner if

⁹⁹Indian Agent C.P. Schmidt to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 21 May 1929, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹Indian Agent Ostrander (Saddle Lake) to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 29 September 1925, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 2.

the aunt had "brought her [Nellie] to Frog Lake simply for the purpose of having her admitted as a grant-earning pupil to an Indian Residential school."¹⁰² The Indian Agent replied that "although Mrs. Quinney will not admit that she brought her niece here solely for the purpose of having her placed in the school as a grant-earning pupil, she had the girl with her only a short time before making application for her admission."¹⁰³ Louise and Nellie were admitted to the Anglican Residential school.

By the mid-1920's Indian Affairs had become quite strict with regards to the admittance of Métis children in Indian schools. Mixed-blood children were not tolerated and those without proper family care were to be referred to the Provincial Department of Neglected and Dependent Children. Regardless of the policy, agents and principals kept seeking permission to admit Métis children, especially those who had only known the Indian mode of life, to the residential schools. The department was inflexible because "it [had] been a hard struggle to keep halfbreeds out of our schools and if we are going to make exceptions and admit a few we

¹⁰²R.T. Ferrier to Lang Turner, 24 November 1930, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

¹⁰³Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 12 December 1930, *ibid.*

are going to have a lot of trouble.¹⁰⁴ However, in 1930, six Métis children were still attending the Onion Lake residential schools. The Peterson children boarded at the Anglican school and the Lawrence children lived at the Roman Catholic institution.¹⁰⁵ Indian Commissioner Graham suggested that "these children should be discharged and handed over to the proper authorities."¹⁰⁶ This was easier said than done as the Commissioner admitted.

I have done everything I could in the matter. I have spoken to the authorities of the Provincial Government and they led me to believe that they were going to have the children removed, but they will certainly keep them there as long as the Indian Department will allow it.¹⁰⁷

Records do not include the circumstances of these children and if they were discharged from the residential schools.

Local White children were still attending the schools as day pupils. In 1923 a report mentioned the presence of "sixteen white children day pupils."¹⁰⁸ No other data

¹⁰⁴W.M. Graham to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 5 December 1929, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵W.M. Graham to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 12 March 1930, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector Charles Nivins, 20 September 1923, *ibid.*, File #658-6, part 1.

concerning the Church of England White day pupils are available.

The Roman Catholic Residential school had day pupils as well. Fifteen day pupils attended the 1923-1924 and 1924-1925 school years.¹⁰⁹ Day pupils amounted to five in 1925-1926, eleven in 1926-1927, six in 1927-1928, two in 1928-1929, and six in 1929-1930.¹¹⁰ Just how many of these day scholars were non-Native is not specified.

It was mentioned at one point that the Church of England Residential school was popular with the Indians,¹¹¹ but parental complaints against Reverend Ellis and the high incidence of runaways, suggest the opposite. In a letter to the Field Secretary of the Missionary Society dated 16 October 1925, Reverend Ellis tendered his resignation as principal of the Onion Lake Residential school.¹¹² His action was the result of two factors.

¹⁰⁹Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1st July 1924, 131. Also 25 July 1925, 138.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 24 July 1926, 144; 28 July 1927, 150; 31 July 1928, 161; 5 July 1929, 171; 8 June 1930, 175.

¹¹¹Inspection of the Church of England School by Inspector W. Murison, 16 February 1923, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

¹¹²Minutes of the Sub-committee on Interim Staff Appointments, 27 October 1925, General Synod Archives, GS 75-103, Papers of the Missionary Society of the Church in Canada, Series 3-2, S. Gould, Box 62, W.A., Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission, File, Reports Dr. Westgate 1927.

First he was unhappy with Indian Affairs' failure to provide a separate residence for his family, and, second, the Indians of the area were pushing for a change of principal.¹¹³ Reverend Ellis remained principal and a private residence was built. As for parental complaints, the sub-committee of the Missionary Society who studied Reverend Ellis's case did not discuss the matter. The origins of the complaints are unknown.

Pupil desertion and failure to return to school after the vacations were becoming regular occurrences at the Church of England Residential school. Between September 1923 and October 1930, at least twenty-one pupils ran away from the school and seventeen others could not be found when the principal went to get them after the summer vacations.¹¹⁴ All pupils were eventually found by constables of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and returned

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴RCMP Report, 4 October 1923, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 2. Lang Turner to D.C. Scott, 21 January 1924, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1. RCMP Report, 26 October 1924, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 2. RCMP Report, 26 March 1925, *ibid.* RCMP Report, 14 May 1925, *ibid.* RCMP Report, 14 September 1925, *ibid.* RCMP Report, 10 October 1925, *ibid.* RCMP Report, 23 October 1925, *ibid.* RCMP Report, 3 November 1926, *ibid.* See also Reverend Ellis to the Commanding Officer of the RCMP, 3 October 1928, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3. Report on Indian Boys escaping from Onion Lake School, 30 November 1928, *ibid.* Reverend Ellis to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 13 October 1930, *ibid.*

to Reverend Ellis. Pupils who had deserted were slapped and had their head shaved.¹¹⁵

The inspectors' reports and the sisters' chronicles do not mention any cases of pupil desertion at the Romanist school except for "un grand garçon de dix-huit ans, Jos John, ne pouvant accepter un reproche, quitte l'école et ne revient plus."¹¹⁶ In this case the boy was legally old enough to leave. Absenteeism, on the other hand, was present at the school and children were slow to return in the fall. On 30 August 1926, classes began with more than twenty children missing.¹¹⁷

Absenteeism was not the only problem surfacing with the summer vacations. It was felt that children were returning to the nefarious influence of their parents. Church authorities feared that children who spent weeks at home could bring viruses to the school environment. Furthermore, time was needed for pupils to readjust to the routine and the discipline of the school. The Missionary Society felt that an alternative to summer holidays should be considered:

¹¹⁵Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

¹¹⁶Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 6 January 1929, 167.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 30 August 1926, 146.

owing to the difficulty which was being experienced at many of the Society's Schools, in having the children return promptly after the summer holidays, the whole question of holidays in relation to the health of the children, the discipline of the school, the cost of transportation etc., should receive careful consideration by our Society and the Indian Department with a view to securing more satisfactory results than obtain at present.¹¹⁸

Another problem faced by many principals about summer vacation was the cost of transportation. The Onion Lake Church of England Residential school was located sixty-four kilometres from the nearest railway station. Since most of the school's pupils were coming from distant reserves, the costs of transportation incurred by the school were sizable. The department's policy was clear. Indian Affairs paid the "travelling expenses of children returning from their holidays ... [and] of children who were coming to the school for the first time, provided that the parents [were] unable to pay their transportation."¹¹⁹ Adults accompanying the children were not reimbursed by the department.

The Missionary Society felt that all pupils should travel with an adult escort and that all transportation

¹¹⁸Correspondence from Schools - Onion Lake - Mr. Ellis, General Synod Archives, GS 75-103, Papers of the Missionary Society of the Church in Canada, Series 2-15, Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission, Box 21, p.16 of Minutes of 12 October 1926.

¹¹⁹R.T. Ferrier, Superintendent of Indian Affairs to Reverend H. Ellis, RG 10, Black Series, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-10, part 2.

costs should be covered by Indian Affairs.¹²⁰ When asked by Westgate to provide an annual sum of \$250 to cover the travelling expenses of the school, the department replied that it was "not prepared to set aside specific amounts for this purpose."¹²¹ The department suggested "that pupils whose homes cannot be easily reached should be discouraged from taking holidays every year."¹²²

The Church of England Residential school followed the department's recommendation. The school established a policy that subtly kept many pupils from going home over the holidays.

The rule at the Onion Lake School is this. Parents write to the principal when they want their children to come home for the holidays. They send the money for the R.R. Fare of the child and if they have not got the money they write any how.¹²³

Such a policy was not implemented for the benefit of Indian families. Most parents could not afford to pay for their children's transportation and most parents could not write.

¹²⁰Reverend T.B.R. Westgate to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 25 November 1927, *ibid.*, File #658-10, part 3.

¹²¹R.T. Ferrier, Superintendent of Indian Education to Reverend T.B.R. Westgate, 30 November 1927, *ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³Edward Ahenakew, General Missionary to Indian Agent S.L. Macdonald (Battleford), 6 September 1930, *ibid.*

This policy was made to clear the principal of any blame for keeping children during summer vacations. The documentation does not mention Christmas holidays, but one can assume that most of the children stayed at school.

Transportation should have been provided for all pupils regardless of their parents' financial means. It was cruel on the part of the department and on the part of the Missionary Society to gamble with the only time of the year where children and parents could be reunited. In their endeavour to 'civilize', and save money, officials and missionaries often forgot that Indian pupils were children.

The children of the Roman Catholic Residential school were always able to go home. The majority of the pupils were from the Onion Lake Agency with nearby family to pick them up. Transportation costs were less of an issue for the Catholic school as pupils did not live as far from the school.

Because of the size of their new institutions the authorities of the Church of England and of the Roman Catholic Residential schools had begun to run their school in a business manner. The principals seemed so concerned with the financial and physical conditions of their institutions that they sometimes lost sight of the children's welfare. Reverend Ellis wanted to alter the school plan when he realized the great distance from the

kitchen to the staff dining room. He was against having to carry the food for the staff through the pupils' dining room, in full view of the children.¹²⁴ The staff and the pupils were incontestably not eating the same food.

At the Roman Catholic Residential school, Father Therien asked the department for two extra stoves. He wanted one for his office and one for the sisters' community room. These stoves would be used in the spring and in the fall when it was cool but not yet cold enough to turn on the furnace.¹²⁵ Indian Affairs justly replied that "s'il fait trop froid pour le personnel il fait également trop froid pour les enfants."¹²⁶ The principal was trying to save money on heating by using the furnace only when absolutely necessary.

In the 1920's, the Church of England Residential school and the Roman Catholic Residential school had become larger institutions accommodating over two hundred children.

¹²⁴Lang Turner to D.C. Scott, 18 June 1924, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 1. See also T.B.R. Westgate to the Department of Indian Affairs, 17 June 1924, *ibid.*

¹²⁵Father Therien, Principal of the Roman Catholic school to Father Joseph Guy, O.M.I., 2 January 1926, Archives Deschâtelets, Fond d'archive du conseil oblat des oeuvres indiennes et esquimaudes, Ottawa.

¹²⁶Father Joseph Guy to Father Therien, 29 January 1926, *ibid.*

The atmosphere of the old, smaller school was replaced by a greater institutionalized environment.

CHAPTER VII

THE END OF THE PROTESTANT ERA, 1931-1943

The first half of the 1930's were years of 'vache maigre' for the Department of Indian Affairs.¹ The Great Depression circumscribed the availability of funds, hurting the administration of the Onion Lake Residential schools. By 1935, the per capita subsidy had been reduced by fifteen percent, the Protestant pupils were spending an increasing amount of time working around the school, and the administration of the Catholic institution had been transferred from the Sisters of the Assumption to the Oblate Fathers.

The pupilage of the Catholic school was increased to one hundred and twenty in 1936, but the Protestant school never exceeded one hundred grant earners. (See APPENDIX I and APPENDIX J.) Indian Affairs was accused of

¹'Vache maigre' is an expression that means 'lean years' in English.

discrimination,² but the pupilage difference was the result of air space calculations, not preferential treatment. Because of a higher number of school-aged Catholic children on the agency, the Onion Lake "R.C. Residential school [had been built] much larger than the Onion Lake C.E. School: consequently, the air space in the dormitories of the former [was] approximately 22,000 cubic feet more than in the dormitories of the latter."³ Ottawa, increasingly concerned with the spreading of diseases, was trying to monitor overcrowding in residential schools. The Onion Lake schools were not overcrowded, but each institution's capacity was stretched to the limit.

The schools continued to follow the provincial curriculum and for the first time in 1941, Indian Affairs had prepared and published a textbook especially written for Indian pupils. Ottawa was also pushing for a greater emphasis on vocational and practical training. The limited success of residential schools had forced the government to look into new ways of defining Indian education. Officials finally realized that "education [was] not something injected into a child during his sojourn at school, but a

²T.B.R. Westgate to Indian Affairs, 29 November 1938, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1, part 2.

³R.A. Hoey, Superintendent of Welfare and Training to T.B.R. Westgate, 21 January 1939, *ibid.*

process that should continue throughout life."⁴ Therefore, it was decided that pupils should be trained

to make the most of their available resources, with talents consecrated to the service of the bands to which they belong, and an adult Indian population proud of their racial origin and cultural heritage, adjusted to modern life, progressive, resourceful, and self-supporting.⁵

One of the destructive characteristics of the Onion Lake residential schools was the staff's lack of respect for the pupils' cultural background. The Indian heritage was ignored if not ridiculed, and children were always reminded to work hard if they did not want to end up like the Indians living on the reserve.⁶ The sisters often referred to Indian parents as 'sauvages' or 'noirs'.⁷ Their pupils, however, were always spoken of with warm affection. It was always with expressions comparable to 'nos bons enfants'.

Vocational training for the Onion Lake Residential schools was somewhat synonymous with the chores accomplished

⁴"Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Year ended 31 March 1937," Annual Departmental Reports, Volume II, 1938, 194.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ivan MacDonald and Alice Carter, interview with author, Onion Lake, 31 August 1991.

⁷For examples, see *Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, Onion Lake, Provincial Archives of Alberta, 22 November 1924, 133; 25 December 1924, 133; 23 March 1931, 179.

in and around the school. Children were supposed to learn various trades, but a lack of money, materials, qualified instructors, and space made such an educational goal almost unachievable. In 1942, Reverend Ellis informed the department that "definite vocational training must of necessity be held in abeyance because of the lack of accommodation and equipment."⁸ A similar situation prevailed at the Catholic school but its principal was trying to organize a manual training building.⁹

The Church of England Residential school's older pupils had been following a half day system since 1931.¹⁰ Their days were equally divided between academic and manual training. Pupils were "working in the fields, barns, washrooms, bakery, kitchen and in all occupations which [were] involved in the upkeep of these premises."¹¹ Successful students were exempted from most physical chores.

⁸Ellis to R.A. Hoey, 13 July 1943, RG 10, Black Series, C9803, Volume 6322, File #658-5, part 8.

⁹Donald H. Cameron, Indian Agent to the Secretary, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, 5 September 1942, *ibid.*, C9806, Volume 6325, File #659-5, part 7. Donald H. Cameron replaced doctor J.R. Hill as Onion Lake Indian Agent in 1940. Dr. Hill was retiring at age sixty-five.

¹⁰Report of Inspector W. Murison, 28 May 1931, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6322, File #658-5, part 5.

¹¹Report of Inspector A.R. Brown [?], 20 October 1942, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

Their workload was reduced to allow more time for academic achievements.¹²

The amount of physical work performed by the Catholic pupils is not documented. It was most likely comparable to the Anglican school as both institutions were large and underfunded. On the other hand, physical chores might have been lighter at the Catholic school due to its higher number of staff. The school counted an average of fourteen sisters plus five or six Oblate fathers.

In 1935 the teaching staff of the Catholic Residential school was increased to four sisters.¹³ The Church of England institution hired a third teacher in March 1939.¹⁴ The latter was still suffering from a high turnover of personnel. The situation deteriorated further with the Second World War. With many men enlisting, new working opportunities were opened to women between 1939 and 1945. Qualified female teachers did not chose employment in a remote Indian school over a well-paid position in one of the

¹²Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

¹³Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 22 July 1935, 208.

¹⁴Dr. Westgate to the Department, 31 January 1939, RG 10, Black Series, C9803, Volume 6322, File #658-5, part 7.

many factories hiring women. Reverend Ellis could only try to secure the best available teachers.¹⁵

Between 1930 and 1945, most of the correspondence between Onion Lake and Ottawa was related to school maintenance. Principals were requesting money for repairs, and Indian Affairs officials were forever delaying expenditures that were not considered urgent. The Department of Indian Affairs provided a yearly amount for each school, and principals chose where the money should be spent. In 1935, the department appropriated \$1,200 for the Catholic school. The principal opted for new water and fire fighting equipment rather than painting the exterior of the school building.¹⁶

Officials of the Department of Indian Affairs were sometimes frustrated by the constant demands from the Onion Lake residential schools' principals. It was pointed out that

in many cases, principals of residential schools seem to rely on the Department to carry out minor repairs and replacements which are properly the responsibility of the school management and which

¹⁵Reverend Ellis to the Secretary, 5 March 1943, *ibid.*, C9804, Volume 6323, File #658-6, part 1.

¹⁶A.F. Mackenzie, Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs to Indian Agent J.T. Hill, 30 April 1935, *ibid.*, C9806, Volume 6325, File #659-5, part 5.

should be paid from the per capita allowance or other receipts of the school.¹⁷

On other occasions, principals spent more than the amount authorized by the department. In January 1940, Reverend Ellis was allocated between fifty and sixty dollars for the purchase of a new pump. The principal proceeded to buy the article and had it installed. However, "instead of being between the figures above stated, its cost was \$191.64. Mr. Ellis obviously did not follow instructions."¹⁸ This type of incident exemplifies the inappropriate funding provided by Ottawa. The department was always trying to buy the cheapest equipment. Principals sometimes purchased higher quality materials hoping that Ottawa would pay the difference. Although Ottawa often did pay the difference, it was not so in this particular case. Indian Affairs' funds were so limited that "the balance of the cost of the pump [had] to be paid by the school management from their funds."¹⁹

The Department of Indian Affairs had so little money that it was forced to endanger the lives of the Anglican

¹⁷A.F. Mackenzie to Indian Agent J.T. Hill, 29 May 1935, *ibid.*, File #658-5, part 5.

¹⁸Indian Agent J.T. Hill to the Secretary, 15 January 1940, *ibid.*, File #658-5, part 7.

¹⁹R.A. Hoey, Superintendent of Welfare and Training to Dr. J.T. Hill, 24 January 1940, *ibid.*

Residential school pupils. At the time of the school reconstruction in the mid 1920's, it had been difficult to find a good location because of a lack of potable water. Unsuccessful drilling brought about the decision to pump the school water from Long Lake. A sample was analyzed and the water was drinkable, containing only a normal amount of bacteria. The situation was fine until 1927, when it was first observed that the supply of water was contaminated. Even though the water was chlorinated before usage, it was

claimed to be still unsafe for drinking purposes and the Health Officer for the Onion Lake Agency has advised the discontinuance of the use of the lake water for drinking purposes for the children that is not filtered.²⁰

Permission to buy water filters was granted by the department, but the situation did not improve.²¹ In 1928 Reverend Ellis asked for a soft water system as the chemicals in the water were seriously damaging the water pipes.²² By 1930 the water was highly contaminated. In that year alone, four different specialists informed the department of the urgency of the situation. Long Lake was "spring fed, [had] no inlet or outlet, and during the past

²⁰Indian Commissioner Graham to J.D. McLean, 12 April 1927, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 4.

²¹J.D. McLean to W.M. Graham, 20 April 1927, *ibid.*

²²Reverend Ellis to T.B.R. Westgate, 20 April 1929, *ibid.*

five years [had] receded some two feet in elevation."²³ The lake water was "of a greenish colour with minute but visible particles of vegetable matter in suspension."²⁴ The water presented "unfavorable contamination,"²⁵ and when "chlorinated [became] dark in colour, offensive in odour, and unusable in regard to taste."²⁶

Indian Affairs was informed that the lake water was "quite unsatisfactory and in fact dangerous as a water supply for the Anglican Indian School."²⁷ The matter was serious and if the "Bacteria Coli ... [became] active, an enormous percentage of mortality would doubtless be the result."²⁸ Indian Affairs did not act because of a shortage of funds. The school authorities were told to make sure that cattle and human feces were not polluting the

²³D. Whittaker, Assistant Hydraulic Engineer to J.S. Tempest, Commissioner of Irrigation, Department of Interior, Calgary, 18 September 1930, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6322, File #658-5, part 5.

²⁴Report of D. Whittaker, Assistant Hydraulic Engineer on Filtration System for Onion Lake, 14 January 1931, *ibid.*

²⁵Allan C. Rankin, Director of Department of Interior, Dominion Water Power and Reclamation Service to [illegible], 28 September 1930, *ibid.*

²⁶Report of D. Whittaker, Assistant Hydraulic Engineer on Filtration System for Onion Lake, 14 January 1931, *ibid.*

²⁷R.H. Murray, C.E. Director, Division of Sanitation Analyze of Water Supply, 10 May 1930, *ibid.*

²⁸Report of D. Whittaker, Assistant Hydraulic Engineer on Filtration System for Onion Lake, 14 January 1931, *ibid.*

stagnant lake.²⁹ Finally, in the fall of 1932, the department authorized \$3,300 to upgrade the Anglican school water system.³⁰ In May 1933 a spring was found, definitely solving the school's water problems. It took five years to resolve the water situation at the Anglican Residential school. Ottawa's delayed reaction shows that the threat to the lives of one hundred Indian children was not a high priority for a government fighting the devils of the Great Depression.

Records do not describe local feelings towards the inadequate supply of potable water. It is not mentioned if the staff or Reverend Ellis's family drank Long Lake water. As far as Indian parents were concerned, they might have been unaware of the water problem. Since neither sickness nor death resulted from the contamination, parents probably felt assured that the water was better once it had been pumped and filtered. Reverend Ellis himself was not thoroughly informed. On 13 October 1932 the principal wrote to Dr. Westgate regarding more information.

Towards the end of June last, a Mr. P. Fetterly, an engineer from the Dominion Water Power Branch at Calgary was here to look into the situation regarding the water supply and the equipment. He

²⁹E.L. Stone, Director of Medical Services, Memorandum regarding Water Supply, 3 February 1931, *ibid.*

³⁰A.F. Mackenzie, Memorandum to Honourable Thomas G. Murphy, 3 September 1932, *ibid.*

was here for, I believe, three days, drawing up the necessary specifications. Since then we have not heard anymore about it.³¹

The Catholic Residential school drew its water from a spring and experienced no inconvenience in regards to its water supply.

There were a few changes of principals at the Romanist school. Father Pratt, O.M.I. who had replaced Father Portier, O.M.I. in February 1934, was succeeded by Father Pascal, O.M.I. in May 1937. The latter was still in office when the Church of England Residential school burned to the ground in 1943.

On the night of 1st December at about four o'clock in the morning, a fire began in the laundry room of the Anglican school building. The flames quickly reached the ceiling, making it impossible for the staff to fight the raging blaze. One hundred and fifteen pupils were quietly evacuated from their dormitories and taken over to the Roman Catholic school where they stayed for a couple of days.³² No one was injured but the main building was a total loss. All out buildings were intact. Reverend Ellis

³¹Reverend H. Ellis to Reverend T.B.R. Westgate, 13 October 1932, *ibid.*

³²Indian Agent Donald H. Cameron to Indian Affairs, 2 December 1943, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1, part 2. See also *Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, 1st December 1943, 272.

did not suspect anyone of starting the fire, and believed it to be entirely of accidental origin, possibly from a spark igniting the clothes drying in the laundry, or possible overheating of a stove-pipe, although all the latter had been cleaned at a recent date. Subsequent investigations did not reveal any reasons to suspect arson or that the fire had been started by any person with view of sabotage.³³

Within a week it was decided by Ottawa and by the Church authorities that the Church of England Residential school would not be rebuilt in Onion Lake. Instead, the school was transferred to Prince Albert, where it took over the vacant St. Alban College. The government invested almost \$15,000 in renovations and the school was ready in the spring of 1944.³⁴ In the meantime most of the pupils were at home.

The decision to move the Anglican Residential school to Prince Albert arose from financial and practical motives. Since the Onion Lake school was not insured, it was cheaper for Ottawa to renovate than to build anew. Funds for Indian education were limited due to the war effort, and 1943 was not a good year to invest thousands of dollars in a remote Indian school. The Onion Lake location was very impractical

³³Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on Onion Lake fire, 12 January 1944, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1, part 2.

³⁴R.A. Hoey, Superintendent of Welfare and Training to Reverend H.A. Alderwood, Secretary, Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission, 19 April 1944, *ibid.* The initial estimate for renovations was \$2000. See Memorandum, Deputy Minister [?] to [illegible], 7 December 1943, *ibid.*

for the school administration as well. St. Alban school was located in the town of Prince Albert and therefore closer to markets and services. Supplies would be cheaper as costs for shipping and freighting would be eliminated. Also there was still a very successful Catholic Residential school on the Onion Lake reserve.

Indian pupils and parents were not involved in the decision to relocate the Protestant school. For the children who came from the Onion Lake Agency, the move to Prince Albert meant a greater distance from their parents. For others, like those from the Carlton Agency, the new location was closer to home. There are no records of Onion Lake Indians asking for the reconstruction of the Church of England Residential school on their agency. Perhaps they were indifferent, or perhaps they were happy to see it leave. Their interest might have been influenced by the fact that in the fall of 1943, only twenty children from the Onion Lake Agency were attending the Church of England Residential school.²⁵

The 1943 fire was not the first one to perturb the routine of the Onion Lake residential schools. Indeed the same ordeal had already fallen on the Roman Catholic institution. On 10 February 1928, it had burned to the

²⁵Memorandum, Deputy Minister [illegible], 7 December 1943, *ibid.*, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1, part 2.

ground, forcing sisters and pupils to lodge in the old abandoned Church of England school.³⁶ All children except about twenty were sent home.³⁷ Classes were cancelled until September 1928 when instruction resumed in the new school.

On that same night of 10 February 1928, Gilbert Saskamoose and George Peechow, both seventeen years old, had set fire to the Church of England school attic. They had been thinking about it for some time and had decided to act when they had heard of the Catholic school blaze.³⁸ The fire was put out and damage was limited to a small hole in the school roof. The culprits were charged with arson and sent to the Prince Albert jail for five months.

A possible connection between the two 1928 fires was investigated, but the cause of the Catholic school fire remained unascertained. The loss of the Romanist

³⁶For a detailed account of the episode see *Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, 10 February 1928, 155-156.

³⁷Lang Turner to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 11 February 1928, RG 10, Black Series, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5, part 2.

³⁸For complete statements by the accused see Statement of Gilbert Saskamoose, Age 17 years in connection with an outbreak of fire at the Anglican Indian School, Onion Lake, Sask.; on Friday evening at 8 o'clock p.m. Feb. 10th, 1928, *ibid.*, C9803, Volume 6321, File #658-5, part 4, and Statement of George Peechow, Age 17 years in connection with an outbreak of fire at the Anglican Indian School, Onion Lake, Sask., on Friday evening at 8 o'clock p.m. Feb. 10th, 1928, *ibid.*

institution was not as significant as it could have been. After all, the old building was soon to be vacated and the new school was almost ready for occupation. No one had been hurt and most of the bedding, clothing, and lighter articles of value had been salvaged.³⁹

Many minor fires had been controlled throughout the history of the Onion Lake Residential schools. Even the complete destruction of the old Catholic building in 1928 had not altered the determination to Christianize and educate the Indians of the Onion Lake Agency. The blaze of December 1943 was different. It marked the end of an era, the end of Protestant education in Onion Lake.

Reverend Ellis left the principalship of St. Alban Residential school in 1945 and took employment as Protestant Chaplain of the Prince Albert federal penitentiary. He stayed "there for ten years, then went to the parish in Kamsack, Saskatchewan, then to St. Mary's in Regina. In May, 1958, he went to Indian Head and was there till he died in February, 1962."⁴⁰

Reverend Henry Ellis and his wife had worked hard to maintain the Church of England Residential school. Little

³⁹"Lang Turner the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs," February 1928, *ibid.*, C9805, Volume 6324, File #659-5, part 2.

⁴⁰Janette K. Taylor, "Rev. Henry Ellis and Family," in Alma Hewitt, The Fort Pitt Trail Mostly Tales of Pioneer Day, (Saskatchewan: n.p., 1968), 292.

is known about Reverend Ellis's relationship with the school pupils. Ivan MacDonald has good memories of the man even though he was quite a disciplinarian. MacDonald got strapped quite a few times but said that he deserved it. He recalled that Reverend Ellis

was nice when I was a small kid. He used to keep some candy in his pocket and I would run up to him and look in his pocket for candy. It was just a favor to me because I was only three years old.⁴¹

One can not conclude the Onion Lake residential schools' history between 1892 and 1943 without touching current issues such as physical and sexual abuse. According to the available government sources, the Church archives, the sisters' chronicles, and the interviews with ex-pupils, the physical force that was used for punishment usually did not go beyond what was acceptable at the time. The strap, the slap, and the brush cut were normal white disciplinary measures. Instances of physical abuse were not uncovered during the work for this thesis. However, two cases of sexual abuse were recounted to the author. The first occurrence took place at the Church of England Residential school around 1943. One of the boys' supervisor was fired after it was reported by the pupils that he was sexually

⁴¹Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

molesting one boy.⁴² The other incident happened at the Roman Catholic school.. A teenage girl from Cold Lake was impregnated by one of the Oblate Fathers.⁴³ She was apparently sent home to have her baby.

Other oral history evidence perhaps contradicts this version. Eric Carlson, a graduate of the Roman Catholic Residential school, insists that he never saw any evidence of sexual or other physical abuse.⁴⁴ Mr. Carlson left the Romanist school in 1941, a few years before the alleged event took place.

Eric Carlson was three when he was dropped off at the school by his widowed mother. He was not a treaty Indian, being the son of a Swedish father. Sister St. Wilfred became his surrogate mother, giving him the love he needed. Eric spent his summers at the school working on the farm. After grade eight, he went to St. Thomas College in Battleford. He eventually attended University and completed a Master's Degree in Education. When asked about his experience at the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Residential school, he replied that

⁴²Ibid. The name of the boys' supervisor has been withheld by the author.

⁴³The names of the adolescent and of the Oblate Father have been withheld by the author. Alice Carter, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

⁴⁴Summary of an interview with Eric Carlson, Interview by Jim R. Miller, Toronto, 21 November 1990.

mon expérience dans une école résidentielle a été très satisfaisante, même joyeuse. A mon âge avancé, (62) je n'hésite pas à vous dire que mes jours à St. Anthony School furent les plus joyeux de ma vie. Etant donné mes expériences comme étudiant et professeur à deux écoles résidentielles, j'ai de la difficulté à imaginer les 'horror stories' qui viennent de certains individus après tant d'années. En général les missionnaires, et femmes et hommes, étaient des gens très dévoués et je suis personnellement très reconnaissant à leur égard.⁴⁵

As a young man, Eric Carlson taught for two years at Lebret Residential school. He now lives in Toronto where he works as an education counsellor with the Department of Indian Affairs. Eric's experience at the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Residential school was positive. He regrets that many people do not appreciate the work of the missionaries who devoted their lives to Indian education. He suggested in an interview with Professor Jim R. Miller that when studying residential schools, "people should not compare living conditions and medical care then to what is available today."⁴⁶

Another ex-pupil, Alice Carter (nee Angus), has very good memories of her years at the Catholic Residential school. She was admitted in 1942 at the age of thirteen. Alice's uncle had sent for the missionary, and she had been

⁴⁵Eric Carlson, letter to author, n.d. [March 1991].

⁴⁶Summary of an interview with Eric Carlson, interview by Jim R. Miller, 21 November 1990, 5.

willing to go to boarding school. She had attended Delmas Residential school and Thunderchild Day school prior to being enrolled in Onion Lake. She completed her grade eight education before leaving the school in 1948. She liked the school and by choice stayed during the summer vacations. The sisters were very helpful and they taught her to cook, knit, and sew. Alice remembers being well fed and well dressed. Each girl had a Sunday-dress to wear on special occasions. Children followed a routine, and boys and girls were always separated. The distance between the two genders did not stop Alice from meeting her husband at the school. They were married when she was discharged at eighteen.⁴⁷

The recollections of their ex-pupils prove that the Onion Lake missionaries tried to make the most of their available means. Of course the main orientation of their establishment was religious, but Indian pupils were not treated any differently than any other pupils, especially in Catholic schools. All Catholic Québec children who attended school before the Quiet Revolution and the Québec Education Reform of 1968 were immersed in a sea of Catechism. The Sisters of the Assumption were teaching Indian children in the same way they would have taught any other Catholic children, except that they would perhaps have had more respect for White parents. Sisters were renowned for their

⁴⁷Alice Carter, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

disciplinarian attributes, and many Catholic children were strapped at school, not only Indian pupils. It must be remembered that discipline was an accepted facet of the Canadian educational system. One cannot compare the 1980's and 1990's lack of school discipline to the first half of the century when teachers still exerted control over the children they were educating.

As for the Protestant teachers of the Church of England school, Ivan MacDonald recalls their initial strictness and their growing leniency as time went on. The slap on the face for children caught speaking Cree remained effective all through his school years.⁴⁸ The sisters were not so rigid with their pupils. Their attitude could have originated from the fact that English was not their first language, either. Being in an immersed situation themselves, they were more understanding than their Protestant rival. Also, many Oblate fathers could converse in Cree with the children.

The Oblate fathers and the Protestant missionaries supplemented their per capita grant with cattle and pig raising because funds from the federal government were inadequate. With better federal funding, a higher number of Indian children might have been educated and perhaps more pupils would have reached grade twelve. Indian education

⁴⁸Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

could have been successful if more schools had been built, if only qualified teachers had been hired, if the student-teacher ratio had been smaller, and if less time had been dedicated to religious education. Indian children would have benefitted from a busing system to well organized day schools, from parental involvement in their education, from a curriculum adapted to their needs, and from educators willing to modify their teaching approaches. Once the conditions to better Indian education have been enumerated, one criterion remains: parental and children interest. White officials and educators were unable to create a school system that awakened widespread interest among Indian people. Their culture was misunderstood and their ways misinterpreted. White educators also failed to recognize that Indian children were not verbal learners.⁴⁹ They learned better through observation and manipulation, making it difficult for them to acquire a second language. A positive learning environment was also an essential, yet missing, requirement for achievement. Few cultural groups would succeed if they were constantly reminded of their so-called inferiority.

⁴⁹Lloyd H. Robertson, Cultural Bias on the WISC-R Information Subtest: Canadian and Native Concerns, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, (Regina: n.p., September 1989), 9, 11, 12.

After their reconstruction, the Onion Lake residential schools housed over two hundred and twenty children. Numbers are not available to demonstrate accurately how many school-aged children from the Onion Lake Agency were not attending the residential schools. Nevertheless, when comparing the total population of the agency to the number of pupils at the schools, it is safe to say that many children were not at school. In 1939, 1390 people lived on the Onion Lake Agency. Of this total, 249 were Anglican, 1073 were Catholics, and sixty-eight were not classified.⁵⁰ The percentage of children is not indicated, but it was probably more than one hundred and twenty Catholic pupils and twenty Anglican pupils who came from the Onion Lake Agency.

Among the children who attended residential schools, many entered the school at an older age. Many stayed for only a few years, leaving the school with a grade two or three education. It could be argued that some education was better than nothing, but it was certainly not sufficient to compete in the White society. The truth is that most graduates did not want to compete with their White neighbours. Their home was the reserve with their own people. White officials were being utopian when they

⁵⁰Memorandum, Deputy Minister [illegible], 7 December 1943, RG 10, Black Series, C9802, Volume 6321, File #658-1, part 2.

believed that Indian graduates would want to build a future away from their culture, their roots, and their families.

The fact that many pupils entered the residential schools at the age of ten or older proves that Indian parents were either indifferent to White education or uninterested in separating from their children. As times were getting difficult, parents began to use the schools as a welfare system. They did not put their children in the schools for them to acquire knowledge, but for them to receive proper food and clothing. Life on the reserve was increasingly rough and more children were living in poor conditions. A decline of hunted animals resulted in greater dependence upon the federal government. Alcohol had made its way to the agency reserves, spreading its evil consequences. The Depression hit Indians harder as already reluctant White employers preferred to hire destitute White men over Indians.

There was no major resistance to the Onion Lake residential schools. Most parents were welcomed at the institutions, although they were not allowed to retrieve their offspring as they pleased. There were some isolated conflicts with Reverend Ellis but no general movement to close either school. Considering that the Church of England Residential school was in operation for fifty-one years and the Roman Catholic Residential school for eighty-two years,

it can be argued that both institutions were, if not well accepted, at least tolerated.

Feelings seemed generally positive towards the schools, but as they could not write, parents did not leave any records behind. The few letters or declarations signed by Indian parents were always witnessed by either a principal or the Indian Agent. The validity of these documents is questionable because Indian parents were unable to double check written materials before signing. They had to trust that the White person transcribing their declaration was faithful to what they were saying.

Indian residential schooling had an explicit purpose. It was first established to 'civilize', Christianize, and assimilate the younger generations of Native children so that as adults they could successfully integrate into the White society. In this regard, residential schools met with very limited success. Most of the Onion Lake Residential schools' graduates stayed on the reserve, returning to their elders' way of life. Even Ivan MacDonald, who had spent fifteen years at the Anglican school and who had entered the school at a very impressionable age, discarded some of the White customs he had followed as a pupil. By the time he left school he was so fed up with religion that he stopped

going to Church completely. Only in the last few years did he return to his faith.⁵¹

The Onion Lake residential schools had followed very similar paths. They were both opened as day schools in 1892, they were both rebuilt between 1924 and 1928, and they both faced the same difficulties and challenges. The two schools struggled with insufficient funding, isolation, recurrent diseases and epidemics, fires, and Indian indifference to education. They also had the same educational priorities, with religious instruction ranking first, followed by academic knowledge and manual training.

Despite their similarities, the Catholic school was always a step ahead of the Protestant school. Except for a short period in the mid 1920's, its pupilage was always higher, its inspections were predominantly positive, its teachers always qualified, and its staff more stable.

The great plague of the Church of England school remained the instability of its teaching staff. The high turnover of its educators hampered the progress of the pupils. The teachers of the Anglican institution were usually younger, single females who felt very isolated in a school located ten kilometres from the Onion Lake settlement. In comparison, the sisters of the Roman Catholic school were living in community, an arrangement

⁵¹Ivan MacDonald, interview with author, 31 August 1991.

that provided them with a support network. The sisters were fulfilling their vocation and were working for the will of God.

This thesis concentrated on two schools located on the same reserve. They were rivals but partners in a shared mission. Their task was grandiose and they faced many adversities. Nevertheless, the schools helped many children, and, even if some parents used them for welfare reasons, they still served a purpose. For many Indian children they represented stability and comfort in a society struggling between two worlds. For some it was a home away from home and for others it was more like a jail where they put in time. Schools are generally not a popular institution with children. They can always think of better places to be and better places to go.

Indian residential schools represent a relatively new field of interest, and scholars are only beginning to unfold their unique history. Some are concerned with the experiences of thousands of youngsters who lived through residential schooling, while others are hoping to find the solution to modern problems in the roots of Indian education. Whatever the purpose, it is fundamental to bring to light the history of all Canadian Indian residential schools if only to be aware of their existence. Too many

people do not know that residential schools played a very important role in White-Indian relations.

APPENDIX A

Census of the Onion Lake Agency and Denominations, 1892-1917.

Year	Total Population	Catholic	Anglican	Pagan
1892	612	501	67	44
1893	647	555	76	16
1894	658	551	92	15
1895	673	557	88	28
1896	679	566	89	24
1897	706	583	90	33
1898	736	605	96	35
1899	839	662	112	65
1900	851	680	112	59
1901	858	651	99	108
1902	878	668	114	96
1903	873	654	121	98
1904	not available			
1905	930	700	129	101
1906	942	684	147	111
1907	967	686	157	124
1908	974	687	154	133
1909	1004	724	145	135
1910	1015	724	143	148
1911	1010	721	141	148

Year	Total Population	Catholic	Anglican	Pagan
1912	1001	723	131	147
1913	1041	755	98	188
1914	1059	749	103	207
1915	1055	740	113	202
1916	1058	745	112	201
1917	1045	785	124	136

Sources:

"Census Return of Resident and Nomadic Indians; Denomination to which they belong," Sessional Papers, 1892-1909.

"Census of Indians and Eskimos - Religions, ages, sexes, births and deaths, by provinces, & c.," Sessional Papers, 1910-1917.

APPENDIX B

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding School and their Standards, 1901-1910.

	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910
Treaty Pupils Registered	58	47	48	43	46	43	41	50	54	53
Average Annual Attendance	51	N/A	43	40	40	33	32	42	49	N/A
Standard I	19	15	13	13	16	11	17	29	35	34
II	13	10	12	10	8	8	6	3	3	8
III	10	9	10	6	8	7	8	8	7	0
IV	6	6	5	8	7	6	8	4	2	7
V	6	4	5	4	4	9	2	6	7	4
VI	4	3	3	2	3	2	0	0	0	0

N/A: Not Available

Sources:

"Tabular Statements, Showing the Condition of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion," Sessional Papers, 1901.

"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies," Sessional Papers, 1902, 1904, 1909.

"School Statement, Statement of Boarding Schools in the Dominion," Sessional Papers, 1903, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1910.

APPENDIX C

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding School and their Standards, 1901-1910.

	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910
Treaty Pupils Registered	17	16	14	15	15	24	16	19	23	31
Average Annual Attendance	16	N/A	11	N/A	15	18	14	15	16	23
Standard I	4	3	4	6	2	12	5	9	16	18
II	5	5	3	0	4	1	1	1	2	6
III	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	2	0	2
IV	4	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	3	3
V	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	2	2
VI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

N/A: Not Available

Sources:

"Tabular Statements, Showing the Condition of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion," Sessional Papers, 1901.

"Annual Report of W.J. Chisholm, Inspector of Indian Agencies," Sessional Papers, 1902, 1904, 1909.

"School Statement, Statement of Boarding Schools in the Dominion," Sessional Papers, 1903, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1910.

APPENDIX D

NEW REGULATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL AND BOARDING SCHOOLS, 1911.

"SCHOOL BUILDINGS, CLASS 'A.'

The buildings owned by the church which would entitle the school to a per capita grant of \$100 in the eastern division and \$125 in the western division should conform to the following general specifications.

1. Substantial building either of brick, stone, cement or wood in good state of repair.
2. To be built on a stone or cement foundation with a light airy basement of full size of main building with cement floor.
3. Pure and plentiful water-supply distributed throughout the building.
4. A proper system of sanitary water-closets, drainage and disposal of sewage.
5. Hospital accommodation for the isolation of pupils ill with infectious disease or tuberculosis.
6. Modern system of ventilation in dormitories and classroom and sufficient air space in dormitories and classrooms for the number of pupils accommodated.
7. Modern heating apparatus, hot water, steam or hot air.
8. Sufficient area of land for farms and gardens and practical industrial work, where such work can be carried on.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS, CLASS 'B.'

The buildings owned by the government which would entitle the managements to \$80 per capita in the eastern division and \$100 per capita in the western division class must conform to the requirements of clauses 5, 6, and 8 class 'A.'

SCHOOL BUILDINGS, CLASS 'C.'

Buildings owned by the churches which do not in all particulars conform to the specifications in classes 'A' and 'B', and which are nevertheless sanitary and kept in a good state of repair, and which would entitle the school to \$80 per capita in the eastern division and \$100 per capita in the western division. The buildings in this class must conform to the requirements of clauses 5, 6, and 8 of class 'A.'

At the date of this writing contracts have been signed for nearly all the boarding schools, and improvements to buildings owned by the church and the government are being gradually carried out."

Source:

"Report of D.C. Scott, Superintendent General of Education, 1st June 1911," Sessional Papers (No. 20) 1911, 295.

APPENDIX E

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Church of England Boarding School and their Standards, 1911-1920.

	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
Treaty Pupils Registered	17	15	14	15	27	30	31	36	38	38
Average Annual Attendance	12	11	10	11	16	26	27	30	32	30
Standard I	10	11	6	5	12	10	10	18	19	20
II	2	2	3	3	5	7	6	8	9	5
III	2	0	3	3	4	3	6	2	2	3
IV	0	1	1	3	4	4	3	4	4	5
V	3	1	1	1	2	6	2	2	2	4
VI	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	2	1

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917.

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion (from which returns have been received) for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1918, 1919, 1920.

APPENDIX F

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Boarding School and their Standards, 1911-1920.

	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
Treaty Pupils Registered	53	49	51	50	57	55	52	55	55	54
Average Annual Attendance	39	35	39	37	43	42	41	46	43	40
Standard I	33	25	29	29	31	31	30	32	26	32
II	9	12	8	8	12	12	7	8	14	10
III	1	7	6	5	6	5	6	9	9	2
IV	6	2	6	6	6	5	5	0	1	10
V	4	3	2	2	2	1	1	3	3	0
VI	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	2	0

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917.

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion (from which returns have been received) for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1918, 1919, 1920.

APPENDIX G

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Church of England Residential School and their Standards, 1921-1930.

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
Treaty Pupils Registered	42	41	46	46	44	80	96	83	86	99
Average Annual Attendance	37	37	38	38	39	72	80	78	75	90
Standard I	22	13	18	18	12	33	42	18	22	21
II	7	5	6	6	10	11	11	6	12	16
III	7	7	3	3	6	16	15	15	10	13
IV	1	7	8	8	5	8	12	30	20	11
V	4	9	11	11	6	7	4	8	15	20
VI	1	0	0	0	5	5	12	6	6	13
VII	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion (from which returns have been received) for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1921, 1922.

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1923, 1924.

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Annual Departmental Reports, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930.

Note: Beginning in 1929, Standards were referred to as Grades.

APPENDIX H

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Union Lake Roman Catholic Residential School and their Standards, 1921-1930.

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
Treaty Pupils Registered	58	55	60	46	56	59	61	76	94	118
Average Annual Attendance	54	50	53	50*	50	53	57	65	79	93
Standard I	30	26	29	20	15	26	26	35	56	74
II	14	18	12	13	13	0	5	9	11	18
III	7	8	9	5	16	15	11	15	12	12
IV	0	3	7	5	5	3	8	5	7	8
V	6	0	3	3	4	10	6	6	4	4
VI	1	0	0	0	3	5	5	6	4	2
VII	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* As written in the Sessional Papers.

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Boarding Schools in the Dominion (from which returns have been received) for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1921, 1922.

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Sessional Papers, 1923, 1924.

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Annual Departmental Reports, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930.

Note: Beginning in 1929, Standards were referred to as Grades.

APPENDIX I

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Church of England Residential School and their Grades, 1931-1939.

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Treaty Pupils Registered	104	101	114	127	114	111	116	143	120
Average Annual Attendance	94	95	101	109	104	102	104	110	109
Grades I	27	39	31	39	40	34	44	66	32
II	16	7	14	12	9	12	13	14	19
III	13	9	11	9	9	10	10	20	9
IV	11	23	18	17	16	12	12	11	18
V	20	14	14	19	15	10	13	14	18
VI	12	8	15	12	10	14	5	8	17
VII	5	1	11	11	7	9	13	9	2
VIII	0	0	0	8	8	6	3	1	2
IX	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	3

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Annual Departmental Report, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939.

Note: Indian Pupils Statistics are not available in Annual Department Reports after 1939.

APPENDIX J

Treaty Indian Pupils Enrolled at the Onion Lake Roman Catholic Residential School and their Grades, 1931-1939.

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Treaty Pupils Registered	126	135	127	133	138	153	153	134	151
Average Annual Attendance	105	112	113	111	117	123	122	118	125
Grades I	78	65	43	51	54	68	72	63	72
II	17	29	20	15	14	26	25	16	16
III	11	7	22	23	12	9	9	0	15
IV	12	19	11	15	24	16	16	17	15
V	8	8	11	12	15	12	10	9	13
VI	0	7	9	11	8	14	14	12	8
VII	0	0	11	6	8	8	7	10	9
VIII	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	6	3
IX	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Sources:

"Statement of Indian Residential Schools in the Dominion for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March," Annual Departmental Reports, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939.

Note: Indian Pupils Statistics are not available in Annual Departmental Reports after 1939.

SOURCES CONSULTED

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Manuscript Collections

1. Government Correspondence

Public Archives of Canada. Record Group 10. "Indian Affairs" Black Series.

Public Archives of Canada. Record Group 10. "Indian Affairs" School Files.

Record Group 10. "Indian Affairs" School Files. As recorded in Documents Relating to Indian Education in Saskatchewan, 1870-1950. Saskatoon: Department of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, 1977.

2. Missionary Correspondence

Archives Deschâtelets. Fonds d'archive du conseil oblat des oeuvres indiennes et esquimaudes. Ottawa. 1921-1974.

General Synod Archives. Papers of the Missionary Society of the Church in Canada. Toronto. 1922-1944.

Provincial Archives of Alberta. Registre pour servir à l'inscription des chroniques des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, Onion Lake. Edmonton. 1913-1962.

----- . Registre pour servir à l'inscription des programmes des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, Onion Lake. Edmonton. 1894-1963.

3. Miscellaneous Manuscripts

Buck, Ruth Matheson. Personal Papers. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, File R-20.

----- . "Onion Lake." Unpublished Paper. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, File E 2829.

- and Mary Turner McCusker. "Wives and Daughters."
Unpublished Paper. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board,
File E 2829.
- Diary of Miss Annie Eliza Brown (nee Philips). Saskatoon:
Saskatchewan Archives Board, File S85-201.
- Dion, Joseph F. "Early History of Onion Lake, Saskatchewan."
Unpublished Paper. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board,
Clippings File.
- Lefebvre, Emma Demers. Notes de voyage, Sherbrooke à Onion
Lake, 1er juillet - 10 septembre 1908. Saskatoon:
Saskatchewan Archives Board, Microfilm R-9.46.
- Lifeso, E.L. "The OutPost at Onion Lake: Royal Canadian
Mounted Police 1886-1974." Unpublished Paper. Regina:
Saskatchewan Archives Board, File R-E3388.
- Mandlebaum, David G. "Notes on Plains Cree Bands from
Official Documents, 1886-1915." Personal Papers.
Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, File GR 328 #1.e.
- Manuscript of Talk Given by Mrs. Ruth Matheson Buck. Regina:
Saskatchewan History Lecture Series. Museum of Natural
History, 10 February 1972.
- National Conference on Indian and Northern Education.
Proceedings. Saskatoon: n.p., 1967.
- Tieengrund, Onion Lake Methodist Chruch, Norwegian and
Scandinavian Telephone. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives
Board, Microfilm 2.572.
- Transcript of Diary Kept by George Mann, Indian Agent at
Farm 14, Onion Lake Reserve, October 1st - December 13,
1886. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board. File R-
E3196.

B. Official Reports

1. Government Reports and Publications

- Abbott, Frederick H. The Administration of Indian Affairs in
Canada. Washington: United States Board of Indian
Commissioners, 1915.

- Bryce, Peter H. Chief Medical Officer, Department of Indian Affairs. Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the North West Territories. Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1903.
- Caldwell, George. M.S.W. Project Director. Indian Residential Schools, A Research Study of the Child Programs of Nine Residential Schools in Saskatchewan. Canada: The Canadian Welfare Council for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, January 1967.
- Canada. Handbook of Indians of Canada. Geographic Board. Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, Printer of the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1912.
- Registered Indian Population by Band, 1965-1973. Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Departmental Statistics Division. Historical Series No. 1, 1974.
- The Canadian Indian. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1986.
- The Indian and the Inuit Graduate Register. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs. Education-Operation, 1976.
- Charles, Roger. Report on Legislation on Indian Education. Toronto: Ontario Indian Education Council, January 1981.
- Christensen, Deanna. Selected Aspects of Fort Pitt's History. Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources: Historic Parks Visitor services, 29 February 1984.
- Dominion of Canada. Annual Departmental Reports. Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1925-1936.
- Annual Departmental Reports. Report of the Department of Mines and Resources. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937-1944.
- Sessional Papers. Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs. Ottawa: Queen's Printer; 1890-1900; King's Printer, 1901-1924.
- Sessional Papers. Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1874-1879.

- . Sessional Papers. Annual Report on Indian Affairs for the Year Ending 30 June 1872. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1873.
- . Sessional Papers. Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Minister of the Interior for the Year Ended 30 June 1873. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1874.
- . Sessional Papers. Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Secretary for the Provinces for the Year Ending the 30 of June 1871. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1872.
- Foght, H.W.. A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. A Report to the Government of Saskatchewan. Regina: King's Printer, 1918.
- Ontario. People of Native Ancestry: A Resource Guide for Primary and Junior Divisions. Toronto: Ministry of Education, n.d.
- Robertson, Lloyd H. Cultural Bias on the WISC-R Information Subtest: Canadian and Native Concerns. Saskatchewan School Trustee Association. Regina: n.p., September 1989.
- Saskatchewan. Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider the Indian Act. Submission of the Saskatchewan Indians, December 1946.
- The Indian Act of 1886. Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer of the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1886.

2. Missionary reports

- Ferrier, Rev. Thompson. Indian Education in the North West. Toronto: Department of Missionary Literature of the Methodist Church of Canada. n.d.
- Report on Indian Missions. Diocese of Saskatchewan. Toronto: Geo. Parker and Sons, 1901-1909.

C. Books

- Barbeau, Marius. Indian Days on the Western Prairies. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1923.

- Begg, Alexander, History of the North West. Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Co., 1894.
- Cardinal, Harold. The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd, 1969.
- Dion, Joseph, F. My Tribe The Crees. Edited by Hugh A. Dempsey. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979.
- MacBeth, Rev. R.G. The Making of the Canadian West Being the Reminiscences of an Eye-Witness. Toronto: William Briggs, 1898.
- Maclean, John. The Indians: Their Manners and Customs. Toronto: William Briggs, 1889.
- Morgan, Henry James, ed. Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters. 2nd ed. Toronto: William Briggs, 1912.
- Morice, Rev. A.G., O.M.I. History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada from Lake Superior to the Pacific 1659-1895. Volume II. Toronto: The Musson Book Co. Ltd, 1910.
- Morris, Alexander. The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North West Territories. Toronto: Belfords, Clarke and Co., 1880.
- Stock, Eugene. The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work. Volumes I, II, III. London: Church Missionary Society, 1899.
- The Reminiscences of Louis Cochin, O.M.I.: A Veteran Missionary and a Prisoner of Poundmaker's Camp in 1885. N.p.: Canadian North-West Society, n.d.
- Venne, Sharon Helen. Indian Acts and Amendments 1868-1975: An Indexed Collection. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan. Native Law Centre, 1981.
- Waubageshig, ed. The Only Good Indian. Toronto: New Press, 1970.

D. Newspapers and Magazines

Bulletin. (Edmonton). 1987-1991.

Scribner's Magazine. (New York). 1909.

The Canadian Churchman. (Toronto). 1916-1928.

The Edmonton Bulletin. Various Issues.

The Edmonton Journal. Various Issues.

The Guide. (Battleford). 1897.

The Lloydminster Times. Various Issues.

The Saskatchewan Herald. (Battleford). Various Issues.

Winnipeg Free Press. Various Issues.

Winnipeg Tribune. 1934.

E. Recorded Sources

Carlson, Eric. Letter to author, March 1991.

Carter, Alice. Interview with author. Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, 31 August 1991.

MacDonald, Ivan. Interview with author. Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, 31 August 1991.

Okanee, Catherine. Interview by D'Arcy Hande and Muriel Carlson. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape S85-202. 7 November 1985.

Rivard, Maria, Recollections of Years 1896-1914 in the Onion Lake Anglican Mission. Recorded by Ruth Matheson Buck. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, Handwritten Script and Tape R 8717, May 1975.

Summary of an Interview with Eric Carlson. Interview by Jim R. Miller. Toronto, 21 November 1990.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Books

Adams, Howard. Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View. Toronto: New Press, 1975.

Adams, Ian. The Poverty Wall. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970.

- Allen, Richard, ed. A Region of the Mind: Interpreting the Western Canadian Plains. Regina: Canadian Plains Studies Centre, 1973.
- Archer, John H. Saskatchewan: A History. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980.
- Barman, Jean, Yvonne Hébert and Don McCaskill, eds. Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press and Nakoda Institute, 1986.
- Bercuson, David. Opening of the Canadian West. Toronto: Grolier, 1980.
- Bowles, Richard P. et al. The Indian: Assimilation, Integration or Separation. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1972.
- Breton, R.R. et J.G. Valentice. Les frontières culturelles et la cohésion du Canada. Montréal: L'Institut de recherches politiques, 1981.
- Buck, Ruth Matheson. The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1974.
- Careless, J.M.S. Canada: A Story of Challenge. Toronto: Macmillan, 1959.
- Chalmers, John W. Laird of the West. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises ltd, 1981.
- Champagne, Joseph-Etienne, O.M.I. Les missions catholiques dans l'ouest canadien (1818-1875). Ottawa: Editions des Etudes Oblates, 1949.
- Clink, William L. ed. and pub. Battleford Beleaguered: 1885, The Story of the Riel Uprising from the Columns of the Saskatchewan Herald. Willowdale, Ontario, 1984.
- Fort Pitt History Unfolding 1829-1985. Altona, Manitoba: Fort Pitt Historical Society. Friesen Printers, 1985.
- Frideres, James S. Native People in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts. 2nd ed. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1983.
- Friesen, Gerald. The Canadian Prairies: A History. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984.
- Friesen, John W. People, Culture and Learning. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1977.

- Fryer, Harold. The Frog Lake Massacre. Frontier Series No. 32. Surrey, British Columbia: n.p., 1980.
- Fulton, Hilary, J.M. The Melting Snowman. Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1972.
- Fumoleau, René. As Long as This Land Shall Last. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.
- Graham, Elizabeth. Medicine Man to Missionary. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd, 1975.
- Gibbins, Roger and J. Rick Ponting. Out of Irrelevance: A Socio-Political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada. Toronto: Butterworths, 1980.
- Haig-Brown, Celia. Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School. Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988.
- Hewitt, Dorcas Alma. The Fort Pitt Trail: Mostly Tales of Pioneer Day. Saskatchewan: n.p., 1968.
- Howard, Joseph Kinsey. Strange Empire. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1952.
- Jenness, Diamond. The Indians of Canada. 7th ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.
- Jenness, Eileen. The Indian Tribes of Canada. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966.
- Kaegi, Gerda. A Comprehensive View of Indian Education. Toronto: Canadian Association in Support of the Native Peoples. Library and Education Centre, 1974.
- Leslie, John and Ron Maguire, eds. The Historical Development of the Indian Act. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978.
- MacGregor, James G. Father Lacombe. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1975.
- Miller, J.R. Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian - White Relations in Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- Morton, Arthur S. A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.
- Osborne, Kenneth W. The Prairies: Selected Historical Sources. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

- Patterson, E. Palmer, The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500. Don Mill, Ontario: Collier-Macmillan, 1972.
- Pohorecky, Zenon. Saskatchewan Indian Heritage: The First Two Hundred Centuries. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1970.
- Renaud, André, O.M.I. Education and the First Canadians. Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Ltd, 1971.
- Russell, R.C. The Carlton Trail: The Broad Highway into the Saskatchewan Country from the Red River Settlement, 1840-1880. Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1955.
- Stanley, George F.G. The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1936.
- Surtees, Robert J. Canadian Indian Policy: A Critical Bibliography. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- The Original People. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1971.
- Tétrault, George, O.M.I. Oblates at Rest. Edited by Antonio Duhaime, O.M.I. Edmonton: Inland Printing Ltd, 1983.
- Thomas, Lewis, H. The North-West Territories 1870-1905. No. 26. Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1970.
- Titley, Brian. A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986.
- Tootosis, John. Biography of a Cree Leader. Edited by Norma Sluman and Jean Goodwill. Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1982.
- Walsh, Gerald. Indians in Transition. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1971.
- Wherrett, G.J. The Miracle of the Empty Beds: A History of Tuberculosis in Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

B. Periodicals

- Barron, F. Laurie. "Indian Agents and the North-West Rebellion." In 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition, edited by F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram. Regina: University of Regina. Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986, 140-154.
- Brown, Gordon R. "Missions and Cultural Diffusion." American Journal of Sociology. L, No. 3, November 1944, 214-219.
- Buck, Ruth Matheson. "The Mathesons of Saskatchewan Diocese." Saskatchewan History. XIII, No. 1, Winter 1960, 41-62.
- ed. "Little Pine: An Indian Day School." Saskatchewan History. XVIII, No. 1, Winter 1965, 55-62.
- Campbell, Kathleen. "In the Beginning was Love." Keewatin. 9, Nos. 1-2, Spring/Summer 1970.
- Carrière, Gaston, O.M.I. "Oblates of Mary Immaculate." New Catholic Encyclopedia. 10, 1967, 611-612.
- Coates, Kenneth. "Betwixt and Between: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross Residential School, 1911-1954." B.C. Studies. No. 64, Winter 1984-1985, 27-47.
- Gresko, Jacqueline. "Roman Catholic Indian Brass Bands, 1866-1915." British Columbia Historical News. XVI, No. 3, Winter 1983, 12-15.
- "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1910." In Western Canada Past and Present, edited by A.W. Rasporich. Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975, 163-181.
- Hall, D.J. "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905." Prairie Forum. II, No. 1, May 1977, 127-151.
- Havighurst, Robert J. "Education Among American Indians: Individual and Cultural Aspects." In Perspectives on the North American Indians, edited by M. Nagler. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1972, 89-102.
- Huel, Raymond. "The Western Oblate History Project." Bulletin. No. 9, July 1989, 9-15.

- Jenness, Diamond. "Canadian Indian Religion." In Religion in Canadian Society, edited by S. Crysdale and L. Wheatcroft. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976, 71-78.
- Kirkness, Verna J. "Education of Indians and Métis." In Indians Without Tipis, edited by D.B. Sealey and V.J. Kirkness. Agincourt, Ontario: The Book Society of Canada Ltd, 1974, 137-173.
- Larmour, Jean. "Edgar Dewdney Indian Commissioner in the Transition Period of Indian Settlement, 1879-1884." Saskatchewan History. XXXIII, No. 1, Winter 1980, 13-24.
- Lewis, Maurice H. "The Anglican Church and the Mission Schools Dispute." Alberta Historical Review. 14, No. 4, Autumn 1966, 7-13.
- Looy, A.J. "Saskatchewan's First Indian Agent: M.G. Dickieson." Saskatchewan History. XXXII, No. 1, Winter 1979, 104-115.
- Lowie, Robert H. "The Cultural-Type of the Plains Indians." The North American Indians: A Sourcebook. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, 487-493.
- MacInness, T.R.L. "History of Indian Administration in Canada." Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science. XII, No. 46, 1946, 387-394.
- Miller, J.R. "The Irony of Residential Schooling." Canadian Journal of Native Education. 14, No. 2, 1987, 3-14.
- Mitchell, Ross. "Pioneer! Dr. Elizabeth Matheson, 1866-1958." Manitoba Medical Review. 40, No. 8, October 1960, 617-619.
- Nicholson, David. "Indian Government in Federal Policy: An Insider's View." In Pathways to Self-Determination: Canadian Indians and the Canadian State, edited by L.L. Bear, M. Boldt and J.A. Long. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, 59-64.
- Pechey, Dorothy. "Dr. Matheson's Contribution: A Proud and Lasting Legacy." Editorial. The Leader Post. (Regina). 18 July 1958, The Third Page, 17.
- Sealey, D. Bruce. "The Indians of Canada: A Historical Sketch." In Indians Without Tipis, edited by D.B. Sealey and V.J. Kirkness. Agincourt, Ontario: The Book Society of Canada Ltd, 1974, 9-37.

- Surtees, R.J. "The Development of an Indian Reserve Policy in Canada." Ontario History. LXI, No. 2, June 1969, 87-98.
- Tobias, John L. "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885." Canadian Historical Review. LXIV, 1983, 519-548.
- . "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy. In As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows, edited by Ian Getty and A. Lussier, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983, 39-55.
- Trennert, Robert A. "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920." Western Historical Quarterly. 13, No. 3, July 1982, 271-290.
- Upton, L.F.S. "The Origins of Canadian Indian Policy." Journal of Canadian Studies. VIII, No. 4, November 1973, 51-61.
- Usher, Jean. "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society." Histoire Sociale/Social History. 7, April 1971, 28-52.
- . "Duncan of Metlakatla." In The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age, edited by W.L. Morton. Toronto: McClelland and Stuart, 1968, 286-310.
- Warburton, T. Rennie. "Religion and the Control of Native Peoples." In Religion in Canadian Society, edited by S. Crysdale and L. Wheatcroft. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976, 412-421.
- Whitehead, Margaret. "Residential School: Indian Response." Bulletin. No. 11, January 1990, 6-11.

C. Theses and Papers

- Barnes, Findlay, "A Comparative Study of the Mental Ability of Indian Children." M.A. Thesis, Stanford University, 1955.
- Gustafson, Robert, W. "The Education of Canada's Indian Peoples: An Experience in Colonialism." M.Ed. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978.

- Kennedy, Jacqueline. "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: 'White Rites' for Indians of the Old North West." M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1970.
- . "Roman Catholic Missionary Effort and Indian Acculturation in the Fraser Valley, B.C." B.A. Honours Essay, University of British Columbia, 1969.
- Kirkness, Verna J. "Educational Achievement of Indians in Federal and Provincial Schools in Manitoba." M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980.
- Lux, Maureen K. "The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Pandemic in Saskatchewan, 1918-1919." M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1989.
- Peterson, Lester B. "Indian Education in British Columbia." M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1959.
- Porter, Eric. "The Anglican Church and Native Education: Residential Schools and Assimilation." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1981.
- Robertson, Lloyd H. "Cultural Bias on the WISC-R Information Subtest: Canadian and Native Concerns." Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, Research Paper No. 191, Regina, September 1989.
- Sweeny, Alastair. "Government Policy and Saskatchewan Indian Veterans: A Brief History of the Canadian Government's Treatment of Indian Veterans of the Two World Wars." Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, November 1979.
- Tarasoff, Koozma, J. "Canadian Indians: Towards a Viable Social Policy." Undergraduate Sociology Paper, Carleton University, 1974.
- Till, J. Richard, "Indian and Non-Indian Values." M.A. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1966.
- Vallery, H.J. "A History of Indian Education in Canada." M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1942.
- Whyte, T.T. "The Education of the Non-Adult Canadian Indian." Educational Psychology Paper, Toronto: Ontario College of Education, 1960.

D. Reference Works

Arora, Ved, ed. The Saskatchewan Bibliography. Regina: The Saskatchewan Provincial Library, 1980.

Artibise, Alan F.J. ed. Western Canada since 1870: A Select Bibliography and Guide. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.

Brooks, I.R. ed. Native Education in Canada and the United States: A Bibliography. Calgary: University of Calgary. Indian Students University Program Services, n.d.

Canada. Atlas of Indian Reserves and Settlements. Ottawa: Indian and Inuit Affairs Program, 1971.

Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1947. London: Oxford University Press, Seventy-First Issue, 1947.