

SHATTERING THE SILENCE

The Hidden History of
Indian Residential Schools
in Saskatchewan

*I for one looked into the
window
And there on the floor
Was a deluge of a misery...*

*I had no wish to enter
Nor to walk the halls
I had no wish to feel the
floors
Where I felt fear
A beating heart of episodes
I care not to recall...*

*extracted from Rita Joe's
poem "Hated Structure"*

The back door of Muscowequan Indian Residential School
Lestock, Saskatchewan. Photo Credit: Lana Slezic

University
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SASKATCHEWAN

PROJECT OF HEART eBOOK

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Warning! This book contains disturbing elements that are not suitable for some audiences. Topics that are covered may cause trauma invoked by memories of past abuse. Those eligible for Indian Residential School Health support who are in need of emotional and crisis support, please contact Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health

Support Program
24-hour crisis line: 1-866-925-4419

SHATTERING THE SILENCE: The Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan

This ebook was prepared by Shuana Niessen for the Faculty of Education, University of Regina, July 2017, Regina, Saskatchewan.

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Cover poem is extracted from Rita Joe's "Hated Structure," which was first published in 1988 in Song of Eskasoni: More Poems of Rita Joe. Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press. Used with permission of Literary Executor, Ann Joe.

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The Glen Anaquod Memorial Tipi Raising Competition is held annually at the University of Regina as part of the Cultural and Traditional Awareness program at the Aboriginal Student Centre. This competition was initiated by the late Glen Anaquod, from the Muscowpetung First Nation, and it was his long-standing wish to involve the University campus community, students and staff by hosting such a competition. Photo credit: Shuana Niessen



“Silence, it really is deafening.”

In the 2012 NFB docudrama, *We Were Children*, Glen Anaquod said, “Silence, it really is deafening,” (34:31) while recalling his experience of being locked in a cell and abused in the priest’s basement at Lebret (Qu’Appelle) Industrial School.



Distant view of Fort Qu’Appelle Indian Industrial School with [Red River] carts and teepees outside the fence, Lebret, Saskatchewan, [May 1885?]. O.B. Buell / Library and Archives Canada / PA-182246

DEDICATION

“*For the child taken, for the parent left behind.*”

The following are three stories to assist readers to *feel* the stories of First People's experiences with European colonizers. The first story explores the point of view of the parent left behind, the second story contemplates the point of view of the child taken, and the third story considers the point of view of an intergenerational survivor of those who suffered Canada's aggressive assimilation policies.

The Parent Left Behind

Imagine you are a Plains Cree-Saulteaux¹ parent in the early 1900s. You have grown up living off the buffalo on the prairies, just as countless generations before you. The Europeans (Black Robes) have been arriving and your world has changed dramatically. At first, your people took pity on the newcomers, helping them to survive. They were generous with their food and medicine. They helped them to learn your language, to live among them. The newcomers soon forgot the generosity shown by your people, though. Newcomers brought with them new ways of hunting, planting, farming, cooking, trading, praying, and speaking—ways they considered superior to your ways. They also brought diseases. Small pox took the lives of many of your community, your family and friends. The buffalo herds were being destroyed due to European demand for their pelts. The horse and rifle have made them easier to hunt. With so few buffalo left, sickness and death have resulted from lack of food. Over time, you've realized the buffalo were hunted to extinction by the newcomers in order to cut off first people from your source of life, making your people reliant on trade with Europeans and subject to their rules.

Because the buffalo were being decimated, wars broke out between those who relied on the buffalo. Nations fought over the Cypress Hills region of Battle Creek, where the buffalo still roamed. While growing up, you heard a ghastly tale of a large pile of buffalo bones at Bone Creek (later called Wascana), evidence of a massive slaughter, too large to be considered taking only what you need, a value instilled in you by your Elders.

The buffalo had provided everything from food to clothing to shelter. But no longer. This sacred, life-giving animal has become extinct, and you are afraid your people are next in line for extinction. Thus impoverished your people became susceptible to more disease. Tuberculosis is now threatening the lives of many in your community.



Wascana (from Cree "oscana" word for bones): A pile of buffalo bones located in what is now called Regina stacked for shipment to Saskatoon on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Regina Public Library, ca. 1898



Mistahi-Maskwa (Big Bear), ca. 1884, a Plains Cree chief, trading. O. B. Buell / Library and Archives Canada / PA-118768

The Hudson's Bay Company and its exploitive fur trade practices took the place of the buffalo, but this source of food and clothing came at a heavy price: the land that sustained you and your freedom. This land was sold by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada—without the consent of your people—they sold what they did not own. The idea of anyone owning the land was laughable because you believe the land is sacred and belongs to no one.

Disease and impoverishment crippled your people, and though the chiefs and warriors put up a good fight, it seemed the only option for survival was to form treaties with the Dominion Government of Canada. Sacred promises. Your people wondered if the newcomers could be trusted to honour their promises. Chief Big Bear attempted to bring the Cree Nations together, to make stronger demands of the Dominion of Canada; he wanted full compensation for the land that was being sold from under your feet, but he did not have success. Chief Poundmaker was concerned about famine and negotiated for a famine clause. Others requested a medicine chest clause. Chief Sweetgrass spoke on behalf of the Nations for Treaty 6. Treaty 4 negotiations were tense, with chiefs disagreeing about how to approach the negotiations with so much at stake. They, too, sought compensation for the land. The Treaty Ground they had negotiated and been promised, was taken when Commissioner Edgar Dewdney instructed you to take treaty annuities on your reserves rather than the Treaty Ground.

After negotiations and signing of a treaty, your people were forced, by Commissioner Dewdney withholding promised treaty rations (food), to move to Crown reserve lands. Your people were starving and they were searching for a means to survive. Their nomadic life was restricted to a small parcel of land. And the newcomers wanted you to learn to garden and farm, to grow food and fence in animals. This lifestyle, and the newcomer's attitude towards you, made you feel like the animal that was being fenced in. Still, some embraced the new ways out of necessity, and made their farms thrive.

¹There are several linguistic groups of First Nations in Saskatchewan: Cree (Woodlands, Plains, Swampy - 'th', 'n', and 'y' dialects); Dakota, Nakoda, and Lakota (Assiniboine); Dene (Chipewyan); Nakewé (Saulteaux, Ojibwa); and Michif (blend of Cree and Métis French, which began as the language of trade for Métis in Northern Saskatchewan).

“These are not just stories Canada needs to hear. These are stories Canada needs to feel,”
Chief Wilton Littlechild, a TRC Commissioner.

The newcomers did not keep their promises. As a result, just three years after signing Treaty 6, Big Bear was still hoping to save the buffalo and regain freedom. The Métis were developing rules (setting up government) about the buffalo run, trying to preserve the remaining buffalo while supplying European demand. Everyone was trying to survive the Settler invasion. The Métis under Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont attempted to carve out rights and titles; they, too, were angered over the transfer of the land to the Dominion of Canada. War broke out between the "Canadians" (who had established and brought in their law-enforcing North-West Mounted Police) and some of the other First Nations. Most of the First Nations did not participate in this resistance because they felt the sacredness of the treaty promises they had made. However, everyone felt encouraged by the Métis victory at Duck Lake and Fish Creek, so a large group of Cree and Stony Nations set up camp, first at Fort Battleford, and then moving on to Cutknife Creek. There, they resisted Lieutenant-Colonel Otter's camp, forcing him to withdraw. Some of the warriors then moved to join Riel at Batoche, despite Poundmaker's decision to retreat. However, they were defeated at Batoche by Middleton's militia. Under the Canadian's law, Chiefs Poundmaker and Big Bear were sentenced to three years in jail. And later, Louis Riel was hanged for treason. Things got even more difficult after that. The *Indian Act*, that piece of paper they use to give them power over your people, was then revised, prohibiting Indian ceremonies, and the Pass and Permit System, which restricted movement and trade off the Reserve, was put in place. The Métis were without representation and began living along the road allowances.

Knowing education was important for your children to acquire the skills for survival in this new world, your people had negotiated for on-reserve schools as part of their treaty agreement. But the government has not honoured its agreement with your people.

Having determined that missionary day schools on reserve were not of value in its attempt to "civilize" you, the Canadian government, instead, set up a residential school system that separated you from your children, building the schools far away from the reserves, and employing the churches to operate the schools. Now, the government has made it mandatory for you to send your children—*your children*—far away to these schools.

You send them, or they are taken from you. You send them knowing you will be fined or put in jail if you do not. You send them knowing you may be sending them to their deaths; many of the other children who have gone to the Industrial schools have never returned, or have returned only to die. You sign the petition for an on-reserve school. Some are hiding their children, regardless of the risk. You do whatever you can to keep relations with your beloved children. But the government has restricted your movement, and you can

only leave your reserve with a pass from the Indian Agent. Many resist, only to be put in jail. Much later, you realize your worst fears, that your children were taken away and given an education that stripped them of the values and culture that you had carefully instilled in them, making them feel like strangers in their homes and communities, their language beaten out of them, their family and cultural identity gone—a shame to them.

Your heart is broken, your losses weigh heavily. You feel discouraged and despairing because the treaty promises are not being honoured, and your ability to protect your children has been terribly compromised. You feel anger welling up inside. Your people are called thieves and savages, in need of being civilized. You wonder, "What does it mean to 'civilize?'" Does it mean to steal land and freedom, to steal children, culture, language—to steal identity—through oppressive and unjust laws, through oppressive religious instruction that teaches your children that they are nothing but savages, that forces them on their knees for hours at a time, that kicks and hits and steals their innocence; does it mean this wiping out of what exists on the land only to replace it with exploitive and unethical trading practices that overkill and over charge, that deny the sacred in all that is life giving? Is this what it means to be "civilized"? You want no part of it.



The Child Taken



"Lac La Ronge School, Sask. - two native children holding puppies," ca. 1920, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538

Now imagine you are a child at the tender age of 5 (maybe even 3) growing up in the 1920s, and all you have known is a loving home, surrounded by friends and community, speaking your language, learning lessons from nature, and being taught by the Elders through stories about the ways of your ancestors. When you do something wrong, your parents frown at you, tease you, or ignore you, which makes you want to please them as much as possible, the momentary separation caused by their disapproval or anger too much to bear. When you get sick, your grandmother gives you medicine she has gathered, and it helps you get well.

One day, you are taken far away from your mom and dad, your grandmothers and grandfathers, your aunties and uncles, cousins and friends by a pale-faced stranger. He takes you to a large, cold building, a residential school. You realize with dread that you are here to stay, possibly 10 years or more will go by here with only brief visits home, if any at all.

Click to hear Cheryl Bear sing of a parent lamenting the child taken, and the child lamenting parents left behind.

“*Today the children and grandchildren of those who went to residential schools also live with the same legacy of broken families, broken culture and broken spirit.*” ~Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes, cited in *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996, p. 22*

Life at residential school is difficult—it feels like all the happiness in you has been drained out and replaced with a feeling of dread and anxiety.

At first you do not understand the words spoken to you, but you do understand the unkindness with which these words are spoken. You feel embarrassed when forced to undress publicly to bathe. They take your clothes and the moccasins your mom spent hours making from buckskin your dad had provided from his hunt; they were beautifully decorated with beading. And the blanket Kokum (grandmother) made, that too was taken. In their place, standard issue clothing and bedding are provided. All the children are dressed the same. The harsh smells of detergent replace the scent of sweetgrass and smoke. All reminders of home are gone.

Your shiny braids are sheared off, and your hair takes the shape of an upside down bowl. Your Elders taught you about the sacredness of hair and how it is an extension of your own thoughts. Along with the braids that lie tangled on the floor, you feel the severing of the bond between you and all that you have known, your relations, your traditions, your language, your memories—but you are too young to have words for this big feeling. You instinctively bend down to gather the hair, to collect it, but they grab your hair from your hands and stuff it into the garbage. You don't know why but you feel deeply humiliated and ashamed by this loss, though you had no part in it. You pinch your nose at the smell produced by the powder the staff put on your roughly scrubbed scalp. Your first night alone is spent with a towel wrapped around your head, and the nauseating smell of the chemical on your hair, with your heart aching for home, and with the muffled cries of the children around you, echoing your own.

Early the next morning, a regimented life begins. You are confused when you are called by what you later learn is a number. You are also given a new, strange sounding English name, and you don't hear your real name until you return to your family for a month in summer. Your day is guided by a strict timetable that begins with chores, prayers, and breakfast. In the mornings you are learning to read, write and speak their language, English. In the afternoons you work: girls work includes cooking, cleaning, sewing, and the boys do farm work and trades. You must work and work hard to avoid punishments.

You are shocked by a blow to the head, and a ringing in your ears when you attempt to communicate your needs in your own language. Every word must be English or you are punished; any objections are shouted into silence and submission. You are angry with yourself because it hurts so much when you forget and speak your own language. As your hair regrows, you learn their thoughts with their language. You must learn quickly, or face severe punishment.

You find that though some staff members are matter-of-fact, interested in doing a good job of educating you, others think you have no value, and they mistreat you regularly. Some injure you physically; school is especially harsh on those who are slow to understand what is expected; sometimes there is a terrifying evil done, to you or one of the others, while you lay in your beds at night, and the shame you feel burns inside you. Except for the cold that leaves you shivering, this place feels like the hell the priest often talks about. Sometimes angry older children threaten you or hurt you, too. You don't feel safe anywhere—no loving parent to watch over you. Your heart beats loudly like a drum in your chest, with fear, with rage; you wait for someone to hear the thundering beat of your heart, to shatter your silence. But no one hears.

The work at the school is difficult and sometimes dangerous. You are poorly dressed for the weather, yet you are forced outside for work and recess. You know some children have died of exposure, and once you watched helplessly from an upper floor window, as a friend drowned trying to escape. The small portions of flavourless food you receive are not sufficient to keep you from sharp pangs of hunger. And your friends are getting sick and some of them have died. You *know* the children who die and are buried at school each month. Sometimes they just disappear. Inside you feel that you are dying too, but it isn't physical; it's something else that is dying, something you can't identify, and there is no one to make you well.

You stop thinking about home, about ceremony, about your relations because it's all confusing to you. What you thought was right and good, is wrong and bad here. And what they call good, and expect from you, feels bad. It's easier to forget, to let the memories slip away.

You wonder, 'Why did my parents abandon me here? Did I displease them?' You feel hurt and angry, but mostly terrified. What your education has taught you most is to fear. How could they have let this happen to you? You won't understand until much later, when you are faced with sending your own children far away to school, that your parents didn't have a choice.



The Intergenerational Trauma Survivor

Fast forward to the 21st century. You are a young Indigenous woman who did not attend residential school, but generations before you were required to go. You feel the privilege of raising your own children, though you should really be able to take that for granted.

Parenting is overwhelming because there are few to guide you in this role. Many parents were raised in foster homes or residential schools, and relations with them are strained.

“*We must strive to become a society that champions human rights, truth, and tolerance by confronting, not avoiding, the history...*” ~Chief Justice Murray Sinclair

Grandmothers are relied on for support, but grandmothers themselves need support. When it comes to your kids, you feel overprotective, distrustful of others. Your kids aren't allowed sleepovers unless you really know the family. You're not sure why, but you especially do not trust White middle-class families.

And though you are not required to attend residential school, you feel the danger in this world, still. Sometimes a cousin or friend goes missing, and no one knows where they've gone. The RCMP investigates, but there are no answers. Sometimes they are found murdered. All of your girlfriends have experienced sexual violence, often more than once. Racism cuts deeply. And you can't believe that people know nothing about what your people have gone through, and how systemic racism is still oppressing you. The silence must be broken--shattered.

You learned some Cree while in school, but you don't speak it. Your family does not speak Cree anymore. You recently took an Indigenous Studies course, and found out so much about what has happened to your ancestors, your parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, all your relations who were raised in residential schools or foster homes. The language was lost generations ago because those who attended residential schools were afraid to pass on their language in case their children would be punished at school for speaking it. The struggles that have troubled you and your family are starting to make sense.

You are ambitious, educating yourself, becoming a professional. You are strong, and do this despite the disruptions of childbearing and rearing.

You want to rise above, to overcome the family and community dysfunctions. There are problems at home, lots of problems. Family feuding, addictions and parties, violence and abuse, depression and anxiety--some family members have even taken their own lives. You've thought about leaving, too, getting away from it all. But learning the history about what has happened to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada has helped you understand. You can name the violence, now, and point at the cause--colonization. You've been hearing some stories from other survivors of residential school who are healing, forgiving the people who wronged them, and taking back their language and culture. You've

been following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and feel more hopeful, that healing can come to your family, too. You are starting to understand why there has been abuse and addiction in your family. Why your uncle sexually abused you when you were nine years old. Why so many of your female friends have experienced sexual and physical violence, too.

Your parents never talk about their experience at school, but you want them to. You want to understand more, to hear about their experiences, and you want them to know how you've been hurt, too, even though you didn't attend residential school. It's as though they brought the residential school home with them, letting the emotional coldness, the abuse, the violence and hatred they experienced there as children take over their lives; their methods of coping have been self-destructive, further threatening the family, forcing you apart yet again in a seemingly endless cycle.

A friend's father had a stroke, and now he's talking about his feelings, letting her know how much he loves her. It took a stroke to break the rock guarding his heart, his emotions. That silence was his protection and survival while attending residential school--protecting him from acting out of anger, outrage, fear, overwhelming grief--but later, as an adult, this coping mechanism kept him from close relationships and caused him to drink to dull the pain.

Now he's smudging again, letting his emotions rise gently, seep through, wafting like the wisps of smoke rising from the burning sweetgrass. Sometimes the emotions come hammering and shouting like beating on a drum--until they are once again quieted with forgiveness, freeing the oppressed from the grip of the oppressor.

You long to hear those words from your parents, too. You want to let them know, there is hope now. Hope that the laws and policies will be rewritten; hope for truth to be told, for justice to be done, for treaties to be honoured, for your culture to be respected, and for trust to be built between Settler-descended Canadians and First peoples, so we can all walk together into a better future, a future that has healed the laws, the education system, the child-welfare system, the health system, and the governance--a future that re-members the First peoples.¹

¹This final perspective is drawn in part from the intergenerational experience of Dr. Shauneen Pete.



"Silenced" Project of Heart Exhibit at Thom Collegiate, Fall 2015. Photo by Shuana Niessen

"We cannot understand the full horror of Indian Residential Schools until we understand that their very existence, in however benign a form, constituted an abomination." Chrisjohn & Young, The Circle Game

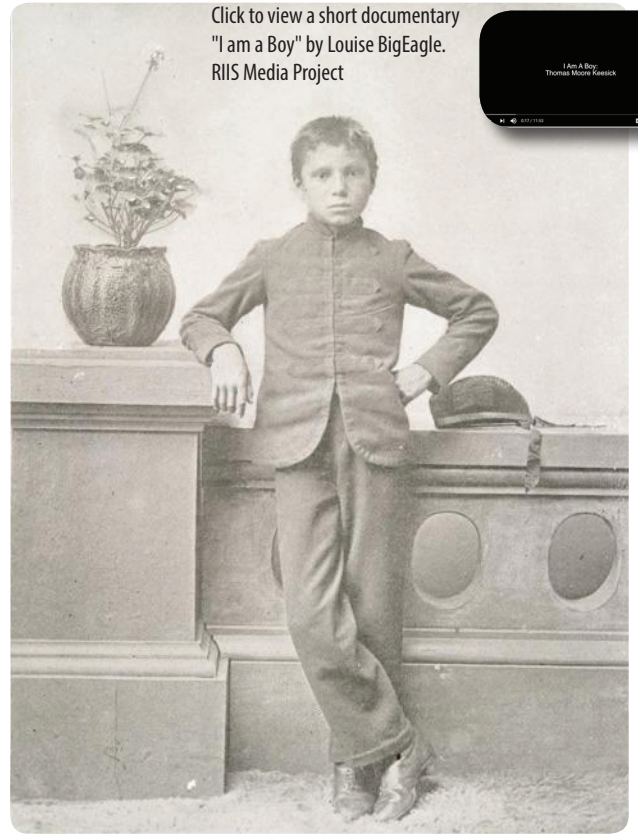
Resolutions

First, the Survivors need to know before they leave this earth that people understand what happened and what the schools did to them.

Second, the Survivors need to know that, having been heard and understood, that we will act to ensure the repair of damages done.

~Justice Sinclair (as cited in [Macleans](#))

The Witness Blanket Exhibit, a project that grew out of the Truth and Reconciliation commission, came to the University of Regina in 2015. Kwakwaka'wakw Master Carver Carey Newman is an intergenerational survivor of residential school. When his father, Victor, told him about his experience at residential school, it deeply affected Carey. He then proceeded to gather stories of former students and hundreds of reclaimed items from residential schools, churches, government buildings and other structures from across Canada. "The Witness Blanket stands as a national monument to recognize the atrocities of the Indian Residential School era, honour the children, and symbolise ongoing reconciliation." Source [link](#)



Click to view a short documentary
"I am a Boy" by Louise BigEagle.
RIIS Media Project



Photo Above: Well-known "Before and After" photos of 8-year-old Thomas Moore Keesick of the Saulteaux Tribe from the Muscowpetung Band. In 1891, he along with his brother Samuel and sister Julia were registered in the Regina Indian Industrial School; he was the 22nd student registered (No. 22). Thomas was sent home with tuberculosis four years after enrolling. His mother was Hanna Moore Kusick and his father Paul Desjarlais. He had previously attended Lakes End (Muscowpetung) residential school. (ca. 1874, Saskatchewan Archive Board/R-A8223-1/ Library and Archives Canada, NL -022474)

"The Canadian Government staged dramatic 'before and after' photos of Aboriginal children. In the before photo, Thomas Moore [Keesick], a student in the Regina Indian Industrial School, is dressed as a 'savage' holding a revolver. In the after photo, he is 'civilized' in his suit. Propaganda like this was used by the Department of Indian Affairs to justify the residential schools system. Few knew that both the before and after photos were faked images with no connection to the Cree boy's real life. Thomas Moore's 'before' clothing includes women's traditional attire which a male would never wear."

From Larry Loyie with Wayne K. Spear and Constance Brissenden (2014) Residential Schools with the Word and Images of Survivors. Indigenous Education Press.



Regina Industrial Residential School, ca. 1921, John Woodruff / Canada. Dept. of Mines and Resources collection / Library and Archives Canada, PA-020921

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALLS TO ACTION FOR EDUCATION

EDUCATION

6. We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.
7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
8. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.
9. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.
10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
 - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
 - ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
 - iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
 - iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
 - v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
 - vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
 - vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
11. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.
 - utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
 - iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
 - i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
 - ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
 - iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
 - iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.
64. We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.
65. We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
 - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
 - ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to

A TIME FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION



Louis Riel in lumberman's jacket, ca. 1884, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/ R-A2294

“*My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.*”

– Louis Riel

“**Anishinaabe Prophecy:** *In the time of the Seventh Fire New People will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail. Their steps will take them to the Elders who they will ask to guide them on their journey. But many of the Elders will have fallen asleep. They will awaken to this new time with nothing to offer. Some of the Elders will be silent because no one will ask anything of them. The New People will have to be careful in how they approach the Elders. The task of the New People will not be easy.*

If the New People will remain strong in their quest the Water Drum of the Midewiwin Lodge will again sound its voice. There will be a rebirth of the Anishinabe Nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit.

It is this time that the light skinned race will be given a choice between two roads. One road will be green and lush, and very inviting. The other road will be black and charred, and walking it will cut their feet. In the prophecy, the people decide to take neither road, but instead to turn back, to remember and reclaim the wisdom of those who came before them. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire, an eternal fire of peace, love brotherhood and sisterhood. If the light skinned race makes the wrong choice of the roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back at them and cause much suffering and death to all the Earth's people. — Edward Benton-Banai

Many healing and commemoration projects include art, such as the art in the background photo created by a Regina Thom Collegiate student for the commemorative project Building Our Home Fire. Read more by clicking here.

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA, FACULTY OF EDUCATION'S COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In its deep commitments to anti-oppressive education and teaching for a better world, the Faculty of Education, situated on Treaty 4 land at the University of Regina, takes seriously the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action, particularly those specific to education. We recognize the many ways that education has been used as a tool for assimilation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and indeed as a vehicle for cultural genocide. Residential schools are not only demonstrative of the failures to honour the spirit and intent of treaties and the treaty relationship; they are also demonstrative of the power of colonialism and racism to shape national narratives and understanding. As such, the history and ongoing legacies of the Residential School experience for Aboriginal peoples in Canada must not be ignored; the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina acknowledges our shared constitutional, historical, and ethical responsibility in this respect.

As an important part of the formal structure of the Faculty of Education, the Indigenous Advisory Circle will provide recommendations and leadership regarding the TRC Calls to Action. They have already supported the work of the Faculty in teaching Residential Schools. For example, since 2014, the Faculty of Education has been the regional facilitator of Project of Heart, an inquiry into residential schools (www.projectofheart.ca/sk). This commitment continues as the Faculty actively seeks to expand this important initiative. Further, the Faculty has facilitated the 100 Years of Loss (2013) and the Witness Blanket Exhibits (2014-2015) at the University of Regina, which more than 800 school children visited; these children interacted with and learned from the Residential school experience. Many faculty and sessional instructors have integrated these exhibits into their undergraduate and graduate teaching, and will persist in finding more ways to teach meaningfully and intentionally about residential schools in Canada. Residential schools are also central to the research activities of several faculty members in Education.

TRC Call to Action 62 urges governments to create "age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to Grade 12 students." The Faculty of Education supports this call to action through its ongoing work in preparing preservice teachers for

treaty education and the integration of Aboriginal content, perspectives, and teachings. Included in the Provincial mandate for treaty education is an assessment of the impact residential schools have on First Nations communities. The Faculty of Education is committed to ensuring our students are prepared to meet this outcome in their classrooms.

TRC Call to Action 10 calls for the development of culturally appropriate curricula and for respecting and honouring the treaty relationship. The Faculty of Education is committed to building on our work in the development of culturally appropriate curriculum not only in K-12 schools but also in teacher education. As noted, our commitment to Treaty Education and our pedagogical and scholarly leadership in this respect are intended to actively respect and honour the treaty relationship, in the past, present, and future.

TRC Call to Action 63 advocates building capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. The Faculty of Education has invited a part-time emerging elder in residence to support faculty, staff, and students in their learning and their understanding of our shared histories with Aboriginal peoples.

TRC Call to Action 63 also calls for identifying teacher-training (sic) needs related to Aboriginal education issues. The Faculty continues to work collaboratively with First Nations University of Canada and in partnership with the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, the Northern Teacher Education Program, and the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program. These collaborations/partnerships are critical in addressing Aboriginal education issues. So too are current and future efforts in undergraduate teacher education within the Faculty of Education some of which involve Education Core Studies content and objectives.

In addition to the specific TRC Calls for Action, the Faculty of Education remains committed to indigenizing curriculum, pedagogy, and spaces in teacher education and in adult education, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. It is the hope of the Faculty that through these continued commitments reconciliation becomes possible.

In 2013, over 400 students from K-12 classrooms in Saskatchewan along with University of Regina faculty and students viewed the *Legacy of Hope Foundation: 100 Years of Loss Exhibition on the Residential School System in Canada*



...sent for away...

School Days

Students living at the residential schools faced experiences which, for most, ranged from degradation to abuse and death. Their parents, left behind in communities devoid of children, suffered as well. In 1920, it became a crime punishable by imprisonment to refuse to send an Aboriginal child to a residential school. In 1922, provinces were granted guardianship of the child on entering the schools thus stripping Aboriginal parents of their right to make decisions affecting their children.

While some Survivors did not experience abuse at the residential schools and (based on a report having benefited from the experience) the Residential School System, on the whole, had devastating impacts that continue to affect Aboriginal Peoples and their communities psychologically, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

This section contains information about the experience the children endured at the residential schools. Be advised that this content may be disturbing to some visitors.

They cut my hair and burned my clothes...

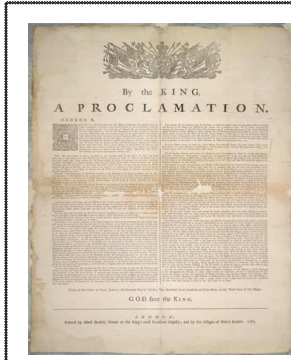
...the children were forced to wear European-style clothing and to cut their hair. This was a significant loss of identity for many children, as their hair and clothing were often the only items they were allowed to keep from their homes.



OUR COMMITMENT



HISTORICAL TIMELINE

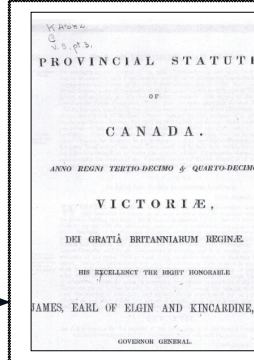


The Royal Proclamation of 1763 set out guidelines for European settlement of Aboriginal territories in what is now North America.

1815 British government adopted policy to “civilize the Indian.”

1842-44 Gradual assimilation strategy: The Bagot Commission proposed that the separation of children from their parents would be the best way to achieve assimilation. Considered the starting point for the residential school system.

1847 Egerton Ryerson’s Report on Native Education iterated the recommendation to separate children from parents, and to “give a plain English education adapted to the working farmer and mechanic.”



1850 Act for the protection of the Indians in Upper Canada from imposition, and the property occupied or enjoyed by them from trespass and injury.

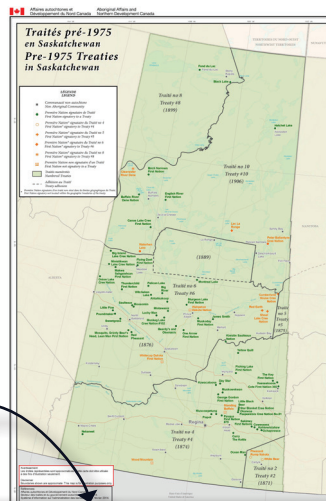
“Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group.” TRC Report

1871-1906 The Numbered Treaties in Saskatchewan: Treaty 2 (1871), Treaty 4 (1874), Treaty 5 (1875), Treaty 6 (1876, treaty adhesion 1883); Treaty 8 (1899), Treaty 10 (1906). The treaties were land surrenders. Each treaty is modeled after the 1850 Robinson Treaties; however, each has unique clauses, reflecting the negotiation between the parties. For example, Treaty 2 in the southeast corner of the province did not include rights to hunt and fish. “In some locations, Canada negotiated Treaties with First Nations; in others, the land was simply occupied or seized. The negotiation of Treaties, while seemingly honourable and legal, was often marked by fraud and coercion, and Canada was, and remains, slow to implement their provisions and intent” (p. 3).¹ Treaties granted limited land rights and financial compensation for the European acquisition of territory. Each treaty offered rights to on-reserve education.

In 1870, some land grants were issued to Métis communities (not individuals) in Saskatchewan.²

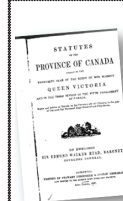
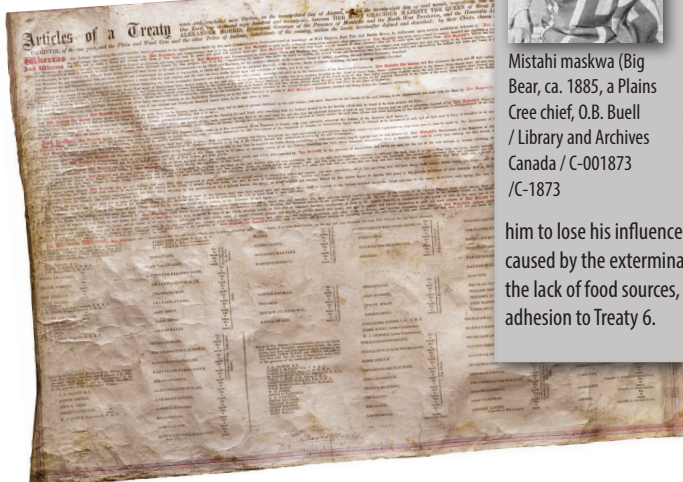
¹ http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_1_History_Part_1_English_Web.pdf

² Read about Métis Land rights and Self-Government



Mistahi maskwa (Big Bear), ca. 1885, a Plains Cree chief, O.B. Buell / Library and Archives Canada / C-001873 / C-1873

In the late 1870s, Chief Mistahi-Maskwa (Big Bear) refused to sign Treaty 6, warning other chiefs not to sign as well, in his attempt to negotiate for greater rights for First Nations people. He attempted to create a political confederation of Indian bands that could force concessions from the government. The government’s refusal to respond to the Band caused him to lose his influence. The desperate circumstances caused by the extermination of the buffalo, and thus, the lack of food sources, finally forced him to sign an adhesion to Treaty 6.

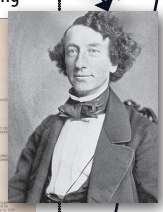
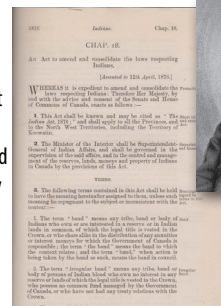


1857 – The Gradual Civilization Act was passed by the Province of Canada, requiring the enfranchisement of any male Indians and Métis over the age of 21 who could read, write, and speak English or French and who were of good moral character and free from debt. Enfranchisement required Indians

to choose an approved surname by which they would be legally recognized. The **1869 Gradual Enfranchisement Act** set out more ways Indian and Métis would become enfranchised (i.e. Indian woman who marries non-Indian man and offspring shall cease to be Indian)

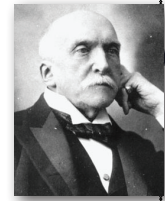
“The great our legislation to do away with system and as Indian people in a the other inhab Dominion as spe are fit to chan Macdonald,

1876 – The First Indian Act was passed concerning registered Indian status and outlining of the administration of Indian rights, but does not grant Indian rights. The act consolidates the 1857 and 1869 Acts (above) already instituted: Definition of “Indian” including categories of status and non-status, provincial jurisdiction and ownership of land and natural resources, federal responsibility for Indians and reserve lands.



John A. MacDonal 1840 - 1901 Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/ R-A6665

1879 – The Davin Report Nicholas Flood Davin prepared a report after visiting several US Industrial Boarding Schools. In his report, he recommended the US model of “aggressive assimilation” through Indian Boarding Schools be adopted. He also recommended a contract method, in which missionary schools were utilized where possible. (For more information, see pages 30-31)



Nicholas Flood Davin 1840 - 1901 Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/ R-A6665



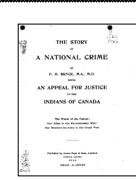
Edgar Dewdney established the Industrial schools in what is now Saskatchewan, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-B48-1

1883 – Industrial Residential Schools were intentionally built far from reserves to limit parental and cultural influence

1884 - 1885 North-West Resistance (often called North-West Rebellion in history books). Cree and Métis resistance in the Saskatchewan District of the North-West Territories (Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, Poundmaker, Mistahi-Maskwa/Big Bear, Star Blanket)

1885 – Amendment to the Indian Act prohibits traditional Indian ceremonies such as potlatches and the Sun Dance. (see Indian Act - Amendments). Hayter Reed's implementation of the Pass System

1894 – Amendments to the Indian Act gave authority to an Indian agent or justice of the peace to remove any "Indian child between six and sixteen years of age" who was "not being properly cared for or educated, and that the parent, guardian or other person having charge or control of such child, is unfit or unwilling to provide for the child's education" to place the children in an industrial or boarding school.



1907 – Medical Inspector for Indian Affairs, Dr. P. H. Bryce, reports that health conditions in residential schools are **A Story of a National Crime**. Bryce recommends Residential Schools be turned into sanatoriums.



Peter Henderson Bryce (photo courtesy of Andy Bryce)



Duncan Campbell Scott, Dupras & Colas, Library and Archives Canada/ C-003187

1920 – Indian Act legislates compulsory school attendance (day, industrial or boarding); Children were forcibly taken and resistant parents fined or jailed.

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department..." Head of Department of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott.

1951 – An Act respecting Indians

1952 – Indian Residential schools: Federal Government was responsible for hiring all teachers and had complete control over in-class curriculum.



Russell Diabo talks about the current problems with the Indian Act.

Human Rights Atrocities in Residential Schools

- Substandard Living Conditions
- Poor Construction and Ventilation
- Malnutrition
- Separation from Siblings
- Manual Labour for Half of School Day
- Physical Assaults
- Sexual Violence
- Emotional/ Mental Abuse
- Forced Confinement
- Religious Fear and Indoctrination
- Cultural Theft Language Tortures
- Hatred, Racism, and Oppression
- Forced Sterilization
- Medical Experiments
- Disease and Inaction
- Unsolved Child Deaths and Burials

The "Sixties Scoop"

The residential school legacy of removing children from their families and communities

Click to read: "How I lost my mother, found my family, recovered my identity"

continued through the child protection system, with the mass removal of Indigenous children from their families in the child welfare system. (June 2015 Province of Manitoba issued an apology for the Sixties Scoop. 2016 Call for apology in Saskatchewan)

1969 – White Paper proposed end of discrimination against Indians and assimilation into Canada--the end of the *Indian Act*. **1970 The Red Paper:** Aboriginal resistance.

1980s – Adult students began disclosing sexual and other abuses while attending the schools. Sixties Scoop children began looking for their parents.

1990 – Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Manitoba Chiefs goes public as the first Indigenous leader to tell the story of his own abuse in residential school, calling for recognition of the abuse, compensation and an apology for the inherent racism in the policy.



Phil Fontaine (photo courtesy of Ontario Chamber of Commerce)

1996 – The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report is released and recommends that a public inquiry be held to investigate and document the abuses in Indian Residential Schools

1997 – Muscowequan (Lestock), Marieval (Grayson, Cowessess), and the Prince Albert residences closed
1998 – Lebret(Qu'Appelle) School closed

1997 – The Canadian Federal Government's response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report: Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

1998 – Aboriginal Healing Foundation established to foster healing strategies for Indigenous communities in Canada. Published a 2004 Report on Canada's Dispute Resolution Plan to Compensate for Abuses in Indian Residential Schools

2001 – Federal Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution set up to manage and resolve abuse claims

2006 – Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) recognizing the damage inflicted by Residential Schools

2008, June 11 The Day of Apology

Formal Apology: Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper on behalf of the Government of Canada



2008 - 2015 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Justice Harry S. Laforme was the first chair of the commission. After he resigned in 2008, Justice Murray Sinclair was appointed chair. The Commission focused on the residential schools, which were one aspect of the assimilation strategy.

2015 The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) was formed to house the collection of materials on the history and effects of the Canadian Residential School System.

April 2016 – Daniels Decision: The Supreme Court of Canada declared Métis and non-status Indians as "Indians" under the Constitution, thus owing fiduciary duty to Métis and non-status Indians, and that Métis and non-status Indians have a right to be consulted and negotiated with in good faith by the federal government

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



THE HIDDEN HISTORY

“This history and its aftermath...should not be seen as an Aboriginal problem; it's a Canadian one.” ~Chief Justice Murray Sinclair

In this time of truth and reconciliation, it is important to re-member and to learn (and unlearn) about the colonizer's attempts to dis-member the first peoples of this land. The selective history that most Canadians have learned in school is a history shaped by colonizers, a history devoid of Indigenous¹ voices, experiences, and perspectives, a history that has covered over and silenced the truth about how this land was settled and the injustices and wrongs done to First Peoples.

The broken window on the cover is a reminder that the silence about residential schools in Saskatchewan² has been shattered by survivors speaking out about what happened to them. These stories must be heard. Ignorance about the history of First Nations has led to fear and hatred as demonstrated in the online social media comments regarding the 2016 tragic shooting of 22 year-old-Colten Boushie (Red Pheasant First Nation) "condoning and even cheering his killing." Knowing and understanding the history of Indian Residential Schools and their effects on survivors and intergenerational survivors will hopefully lead to the erasure of racist beliefs and attitudes and to restorative and reconciling actions (see Calls to Action) that will enable all of us to walk forward together.

Many Indigenous residential school accounts were heard and recorded by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC Commission, in accordance with the Royal Commission, gave survivors and their children the opportunity "to stand in dignity, voice their sorrow and anger, and be listened to with respect."³ Survivor/thriver stories along with the compiled school, church, and government documents were generated into Reports by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR). The reports reveal a gradual dis-membering of Indigenous cultures and identities through explicit and aggressive assimilation policies and through sometimes well-intentioned but damaging efforts to educate, Christianize, and civilize. This book extracts, reorganizes, and compiles the Saskatchewan school-specific elements of the NCTR reports and primary archived school files, as well as incorporating other resources and former student accounts that have been recorded and published online. The links throughout this ebook lead to sources, resources, and more information.

The historical timeline on pages 16 and 17 is an overview of the gradual introduction of government policies that would insidiously remove rights and freedoms from the original inhabitants of what is now called Canada. The Royal Proclamation by King George in 1763 recognized the rights and title of First Nations and Inuit peoples regarding their

¹Indigenous here includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

²The province of Saskatchewan was established in 1905; this book includes the history of Indian residential schools in the regions of Rupert's Land/ North-West Territories that became Saskatchewan.

³http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055806/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/dh/cap/sq/sq33_e.html#106

lands. It set out guidelines for the settlement of First People's territories in what was later established as North America. And though there was some effort to acknowledge these entitlements through the establishment of the numbered treaties, the Canadian Government's agenda of assimilation and enfranchisement of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, guided policy making.

To phase out Treaty obligations, the Canadian government hoped to eradicate the "Indian," culturally speaking.⁴ The first policies (Gradual Civilization Act, 1857 and Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869) aimed at gradually assimilating and enfranchising First Peoples. These two acts became the *Indian Act* in 1876; it outlined policies that would control and restrict most aspects of Aboriginal life. Sir John A. Macdonald, Edgar Dewdney, and Hayter Reed were prominent in developing harsher and more aggressive policy following the 1884 -1885 North-West Resistance. The *Indian Act* was once again amended, this time banning cultural ceremonies and gatherings. Hayter Reed "promoted a 'peasant farming' approach, central to which were the pass, permit, and Birtle system, and severalty."⁵ First Nations who had been forced to reserve lands were confined to them, and were only allowed to travel and trade with permission from the Indian Agent. The pass system was initially developed for "rebel Indians" but over time, the system was applied to all First Nations people. Parents could only travel to visit their children at residential school with a permit authorized by the Indian Agent. The pass system was never legalized, though it was enforced. The permit system controlled trade. How these policies affected the daily lives of First Nations peoples is reflected in one account of a father who went to jail for selling a steer without a permit so he could buy the wood to make coffins for the burial of two of his deceased daughters, a third daughter had died at residential school in Onion Lake and was buried there.

Added to the desire to assimilate and enfranchise was the race-based belief in White superiority and divine entitlement to land that Christian White European Settler's considered "improved." (see Doctrine of discovery and terra nullius). Indigenous peoples were spoken of as "dirty savages" and considered inherently lazy, unintelligent, childlike, and unable to learn anything but English, religion, and basic skills in farming.

The 1879 Davin Report marked the beginning of a concerted effort to set up a residential school system,⁶ with schools intentionally located far from reserves to limit parental and cultural influences on the children who were enrolled.

⁴"Indian Status" is a specific legal identity created by the 1876 Indian Act which developed criteria for who would be considered an Indian."

⁵http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/indian_policy_and_the_early_reserve_period.html

⁶"Although [the NCTR] report refers to the "residential school system," the word system is largely a term of convenience. The federal government never established or operated an integrated or coherent system for the education of Aboriginal people. The various church groups ran what amounted to independent systems that were funded by the federal government." (The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 198-99)

Treaty-promised day schools on reserves had failed to “civilize” the children. Educators and officials complained about attendance, about how little the children learned, and about how much influence First Nations cultures and families had in making students forget what they had learned in school. The cost of fulfilling the Canadian Government’s Treaty obligation to provide free, on-reserve education to First Nations peoples was felt to be prohibitive, and the idea of utilizing the already instituted Church-based Mission schools was enticing. The missionaries and children were considered a source of cheap labour.⁷

In 1883, the first three industrial schools, designed after the United States Industrial school model and recommended by [Nicholas Flood Davin](#) in the Davin Report, were established, two of which were located in what is now Saskatchewan (Battleford and Lebret/Qu’Appelle). In these schools, boys were trained in farming, carpentry, mechanics, shoe making, among other trades, and girls were trained in domestic arts such as sewing, cooking, and cleaning. Classroom instruction included reading, writing and speaking in English, basic arithmetic, and religious instruction. Schools adopted a half-day model, with students attending half the day in the classroom, and working the other half.

The [Government](#) contracted with the churches—[Roman Catholic](#), [Anglican](#), [Presbyterian](#), (and later the [United Church](#))—to run both the industrial and boarding schools. The government fully funded and regulated industrial schools for First Nation’s children and the churches operated the schools. Mission-run boarding schools received per capita funding. However, within a few years of operation, the industrial schools were also put on the per capita funding model.

Per capita Government funding created competition for students between Catholic and Protestant churches. Increased enrolment numbers would enable the schools to receive the funding necessary to operate their respective schools. Fueling the competition was a theological disagreement over what was considered “deadly error” in the other’s religious teachings. Principals spent a great deal of time recruiting—an aspect of their roles that none found agreeable.⁸ Competition also created problems for the distribution of schools, with some schools located closely together, leaving other locations with no school. Children often had to travel far from home to attend their religious-affiliated school.

The industrial schools were expected to become self-supporting, through farming and livestock. However, droughts (especially during the 30s) and World War II severely impacted farms and livestock, and therefore the schools’ abilities to feed the students well. Further, some locations in northern Saskatchewan were not suited to farming. Government funding cuts made it difficult to hire quality educators and staff, due to lower than average

salaries and poor working and living conditions within the schools.

By the late 1890s, the industrial schools were being heavily criticized for failing to educate students. Students were returning to their reserves after graduation, and to traditional life. In 1897, Indian Affairs’ official Martin Benson gave a “devastating critique” in which he stated that the schools’ mandate had been too ambitious, too closely modelled after the [Carlisle School in the United States](#). The industrial schools were failing to educate the students in farming, and trade apprenticeships were necessary before students could find employment. Benson even criticized the schools’ “success stories,” such as Gilbert Bear who had been taught the printing trade at the Battleford school, but who, as an employee of the *Ottawa Citizen*, was not making enough to pay for his board and clothing, and who hated the night shift hours he worked. Benson, like [Egerton Ryerson in 1847](#), believed that farming was the only trade that should be taught in these schools. He criticized the industrial schools’ half-day model, which was turning out half-educated, half-trained students. Benson also questioned whether the “priest or parson” was appropriately trained for assuming control and management of the industrial schools. He believed the churches had been given too much authority, and he called for the government to take over the system. However, changes to curriculum or control did not occur quickly. In 1898, Indian Agent Graham set up the [File Hills Colony](#) as part of the solution for the “problem” of ex-pupils returning to traditional ways after completing residential school. (Read more about this on pages 58-59)

In 1907, [Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce](#) called the public’s attention to yet another problem: the tuberculosis crisis in the Indian residential schools. In 1908, Samuel Hume Blake, an Anglican lawyer, wrote a pamphlet in support of Dr. Bryce’s report. In it he quoted Rev. Hogbin’s response to the Bryce Report: “The competition of getting in pupils to earn the government grant seems to blind the heads of these institutions and to render them quite callous to the shocking results which flow from this most highly improper means of adding to the funds of their institutions...” He also quoted Bishop DuVernet: “Institutions competing with us have been known to take in children under age, over age, physically unfit, etc. all to keep up numbers...There is supposed to be a medical test. If this test were applied as it should be it would shutout half at least of these in some of these schools.... There is a growing feeling among our missionaries that what we need most at present is to strengthen our day schools.” To this Blake responded: “I have felt for some time that it is an outrage to talk of compelling the Indians to send their children to school when these schools are conducted in such a way as that they are the means of conveying disease from the one to the other.”⁹ The report ended Bryce’s career, and [Duncan Campbell Scott](#)’s response to Bryce’s recommendations was to put in place a new screening [measure, which was added to the application form to ensure](#)

⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 59

⁸ Peter Henderson Bryce. (1907). Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories (p. 16)

⁹ Don’t You Hear the Red Man Calling? (p. 18)

children who were admitted to Indian residential schools were healthy. However, government-employed doctors were not always able to recognize TB in children. This problem was not addressed until Dr. R. George Ferguson, a researcher and expert in the treatment of TB, committed the Saskatchewan Anti-Tuberculosis League travelling clinic to the examination of children in residential schools in the province in 1933. Dr. Ferguson's research on, and campaign against, TB led to Saskatchewan having the lowest TB death rate from 1921 - 1940, and in 1929, to being the first jurisdiction in North America to offer free TB diagnosis and treatment.¹⁰

Due to epidemics of smallpox, tuberculosis, and influenza, many Indigenous children were orphaned. After the 1918 influenza pandemic, Indian Affairs sent out new instructions, that due to the number of children orphaned by the epidemic, no children whose parents were alive should be admitted to residential schools, unless exceptional circumstances existed. This temporary measure became official policy by 1924. Thus, residential schools increasingly became child welfare institutions, setting the stage for ongoing problems in child-welfare services.

Parental resistance to having their children taken away to schools contributed to their eventual closing. In 1910 Regina Industrial closed and in 1914, Battleford closed its doors.¹¹ Though parental resistance contributed to the closing of industrial schools, it also led to more compulsory attendance measures. Despite obvious problems with the residential schools, churches continued to pressure the government for enforced mandatory attendance. In 1920, the *Indian Act* was again amended to increase the government's power to enforce attendance at day, boarding, or residential schools. The idea behind the policy was designed not for the education of the child, but to "kill the Indian in the child."¹² Children were swept up and confined to residential schools, leaving a deafening silence on the reserves where their laughter and play once echoed throughout.¹³ Parents who resisted were fined or put in jail. This severing of relations (among other aspects) had devastating effects on multiple generations of Indigenous families.

In 1923, the former (and final) principal of the Regina Indian Industrial School, R. B. Heron, read a paper to the Regina Presbytery that was deeply critical of the Indian residential school system: "The parents have no voice in the selection of teachers nor in the selection of the course of study the children are to pursue, nor in the number of hours they attend the classroom."¹⁴ He noted that parents, while anxious to have their children educated were concerned that the children were spending too much time working to produce revenue for the school rather than learning to read and write. He said, "The classroom standing of many of the graduates of the schools would indicate that the parents have considerable ground for

¹⁰ http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/tuberculosis_control.html

¹¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 249

¹² "Scott is commonly and wrongly attributed with uttering the goal to "kill the Indian in the child" (Sniderman, 2013). It was Captain Richard H. Pratt who said it was wiser to "kill the Indian and save the man." Pratt was an American military officer of the Indian Wars who opened the first federally sanctioned boarding school: The Carlisle Industrial Training School. (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/node/87342>) The Carlisle school was one of several schools studied by the Nicholas Flood Davin, and was a particularly featured in the Davin Report.

¹³ These were the approximate words used by Dr. Anna-Leah King while describing her parent's experience.

¹⁴ Canada's Residential Schools - The Legacy: Vol. 5, p. 319

complaint." Heron described a system that separated children from parents only to provide an inferior education.

During the Depression, government officials began to consider *integration* strategies for the education of on-reserve Indigenous children. Budget cuts to residential schools had caused an increase in the number of Indigenous children attending public schools.¹⁵ By the end of the 1930s, Indian Affairs officials finally recognized that the per capita funding model wasn't working because it had no connection with the actual costs of the institutions. With compulsion policies, enrollments were high and dilapidated schools were overcrowded. Indian Affairs, faced with the decision of having to spend more on the repair, upkeep, and construction of residential schools, began to favour on-reserve day school education, which was much less costly. Indian Affairs began questioning the goal of making the "Indian a White man," and began to consider the possibilities of allowing students to return to reserves. However, the United, Anglican, and Catholic churches believed that intensification of the current residential schooling system with a funding model based on actual costs and a continued emphasis on assimilation was the solution. At a conference in 1936, the United Church sought the goal of "the abolition of the Reserves, with their restrictions, and the mingling of our Indian people in fulness [*sic*] of personality and privilege among other Canadian citizens."¹⁶ While the government and churches disputed the direction to take, the residential schools remained in operation, though chronically underfunded. Indian Affairs was also increasingly underfunded. In the 1950s, Indian Affairs adopted an integration process, in which it would gradually divest itself of responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children, who would be moved to provincial or territorial schools. The word "integration" began to replace the word "assimilation" in Indian Affairs policy. Residential schools were slated for closure and funding for maintenance and improvements was limited. By 1966, there were more First Nations students attending provincial schools than Indian Affairs schools.¹⁷ In 1969, the federal government took full control of the remaining residential schools in southern Canada in response to a federal labour board ruling that forced it to take responsibility for its own actions. School closures were slated, though often disputed. There was a variety of opinions among First Nation parents as to whether their children should go to public, religious, on-reserve, or residential school, dependent on context and circumstance. Some residential schools were still required for orphans and children whose homes could not provide for them. Beauval, Le Bret/Qu'Appelle, Marieval/Cowessess, Muscowequan, Prince Albert, and St. Michael's/Duck Lake residential schools came under First Nation control in the 1980s. Beauval school closed in 1995; St. Michael's/Duck Lake and Gordon's residences closed in 1996; Muscowequan/Lestock school, Marieval/Cowessess, and Prince Albert residences closed in 1997; and the last residential school to close was Le Bret/Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School in 1998.

¹⁵ Raptis, H. (2008). Implementing Integrated Education Policy for On-Reserve Aboriginal Children in British Columbia, 1951-1981. *Historical Studies in Education*. p. 120

¹⁶ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 4

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 59

THE CHILDREN

“Removed from their families and home communities, seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their culture, language, and spirit.” ~Chair of the TRC, Justice Murray Sinclair.

In 1894, amendments to the *Indian Act* authorized Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Hayter Reed, to make regulations "to secure the compulsory attendance of children at school," to be applied to "the Indians of any province or of any named band." The government was authorized to establish "industrial or boarding schools for Indians," and to commit to these schools "children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen years," who once committed could be retained until the age of 18.¹⁸ Most of the regulations dealt with day school attendance. However, if any "Indian child between six and sixteen years of age is not being properly care for or educated, and that the parent, guardian or other person having charge or control of such child, is unfit or unwilling to provide for the child's education," that child could be placed in an industrial or boarding school.¹⁹ In 1895, Reed announced that he intended to "do away ...with day schools on reserves and substitute industrial and boarding schools at a distance from them...owing to the fact that home influences so readily counteract any good which may be attained through them."²⁰ Further, with the churches' intense recruitment efforts for enrolments in residential schools, necessary to secure government funding, many day schools on reserves were closed in favour of boarding schools. Parents were left with no option but to send their children far away from home to attend school. Where there was resistance, children were forcibly removed, sometimes kidnapped, from loving parents and grandparents who did not want to send their children away to school. For instance, in 1901, Qu'Appelle Principal Fr. Hugonard was accused of "stealing" boys of the She-Sheep's Band and taking them to school by force. Indian Agent Magnus Begg reported what the widowed mother of two boys told him: "The Rev. gentlemen and the two police-men overtook her about 25 miles from Qu'Appelle and 40 miles from the Reserve, and without speaking to her, told the police to put the boys in the waggon [*sic*], she said the eldest boy clung to her but they pulled him away."²¹

In Saskatchewan about 30,000 people have filed claims under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Some of these are children of survivors (intergenerational survivors). According to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, there are over 21,000 residential school survivors living in Saskatchewan.

The stories of survivors and their children help clarify the *lived experiences* of the assimilation and enfranchisement policies. Everyday life for First Peoples was controlled and restricted by the government through the *Indian Act*. Residential school policies formulated by government, such as compulsory attendance and inadequate per capita funding, had dire

consequences on the daily life of both staff and students. At least 13 principals died while holding office in the early 1900s (9 of whom were in Saskatchewan schools). Staff who brought abuses to light, such as Lucy Affleck at Round Lake, lost their jobs. Indigenous children and families, however, were the most severely affected. Poorly funded residential schools had poor ventilation systems, inadequate nutrition, and no isolation facilities for sick students. Consequently, students who attended (both well and ill) were plagued by epidemics, causing the deaths of many children. The death rate in residential schools far exceeded the death rate in public schools. Children who died while attending residential school were often buried in school cemeteries, in unmarked graves. Parents were not always notified, or were not notified until weeks after, that their child had died. In fact, in some schools, when parents enrolled their children in a residential school, they lost their parental rights. Their children became wards of the government.

It is estimated that at least 6000 children died in Indian residential schools, often from epidemics of tuberculosis and scrofula, influenza, and measles. But there were other disturbing sources of student deaths as well: fires (see Beauval and Île-à-la-Crosse), suicides (see File Hills and Muscowequan), accidents (see Beauval and Gordon's), ill-treatment (see Battleford and Thunderchild), "sheer homesickness" (see Battleford), and neglect (see Round Lake). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified 3,200 deaths on the residential school registers; however, the system of reporting deaths was inconsistent. For instance, at Guy Indian Residential School at Sturgeon Landing, in 1937, when the Chief of Training Division heard of two student deaths (Josiah Constant and Bibiane Bighetty) at Guy school, he wrote the Indian Agent, S. Lovell, to inform him of the proper process: All student deaths needed to be reported through a form that had been filled out after an inquiry into the cause of death. Lovell responded that he had no such forms, and that it was impossible for him to fill out forms because he was 60 miles from Sturgeon Landing.

Residential schools were underfunded and cheaply constructed. With too-little funding, schools were not well-maintained. As a result, they became fire hazards and were frequently destroyed by fire, sometimes set intentionally by students who wanted to go home. Some student attempts at burning down schools were risky acts of resistance and protest.²² "The fires played a role in the eventual dismantling of the residential school system. Government officials recognized that the fires created an opportunity to expand day schools."²³ Inspections revealed that many schools were fire hazards, had no fire escape strategy for smaller children,

¹⁸ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 254

¹⁹ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 255

²⁰ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 257

²¹ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 259

²² Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 484

²³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306

and had a dangerous practice of locking fire escape doors. Fires were sometimes deadly, for instance at Beauval Residential School, in 1927, 19 students and one staff member died in a fire that destroyed the school.

Education was considered substandard in the residential schools. In 1898, Battleford principal E. Matheson wrote, "All pupils, excepting the smallest or most backward, attend on the 'half-time' system."²⁴ The half-day model meant students worked for half the day (boys learned farming, gardening, woodwork, and other trades and girls learned sewing, housekeeping, and cooking/baking), and for the other half of the day, students were learning in the classroom. Nicholas Flood Davin and Edgar Dewdney believed this model would render the schools self-supporting. Instead, it "came close to turning the schools into child labour camps."²⁵ Further, racial stereotypes about the children's abilities to learn shaped the curriculum, which focused on religious instruction, basic arithmetic, and English language. In a 1928 report on the St. Barnabas school at Onion Lake, a government school inspector expressed his belief that "in arithmetic abstract ideas develop slowly in the Indian child."²⁶ Some also thought it was dangerous to give the Indigenous students too much education.

Staff was neither well-screened nor well-paid, which left students vulnerable to less skilled, less employable members of society, some with criminal records, some traumatized by war, some were abusers and child molesters. For example, at Gordon's in 1945 it was known by the principal that the school engineer was an alcoholic and a molester and unfit for work around children, yet the principal kept him on because he feared he would not be able to find another engineer. Failure to deal with this employee led to a culture of sexual abuse at the school, with older students abusing younger students. Only when a new principal was appointed was the molester charged and convicted. Molesters were sometimes moved from school to school, leaving a trail of despair and shame behind them. Without the protection of their parents, children in the residential schools were vulnerable to physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and spiritual abuses.

Indian residential school children were stripped of their identities and cut off from their families and communities. Even within the schools, brothers and sisters were not allowed to speak to each other without permission. Students experienced acute loneliness. They were punished harshly for speaking their own languages, and for trying to go home. They were stripped of their own clothing and possessions, had their hair cut off, were given English or French names, and assigned numbers. Their lives at school were tightly regimented, with heavy labour due to settler racial stereotyping that cast them as inherently lazy. (Their dislocated parents, in like manner, were being treated

to harsh work-for-rations policies on their reserves after European settlers had decimated the buffalo and forced them into reserve lands). Through severe punishment, students learned to be ashamed of their culture and language, and thus ashamed of themselves, their parents, families, and communities. Yet, they did not feel at home in the White settler's world either. "They were, as the survivor John Tootoosis famously observed, 'left hanging' between two worlds."²⁷

Understanding the effects of residential schools on Indigenous peoples is important before reconciliation can occur. Many Indigenous people have already taken the courageous first step in speaking out about the abuses and injustices they experienced at residential schools as well as ongoing injustices and wrongs, such as the state of the child welfare system, health care, education, housing and employment on reserves, and justice issues such as the high rate of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and so on. Many have been working to re-member and re-collect cultural identity and family relations. Settler descendants have been called to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Reconciliation requires redressing the wrongs and injustices done through assimilation policies, specifically the Indian residential schools. Survivors who have spoken out deserve to be heard with respect and support by Canadians. It is also critically important to consult with Indigenous peoples as to how to move forward together in a good way, taking action to right the wrongs. The Canadian government, churches, and educational institutions have already begun this work. This ebook is one such response to the TRC's Calls to Action.

Out of respect, it is also important to recognize that some former students who attended residential schools report positive experiences, such as a story told by Eleanor Brass in her book, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, in which she expresses regret over the 1910 closure of Regina Indian Industrial School, which gave her father and others the skills they needed to progress economically. She writes, "The Regina industrial school was closed in 1910 and those of us who are descendants of the pupils often wonder why this technical school and others like it were not kept open. Had they been continued, the Indians might be further advanced than they are today."²⁸ (Even among those who testified for the TRC Commission there were both positive and negative experiences reported. Also see: Positive stories from residential school; Tomson Highway's story, Mr. Aller the art teacher)

One can understand the complexity of the issues involving residential schools, with enfranchisement and assimilation on the government agenda; survival, justice, and honouring of treaties on the agenda for Indigenous communities; and civilizing and Christianizing on the agenda for the churches. Education, however, was a common goal. Education was

²⁴ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 297

²⁵ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 163

²⁶ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 321

²⁷ Canada's Residential Schools - The Legacy: Vol. 5, p. 61

²⁸ Brass, E. (1987). *I Walk in Two Worlds*, pp. 8-9. Calgary, AB: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

viewed as a solution by Indigenous peoples and European settlers alike. Like divisions over the pros and cons of the *Indian Act*, there are a variety of perspectives on the Indian residential schools. *How* education was and is achieved and *what* is taught, *where*, *why* and *by whom*—these are major issues. In the past, the problem was framed as an "Indian problem" and Indigenous peoples were not consulted on solutions. What this history teaches is the importance and duty to consult in order to accurately frame a problem and identify mutually beneficial solutions. The problems created by the European settler invasion can only be solved through respectful consultation with the First peoples of this land. Without consultation, government and church officials have exhibited ignorance and prejudice against First Nation ways, languages, and cultures, creating oppressive solutions such as aggressive assimilation policies that privileged European settlers while impoverishing and restricting the freedoms and rights of Indigenous peoples. Many officials and administrators displayed an appalling lack of empathy and disinterest in the feelings of Indigenous peoples whose families and communities were being dis-membered by the government's adherence to its assimilation policies, while claiming the suffering as the cost of becoming "civilized."

The focus of the Truth and Reconciliation is the effects of the inculturation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, the stripping of their language and traditions, and the severing of children from their homes and communities, which resulted from aggressive civilization policies formed by the government and enforced by the churches that were used

to manage the residential schools. Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission writes, "Removed from their families and home communities, seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their culture, language, and spirit."²⁹

With such policy at the heart of these institutions, it is not surprising that the stories of many residential school survivors, though diverse and unique according to their locations and times, are often chillingly similar to the stories of holocaust survivors. This similarity has led to the use of terms such as "cultural genocide" and "ethnocide" to describe the residential school system's intent, purpose, and effects and more recently, a push to acknowledge the assimilation policies enacted upon Indigenous peoples as human rights atrocities.

Aggressive assimilation policies were enacted upon vulnerable children—a *war on children*. It is not surprising that so many did not survive and many who did, suffered severe trauma effects. The focus of this ebook is to bear witness to the history and legacy of Indian residential schools in Saskatchewan, to highlight the Project of Heart commemorations of those who did not survive, and to honour the stories of those who did survive along with the stories of their descendents.

²⁹ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. vii

*"Aboriginal Peoples are not 'sick' people
in need of 'therapy' and 'healing':
We are wronged people in need of justice."³¹*

³¹ Chrisjohn, R., & Young, S. (2006). *The Circle Game*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, p. 142

Photo of Regina Indian Industrial School cemetery.
Shuana Niessen, 2016

TOMMY C. DOUGLAS'S RESPONSE TO THE REMOVAL OF THE SHEPHERD CHILDREN

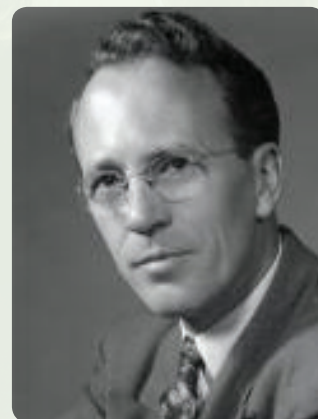
The following story illustrates the 1940's broad application and enforcement of the 1894 amendments to the *Indian Act*, which gave authority to an Indian agent or justice of the peace to remove any "Indian child between six and sixteen years of age" who was not thought to be "properly cared for or educated, and that the parent, guardian or other person having charge or control of such child, is unfit or unwilling to provide for the child's education" to place such a child in an industrial or boarding school. Under this legislation, poverty became a legitimate reason for removing Indigenous children from their homes. In 1946, Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas protested the removal of two children from their home at Moose Mountain Reserve to a residential school in Manitoba, even though a day school existed on their reserve. Indian Affairs argued that the family's home conditions were such that the children were better off in residential school. Douglas wrote that "although the family lived in a small shack, it was as well kept and as large as other homes on the reserve, and the children were as well-cared-for on the reserve as at the residential school":

In September 1946, Saskatchewan Premier T. C. Douglas telegraphed federal Mines and Resources Minister J. A. Glen, the minister responsible for Indian Affairs, to protest the removal of two children from the Moose Mountain Reserve [[White Bear](#)] at Carlyle, Saskatchewan to the Brandon school in Manitoba by the Mounted Police. Douglas said the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd, wanted their children at home, where, he said, there was space for them in the local day school.²⁶ Indian Affairs argued that the family's home conditions were such that the children were better off in residential school.

At least one of the Shepherd children did not agree. In December 1946, Douglas once more wrote on behalf of the Shepherd family. Clifford Shepherd had run away, returning home by hitchhiking and walking through a blizzard, arriving poorly clothed and weakened. Two other boys from the reserve had also run away from that school, causing considerable concern to their parents, who believed the children "are not properly cared for, that they do not receive sufficient supervision and training, and that the food is inadequate." Douglas wrote that although the family lived in a small shack, it was as well kept and as large as other homes on the reserve, and the children were as well-cared-for on the reserve as at the residential school.²⁷ In affidavits submitted to Indian Affairs, John Shepherd (Clifford's father) and D. Pewean, the father of another boy who had run away from the school, complained of the poor treatment their children received at the Brandon school. In sending the affidavits to Ottawa, J. P. B. Ostrander, the inspector of Indian agencies in Saskatchewan, wrote that although he did not consider the affidavits to be of value, he thought the accusations should be investigated. He noted, "I have had other complaints of a similar nature about the action of Reverend Strapp [the Brandon school principal]," and thought they might explain the numerous cases of truancy at the school.²⁸

The conflict between Clifford Shepherd and Strapp continued into 1947. On January 11, 1947, Indian Affairs official A. G. Hamilton reported that in December, upon return from his most recent attempt to run away, Clifford Shepherd had fought back when ordered to report to the school dormitory. As a result, he was taken there by force. Once there, Strapp had held him on the bed while another student was sent to fetch the regulation strap, which was used to discipline him. Since then, the boy had been confined to the dormitory. Strapp said that if he did not keep Shepherd locked up, "he will take one of these smaller boys away with him and that they might freeze in a snow storm during the night." Strapp requested that a number of troublesome students be transferred to schools in Alberta. In response to the request, Indian Affairs official Bernard Neary said the department did not believe in transferring students except in an emergency.²⁹ Saskatchewan Premier Douglas intervened in the case once again, urging that Clifford Shepherd be sent home to his parents.³⁰ Hamilton agreed, saying Shepherd, who would not promise to stop running away, should be discharged.³¹ He was discharged on January 28, 1947.³² Later that year, Douglas also raised concerns about the harshness of disciplinary measures used in residential schools: "Frankly, I was shocked to learn of the corporal punishment which is being administered in Indians schools." He asked "if it is customary to give children a short haircut as a punishment. It appears that this is also a common method of endeavouring to discipline children. Personally, I am not at all surprised that a spirited boy, treated in this manner, would become more recalcitrant than ever."³³

Government and church officials were quick to fend off outside criticism. In response to Douglas's complaints, United Church official George Dorey wrote to Indian Affairs, "If Mr. Douglas accepts the statements of the Carlyle Indians at their face value, without further investigation, all I can say is that he will have plenty to do looking after the Indians in Saskatchewan without being able to give very much time to his duties as Premier."³⁴



T. C. Douglas (1944-1961), Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan ©M. West, Regina, West's Studio Collection/R-WS15159-1

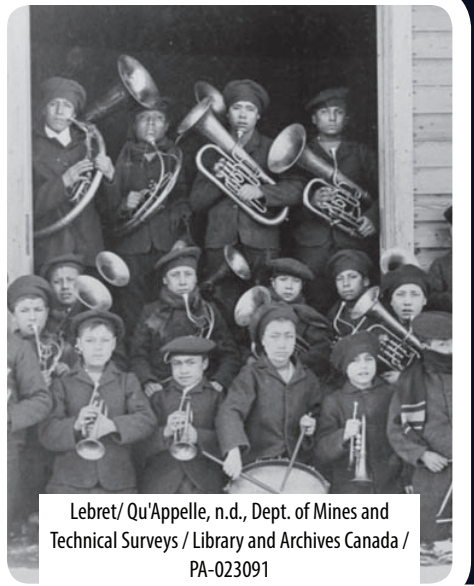
Source: *The History*, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 372 - 373



School children learning to light a fire at Treaty 4 Gathering, September 2016. Photo by Shuana Niessen



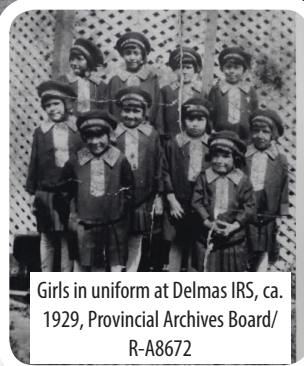
Battleford, ca. 1895, Library and Archives Canada / PA-182265



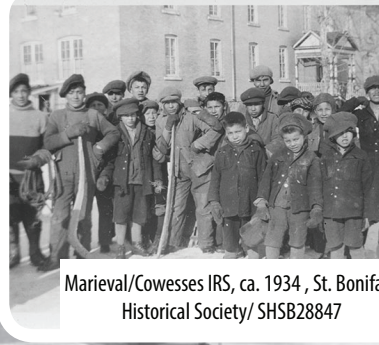
Lebret/ Qu'Appelle, n.d., Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada / PA-023091



Round Lake, ca. 1940, UCCA 93.049P/1162



Girls in uniform at Delmas IRS, ca. 1929, Provincial Archives Board/ R-A8672



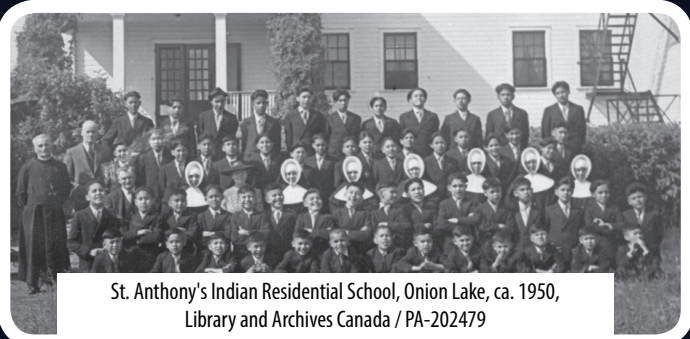
Marieval/Cowesses IRS, ca. 1934, St. Boniface Historical Society/ SHSB28847



"Students out for a walk at Gordon's Residential School," ca. 1926, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada/P8801-1



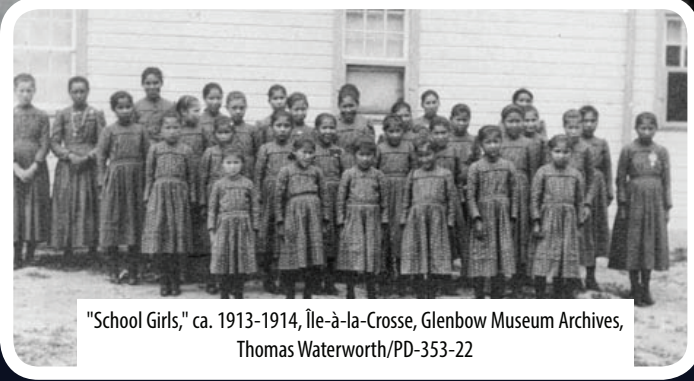
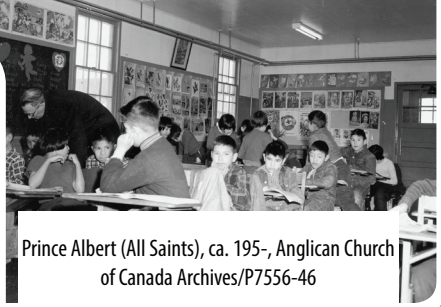
Duck Lake/St. Michael's sewing room, Sept. 1934, Glenbow Archives/NA-4938-40



St. Anthony's Indian Residential School, Onion Lake, ca. 1950, Library and Archives Canada / PA-202479



Guy (Sturgeon Landing), ca. 1939 -1971, Les Oeuvres Oblates de là Ontario (Deschatelets Archive)



STOLEN IDENTITIES

"The assault on Aboriginal identity usually began the moment the child took the first step across the school's threshold. Long braided hair (which often had spiritual significance and was part of their cultural identity) was cut off. For many students, this process was shocking and distressful. Many children knew from their own beliefs that the cutting of hair was part of a mourning tradition. Homemade traditional clothing was exchanged for a school uniform, Aboriginal names were replaced with Euro-Canadian ones (and a number), and the freedom of life in their own communities was foregone for the regimen of an institution in which every activity from morning to night was scheduled. Males and females, and siblings, were separated, and, with some exceptions, parental visits were discouraged and controlled." (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 599; *The Survivors Speak*, p. vi)

Campbell Papequash (St. Philips, Kamsack)

"After I was taken there they took off my clothes and then they deloused me. I didn't know what was happening but I learned about it later, that they were delousing me; 'the dirty, no-good-for-nothing savage's lousy.' And then they cut off my beautiful hair. You know and my hair, my hair represents such a spiritual significance of my life and my spirit. And they did not know, you know, what they were doing to me. You know and I cried and I see them throw my hair into a garbage can, my long, beautiful braids. And then after they deloused me then I was thrown into the shower, you know, to go wash all that kerosene on my body and on my head. And I was shaved, bald-headed." (*The Survivors Speak*, p. 34)

Emily Kematch (Gordon's)

Her hair was treated with a white powder and then cut. "And we had our clothes that we went there with even though we didn't have much. We had our own clothes but they took those away from us and we had to wear the clothes that they gave us, same sort of clothes that we had to wear." (*The Survivors Speak*, p. 38)

Elaine Durocher (St. Philips, Kamsack)

As soon as we entered the residential school, the abuse started right away. We were stripped, taken up to a dormitory, stripped. Our hair was sprayed.... They put oxfords on our feet, 'cause I know my feet hurt. They put dresses on us. And were made, we were always praying, we were always on our knees. We were told we were little, stupid savages, and that they had to educate us. (*The Survivors Speak*, p. 41)

Daniel Kennedy (Lebret)

In keeping with the promise to civilize the little pagan, they went to work and cut off my braids, which, incidentally, according to the Assiniboine traditional custom, was a token of mourning—the closer the relative, the closer the cut. After my haircut, I wondered in silence if my mother had died, as they had cut my hair close to the scalp. (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 173)

Ahchacoosahcootakoopits, or Star Blanket agreed to allow one of his sons to attend the residential school in Regina under the conditions that his hair not be cut, and that he would be exempted from religious studies, military drill, or the brass band. (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 253)

Alice Star Blanket (File Hills in 1930s)

She recalled that runaways at that school were "punished with a strap, shave their hair off, get bald heads." (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 524)

Principal R. W. Frayling (Gordon's, 1938)

"I strapped them once, put them on Bread and Water and had their hair cut short, which is only done for truancy." (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 557)

Charlie Bigknife (File Hills)

The farm instructor...came in with a sheep's shear and cut my four braids off and threw them on the floor. After a while along came a young boy rolling a horse clippers into the room and that horse clippers bounced over my head and gave me a bald head. After he got through, he said, "Now you are no longer an Indian" and he gave me a slap on the head." (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 599)

Mary Angus (Battleford, late 19th century)

"They lose all their hair, cut up like men's cut, always straight up (on the head). That's what they did with you—bald head like. All the hair cut to be as a man, that what they do, for us not to talk. We were afraid of that, to have our hair cut." (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 623)

Sarah Soonias (Battleford, late 19th century)

She recalled students being strapped and having their hair cut short for speaking Cree. (Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 623)

Robert Derocher (Île-à-la-Crosse)

Robert recalled being punished for speaking Cree. "It was so hard, you know, not to be able to communicate with other Native children there." (*The Métis Experience*, Vol. 3, p. 46)

Yvonne Lariviere (Île-à-la-Crosse, 1947 - 1955)

"I didn't know why I was being hit because I didn't speak English. I was seven years old and I had never been hit before in my life." (*The Métis Experience*, Vol. 3, p. 49)

Greg Rainville (Lebret, mid 60s)

"I was punished because the nuns would get frustrated with you when they talk to you in French and English, and you're not knowing what they're talking about, and you're pulled around by the ear, and whatnot, and slapped on the back of the head, and stuff like that. And I didn't know what I was doing wrong. No matter what, I tried to do good, but I couldn't understand what they were saying, and they couldn't understand what I was saying, but I was punished."

Conrad Burns (whose father attended the Prince Albert school)

"It was a cultural genocide. People were beaten for their language, people were beaten because ... they followed their own ways." (*The Legacy*, Vol. 5, p. 6)

Ralph Paul (Beauval, 1944)

"In 1944...our surname was changed again and this time to Paul. My late father had three names. So what happened was it disrupted our clanship. We had many people marrying first cousins as the result because they did not know the immediate family lines. It was not just our language that was tampered with, but also our identity, Our Dene names were changed." (*FN Education, SK Teacher Guide*, p. 19)

A language is one's identity. A language is an inviolable gift to the Indigenous peoples from the Creator and their ancestors.

*Fred Kelly, former student of Lebret
(Speaking My Truth, p. 38)*

"Now you are no longer an Indian"

No. 26

No. 103

No. 52

No. 35

"Our language and culture is the window through which we see the world."

*"Hotié nuhecvaniö
chu nuheyatié húton
dézq, ḥqḥú ḥeh hoḥüné
dáhoözq sí benerídí
hasü."*

*~Dene Elder Paul
Disain, Stony Rapids,
SK*

Source: www.sicc.sk.ca/dene-elders-quotes.html

Click to view Kalolin Johnson sing "Gentle Warrior" (a tribute to Rita Joe who wrote "I lost my talk")

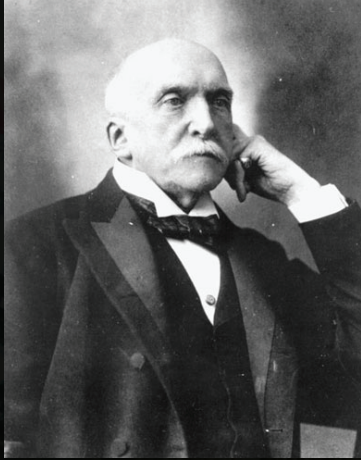
Quick Fact:
First Languages of Saskatchewan
Algonquin language family:
Cree (3 dialects:
Plains "Y", Woods "Th" and Swampy "N")
Nakewé (Ojibwa, Western Dialect is Saulteaux)
Arapaho (Atsina or Gros Ventre dialects)
Siouan language family
Nakota (Assiniboine, Stoney Sioux),
Dakota,
Lakota
Athapaskan language family
Dene (sole representative found in Saskatchewan)
Métis Language
Michif (mix of Cree and French)

No. 7

STOLEN IDENTITY



A SECOND LOOK AT THE LEGACY OF NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN



Nicholas Flood Davin 1840 - 1901
Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/
R-A6665

Ireland-born Nicholas Flood Davin came to Regina in 1882, where he founded the *Leader* Regina newspaper. He is known for his 1885 interview with the condemned Louis Riel, though some claim that one of his employees actually conducted the interview. He was elected as an MP in 1887, and is described as "a staunch Conservative Party man," on the City of Regina web site.

Davin's legacy also includes the Davin Report of 1879,

which was influential in bringing the United States Indian Industrial School model to Canada. Davin wrote, "If anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions." Davin claimed, "The industrial school is the principal feature of the policy known as that of 'aggressive civilization'" (Davin Report, p. 1).

Aggressive civilization was viewed as a necessary policy for the elimination of Indian Treaty rights (enfranchisement), and to offer First Nations peoples a new livelihood in farming, after the buffalo had been exterminated, and Indigenous lands had been appropriated. This policy was also viewed as necessary because of what was considered the inherent nature of the 'Indian':

... as far as the adult Indian is concerned. Little can be done with him. He can be taught to do a little at farming, and at stock-raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all. The child, again, who goes to a day school learns little, and what little he learns is soon forgotten, while his tastes are fashioned at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combated. (Davin Report, p. 2)

Colonial paternalism is evident in Davin's report as he attempted to describe what he viewed as the defective character of the Indian:

The Indian is sometimes spoken of as a child, but he is very far from being a child. The race is in its childhood....There is, it is true, in the adult, the helplessness of mind of the child, as well as the practical helplessness; there is, too, the child's want of perspective; but there is little of the child's receptivity; nor is the child's tractableness always found. One of the prime conditions of childhood is absent—the abeyance of the passions....He has the suspicion, distrust, fault-finding tendency, the insincerity and flattery, produced in all subject races...The Indian's stolidity is in

part assumed, in part the stupor produced by external novel and distasteful conditions, and in both respects has been manifested in white races at periods of helplessness and ignorance, of subjection to, and daily contact with, the power and superior skill and refinement of more advanced races, or even more advanced branches of the same race. (Davin Report, p. 10)

What Davin is describing as the "Indian character" is in part due to conditions produced by the loss of livelihood and way of life and in part due to European infantilization of the First Peoples as a race. But there is an element of class introduced in his statement as well, with the 'Indian' being compared to those who live subject to others, in this case a whole race, who have taken on the characteristics of the untrustworthy lower class. Too, there is a conflict of cultural values in which White society sought to distance itself from the land and all that was untamed, (what they understood to be *civilizing*) along with first peoples' societies, which sought to live in close relation to the land and its life-giving qualities. There is the assumption of the maturity, superiority, and refinement of what Davin calls the "advanced races," without evidence of that maturity and refinement in White-European treatment of the original inhabitants of the land.

Further, there is another insidious aspect at work in Davin's argument. Davin criticizes the treaty promise of on-reserve schools in the following statement: "Guaranteeing schools as one of the considerations for surrendering the title of the land, was, in my opinion, trifling with a great duty and placing the Government in no dignified attitude...Such a guarantee, moreover, betrays a want of knowledge of the Indian character." (p. 11). Thus, by associating the government with undignified and inevitable failure, and by attaching a child-like metaphor to "Indian" character, Davin seems to be rationalizing the dismissal of treaty promises—as an undignified giving in to child-like demands, rather than the dignified honouring of treaty promises.

The John A. Macdonald government implemented the Indian Residential School system, and as recommended by the Davin Report, contracted with churches to manage the schools at minimal cost to the government. With churches managing the schools, bureaucratic complexities along with religious divisions created administrative blocks and gaps, which impacted where children could attend school, (sometimes forcing children to attend school out-of-province), the building and funding of too many schools with churches vying for funding and position in communities, and the prevention of protective policies regarding curriculum, limits on student labour, discipline, nutrition, admissions requirements, care of the ill and deceased, and staff credentials.

Davin later lost his seat in the Commons to a Liberal, and did not live to see the full effects of his report. He took his own life in 1901.



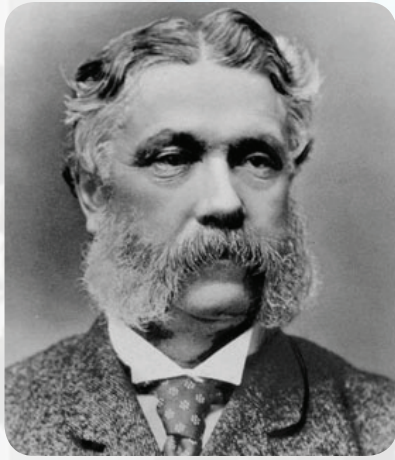
A school in Regina bears the name of Davin and recently there has been a call to change the name of the school. Read news article: Nicholas Flood Davin's legacy needs a second look.



What's in a name?: Listen to Dr. Marc Spooner and Dr. Shauneen Pete speak about the Davin name. CTV Regina Indigenous Circle, May 5, 2016 (Photo credits: Shuana Niessen, 2015)

"The industrial school is the principal feature of the policy known as that of 'aggressive civilization,'" wrote Davin in his 1879 report (p. 1).

EDGAR DEWDNEY: INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS IN THE N. W. T.



Edgar Dewdney
Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/ R-B48-1

planned Canadian Pacific Railway line. In 1888, Dewdney became MP for Assiniboia East, and in 1891, he became Minister of Indian Affairs.

During the negotiations of treaties and the North-West Resistance, Commissioner Dewdney used rations as a means of control over First Nations peoples. When Cree Chiefs sought to establish a Cree homeland in the Cypress Hills, Dewdney opposed them. He wanted them to settle on smaller, separate, and more easily controlled reserves. He referred to these Cree people as "a large number of worthless and lazy Indians, the concourse of malcontents and reckless Indians from all the bands in the Territories."² Even though the Treaties allowed First Nations to select their Treaty lands, Dewdney refused to grant them the land they requested. To force them to travel north, he refused to provide promised food rations, causing mass starvation among First Nations. He even went so far as to implement a policy called "sheer compulsion," which involved "using the Mounted police to arrest First Nations leaders in order to disrupt their governance."³ To prevent First Nations from joining in the 1885 North-West Resistance, Dewdney again used food: This time he was exceedingly generous with food and presents.

Indian Commissioner Dewdney was also a policy maker for the Indian Residential schools in the NWT. In 1883, Dewdney, in support of the 1879 Davin Report, wrote to Macdonald that the time had come for industrial schooling, which "might be carried on with great advantage to the Indians."⁴ Dewdney thought the residential schools were preferable to day schools for producing workers "because the influence of home...is stronger than that of the school." He believed that what he deemed "an inherited aversion to labour" in Indigenous peoples would be offset by "being separated from their parents and properly and regularly instructed not only in the rudiments of English language, but also in trades and agriculture."⁵ Dewdney also believed a harshly regimented schedule, which equated hard work with godliness, would work against this "aversion to labour." He felt certain that "a great end" would be "attained for the permanent and lasting benefit of the Indian."⁶ Dewdney offered his former governor's residence at Battleford as one of three chosen locations for an industrial school. The other two would be constructed in Qu'Appelle and High River. In agreement with the Davin Report, he recommended having the churches supply the staff as a cost-saving measure. He estimated the Qu'Appelle school would cost \$6,000 to construct, and suggested an operational budget of \$6,500 annually. With government authorization and instruction to

England-born Edgar Dewdney arrived in Victoria, BC in 1859, where he worked as a surveyor during the gold rush. He was elected as a Conservative MP in 1872. A loyal devotee of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, in 1881, Dewdney became Lieutenant Governor and Indian Commissioner of the North-West Territories (NWT), roles he served in until 1888. In 1882, Dewdney was behind the decision to move the territorial capital from Battleford to Wascana (Regina),⁷ where he owned real estate adjacent to the

use the Davin Report as a guide, Dewdney established the industrial schools. He oversaw the construction of the schools; however, actual construction costs far exceeded Dewdney's estimates. "By September 1884, the total construction costs of the two Industrial schools (High River and Qu'Appelle) had reached \$29,920."⁷ Further, the problems of refitting the former governor's single family residence at Battleford into a residential school persisted throughout the life of the school. Regarding finance, Dewdney's instruction to the first Battleford principal, Thomas Clarke, was clear: "I need scarcely inform you that the strictest economy must be practised in all particulars."⁸ Dewdney continued to underestimate operation costs for the schools. His spending cuts in 1889 and 1891 "did not take into account the actual costs of running the schools."⁹ Despite repeated salary reductions, the schools could not survive on the per capita grant, which had been put in effect in 1895. Both the High River and Qu'Appelle schools emerged from the first year on the per capita system with deficits. Dewdney believed industrial spending was "unnecessarily high."¹⁰ He believed that efficiency had to increase and schools would need to graduate more students.

Dewdney acknowledged that recruiting students was problematic in his 1884 report, writing that even after the children had been cared for in the kindest manner, "...some parents, prompted by unaccountable freaks of the most childish nature, demand a return of their children to their own shanties to suffer from cold and hunger."¹¹ Parents were expressing appropriate emotions at the taking of their children, and they were rightly concerned that the schools would obliterate language and culture, preparing children for the "white man's" life, in which they would be used as free labour. They were afraid their children would not go back to the reserves. Because Dewdney reasoned that the industrial schools would benefit "Indians," he viewed the parents as short-sighted and selfish, explaining that their resistance to sending their children to school was due to a "peculiar nature, being a creature of the present moment and failing to witness immediate results to his own benefit, as well as prompted, in many instances, by a selfish desire to retain constantly about him the slight labour which his children may afford him."¹² Dewdney believed attendance would inevitably become compulsory, but that it should be introduced gradually after Indigenous peoples became accustomed to the restrictions of their reserves. Dewdney thought it "highly desirable...to obtain entire possession of all Indian children after they attain to the age of seven or eight years, and keep them at schools of the industrial type until they have had a thorough course of instruction."¹³

Dewdney supposed the "half-day system," which meant students worked for half the day and attended class for half the day, would allow the school to become self-supporting. However, this model "came close to turning the schools into child labour camps."¹⁴ Further, the model didn't work. The schools never became self-supporting.

As for the high percentage of illness in the schools, Dewdney shared the commonly held (and incorrect) view of his time. In 1886, he wrote, "A large percentage of the sickness and consequent death-rate, is directly due to hereditary disease, which had its origin at the time prior to that at which our responsibility began." He argued that the increase in death rate could be due to improved record keeping. He coldly suggested the increased death rate was part of the price that First Nations had to pay to become civilized.¹⁵

⁷ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 217

⁸ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 162

⁹ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 218

¹⁰ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 218

¹¹ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 249

¹² The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 247-248

¹³ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 198

¹⁴ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 163

¹⁵ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 387

¹ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dewdney_edgar_14E.html

² The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 112

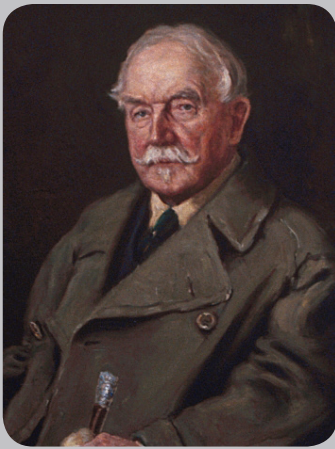
³ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 123

⁴ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 159

⁵ The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 12

⁶ The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 12

HAYTER REED: SEPARATION AND THE PASS SYSTEM



"Mr. Hayter Reed" by George Russell via © McCord Museum, licensed under CC-BY-NC-ND 2.5 ca. 1900-1925, <http://collections.Musée-mccord.qc.ca>

Ontario-born Hayter Reed, retired from his part-time career in the militia in 1881, when he took on the role of Indian Agent in Battleford, North-West Territories (NWT). Reed's career ascent was due to his affiliation with Edgar Dewdney.

Dewdney, impressed by Reed, appointed him to the Council of the NWT. Reed was Acting Lieutenant-Governor in 1882, when he lived in Regina. When Dewdney's assistant Indian commissioner resigned in 1883, Dewdney selected Reed to replace him. In 1888, Dewdney resigned his role and Reed became Indian Commissioner (NWT). Despite charges against

him regarding furs he had allegedly stolen from Métis Charles Bremner (later blamed on Middleton), and despite First Nations resentment of him, Reed became the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs in 1893, due to the efforts of Dewdney, who had arranged for the forced retirement of incumbent, Lawrence Vankoughnet. While in this position, Reed worked on revisions to the *Indian Act* which would increase and strengthen the department's ability to control and regulate Indigenous social and spiritual practices. When the Liberals came to power in 1897, departmental reorganizations forced Reed to leave the federal government.

While he was Assistant Indian Commissioner, Reed advocated for and implemented a pass system, imposed on any Indigenous nations who participated in the 1885 North-West Resistance: "No rebel Indians should be allowed off the Reserves without a pass signed by an I. D. official. The dangers of complications with white men will thus be lessened. And by preserving knowledge of individual movements any inclination to petty depredations may be checked by the facility of apprehending those who commit such offences."¹ He informed Dewdney, "I am adopting the system of keeping the Indians on their respective Reserves and not allowing any [to] leave them without passes—I know this is hardly supportable by any legal enactment but we must do many things which can only be supported by common sense and by what may be for the general good. I get the police to send out daily and send any Indians without passes back to their reserves."² Under this policy, First Nations people on the prairies had to seek government permission to leave their reserves. Those who did not comply were charged with "trespassing" or in some cases denied rations. Though the pass system was initially set up to contain "rebels," it was eventually applied to all people living on reserve. Though illegal, this system was enforced into the late 1930s.

By 1892, Reed was recommending government legislation be enacted that would require "children being retained in Industrial Schools pending the Department's pleasure."³ In 1894, as Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Reed promoted the industrial and semi-industrial institutions because they removed children "from the retarding influences" of contact with their reserves.⁴ He wrote, "Experience has proved that the industrial and boarding schools are productive of the best results in Indian education. At the ordinary day school the children are under the influence of their teacher for only a

Hayter Reed, (known as "Iron Heart" by local Indians because of his harsh enforcement of the work-for-rations policy), described the First Nations people he encountered as the "scum of the Plains."

Cutland, D. (2007). *Askiwina: A Cree World*, p. 33. Regina, SK: Coteau Books

short time each day and after school hours they merge again with the life of the reserve. It can readily be seen that, no matter how earnest a teacher may be, his control over his pupils must be very limited under such conditions. But in the boarding or industrial schools the pupils are removed for a long period from the leadings of this uncivilized life and receive constant care and attention. It is therefore in the interest of the Indians that these institutions should be kept in an efficient state as it is in their success that the solution of the Indian problem lies."⁵ He reported that parental opposition to sending their children to boarding schools had decreased to the point that the government could, "without fear of exciting undue hostility,"⁶ introduce policy for compulsory attendance at schools. Accordingly, in 1894, the *Indian Act* was amended, authorizing the government to retain "children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen years" in the schools.⁷ The amendments gave authority to an Indian agent or justice of the peace to remove any "Indian child between six and sixteen years of age" who was "not being properly cared for or educated, and that the parent, guardian or other person having charge or control of such child, is unfit or unwilling to provide for the child's education,"⁸ and to place the child in an industrial or boarding school. Reed instructed that vacancies in the Indian residential schools could now be filled with orphans. Where current administrators failed to obtain attendance, Reed warned that it "may yet become incumbent upon the department to adopt more stringent measures to secure attendance."⁹ Reed campaigned successfully to close day schools on reserves and to fill the residential schools and by 1904, only one day school was operating. The lack of day schools in the West left parents with limited options, forcing them at times to send their children far away to school. Despite the distance, some parents still visited the industrial schools. Battleford and Qu'Appelle school principals Thomas Clark and Joseph Hugonard were welcoming to parents, believing their presence reassured them their children were well-treated. Reed was displeased when he discovered that Hugonard had provided a place for entertaining family visitors and was serving them breakfast and giving them provisions. Dewdney confronted Hugonard saying that "relations of the pupils are allowed to visit the school, to an extent which can only be regarded as quite unnecessary... Children can be obtained and kept" without allowing excessive parental visits, as was done in other schools.¹⁰ Reed sent out a reminder that without a Pass, Indians were not allowed to visit the school. Passes should only be given occasionally. Reed shared his school regulations with everyone involved except First Nations, who would be dealt with on an individual, case-by-case basis. Indigenous communities were not to be consulted about school policies.¹¹

Reed was also pushing for restrictions on language. When he became Deputy Minister of IA, the department's program of study Reed specified that "every effort must be made to induce pupils to speak English, and to teach them to understand it."¹² Along with the suppressing the Aboriginal languages of students, this had implications for many French Catholic schools in which some teachers could not speak English.

⁵ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 199

⁶ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 254

⁷ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 254

⁸ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 255

⁹ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 257

¹⁰ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 602

¹¹ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 606

¹² Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future, p. 80

¹ Public Archives of Canada, RG 10, Vol. 37 10, file 19,550-3. Hayter Reed to Edgar Dewdney, 20 July 1885.

² The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 127.

³ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 251.

⁴ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 164

PETER HENDERSON BRYCE: INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND THE HIGH DEATH RATE



Peter Henderson Bryce
(Photo courtesy of [Andy Bryce](#))

Ontario-born Peter Henderson Bryce was the physician appointed in 1904 to the newly created position of chief medical officer for the Interior and Indian Affairs. Bryce was a leading public health authority who focused his work on the prevention of tuberculosis.

For some time, school officials and administrators had been convinced that tuberculosis was a hereditary disease. Thus, no health screen was in place until 1909, when the school application form for all residential schools instructed

physicians who were inspecting potential students not to admit children suffering from scrofula or any form of tuberculosis. In 1910, the contract between the government and the churches also specified that students were not to be admitted until a physician had declared the children in good health.

Indian Residential Schools were not set up to isolate sick children from well, and often did not have proper ventilation systems or sewage disposals, so that diseases spread quickly, causing the death of many students. In Kamsack, for instance, parent letters and petitions calling for an on-reserve school disclose concerns about sending their children away to the Industrial schools, because all but one that was sent away died in these institutions. "As early as 1907, the residential schools were noted by inspectors as places of disease, hunger, overcrowding, and disrepair" (Erasmus, 2004, p. 4).¹

In 1907, Bryce released a damaging report to Members of Parliament and the churches that exposed the death rates due to tuberculosis among children in the residential school system (see *On the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories*). Children attending residential schools were dying at a far higher rate than children in the general population.² The report was leaked to media, and the *Evening Citizen* (now *Ottawa Citizen*) included a story on Bryce's report. By bringing public attention to the issue, the government was being pressured to act.

In the report, Bryce noted that attendance had fallen since 1901 and the reasons were chiefly due to the distance of schools from the reserves, the ineffectiveness of the staff, the lack of practical success upon graduation, the cooperation of the boarding schools staff to the canvassing of the industrial school principals, the lack of interest of Indian agents in schools far from reserves, the dislike of the parents to have their children so far from home, and the great increase and enlargement of boarding schools on or near reserves. He also noted that all of the principals expressed the disagree-ability of recruiting students. He concludes, "It seems evident that with boarding schools increasing in numbers and in efficiency, the successful continuation of the industrial schools under the present form must become increasingly difficult and expensive" (p. 16).³

Bryce noted the differences between public school and residential school, writing, "In the public school everywhere the child returns to its parents at night and they are naturally chiefly responsible for its health. On the other hand, our industrial and boarding schools have been for the full term of residence in them the home of the child, and for his

health the staff of the school is immediately responsible. Not only so, but this fact has been recognized by the government, which has for many years appointed and paid medical officers for supervising the health of children" (p. 17).

Bryce criticized the government officials, saying the problem of students of ill-health gaining admission into school was due "to the lack of any system under which they [the schools] came under government inspection." Additionally, the problem was due to the difficulties in every instance, of maintaining attendance "up to the number allowed upon which the per capita payment was made." It was not surprising to him that children with cases of scrofula and other forms of disease were admitted: "Principals and teachers and even physicians were at times inclined to question or minimize the dangers of infection from scrofulous or consumptive pupils and nothing less than peremptory instructions as to how to deal with cases of disease existing in the schools will eliminate this ever-present danger of infection" (p. 17).

Bryce recognized that the staff and even many medical officers were not aware that the "defective sanitary condition of many schools, especially in the matter of ventilation" was causing the spread of the disease. Bryce also criticized the record-keeping process as defective and inconsistent. "It suffices us to know, however, that of a total of 1, 537 pupils reported upon nearly 25 per cent are dead, of one school with an absolutely accurate statement, 69 per cent of ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death given is tuberculosis" (p. 18). He reported that with the exception of three schools, "no serious attempt at the ventilation of dormitories or school-rooms has hitherto been made." Making matters worse were the long months of winter in the West, when "double sashes are on the windows" to save fuel and heat and "for some 10 continuous hours children are confined in dormitories. ...It is apparent that general ill health from the continued inspiration of an air of increasing foulness is inevitable; but when sometimes consumptive pupils and, very frequently, others with discharging scrofulous glands, are present to add an infective quality to the atmosphere, we have created a situation so dangerous to health that I was often surprised that the results were not even worse than they have been shown statistically to be" (p. 19).

Despite the warnings and recommendations of Dr. Peter Bryce, that the conditions in the residential schools were causing healthy children to become sick, and despite the government lawyers' warning in 1907, "Doing nothing to obviate the preventable causes of death, brings the Department within unpleasant nearness to the charge of manslaughter," the government did little to improve conditions except to institute a policy that prohibited sick children from admission to the school. However, only a few doctors were able to recognize TB in children. Samuel Blake, an Anglican Ontario lawyer supported Bryce in his pamphlet, *Don't You Hear the Red Man Calling?* He criticized those who were condemning Bryce's report, and iterated the call to attend to the health of the children in the Indian residential schools. However, Bryce's recommendations came into conflict with Duncan Campbell Scott's mandate to reduce spending. Bryce remained on the government payroll for another 8 years, but Scott never asked him to do any more inspection work for Indian Affairs. The federal government forced Bryce into retirement in 1921, after which he published *The Story of a National Crime: An Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada*. Despite his report, Indigenous children continued to live in unsafe buildings with high infection rates.

In 2015, a historical plaque was erected at Dr. Bryce's grave site in the Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, Ontario, to honour his stand for the health and rights of Aboriginal children.

¹ Erasmus, G. (2004, March 12). Notes on a History of the Residential School System in Canada. *The Tragic Legacy of Residential Schools: Is Reconciliation Possible*. Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

² Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 1

³ Bryce, P.H. (1907). *Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories*.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT: A MORE COMPULSORY APPROACH TO ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL



Duncan Campbell Scott, Dupras & Colas, Library and Archives Canada/ C-003187

Ottawa-born Duncan Campbell Scott has a mixed legacy. Scott's career with Indian Affairs started when, during an interview with Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald in 1879, he was employed by him as a copying clerk. By 1913, he had attained the position of deputy minister of Indian Affairs, the highest non-elected position in the department.

Scott is responsible for the 1920 amendments

to the *Indian Act*, which put in place a more compulsory approach to enforcing attendance in day, boarding, or residential school for Indigenous school-aged children. On paper, "school-aged" included children up to the age of 16, but in practice Scott directed that children were not to be discharged until the age of 18. Before a parliamentary committee examining proposed amendments to the *Indian Act*, Scott outlined the department's long-term goals: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. I do not want to pass into the citizens' class people who are paupers. That is not the intention of the Bill. But after one hundred years, after being in close contact with civilization it is enervating to the individual or to a band to continue in that state of tutelage, when he or they are able to take their position as British citizens or Canadian citizens, to support themselves, and stand alone. That has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times. One of the very earliest enactments was to provide for the enfranchisement of the Indian. So it was written into our law that the Indian was eventually to become enfranchised. ...our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department that is the whole object of this Bill."¹ Scott was clearly

¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 289

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem....Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department."

~Duncan Campbell Scott

committed to the colonial project.² Accordingly, throughout his term, Scott worked on amendments to the *Indian Act*, which increased the power of the department over First Nations.

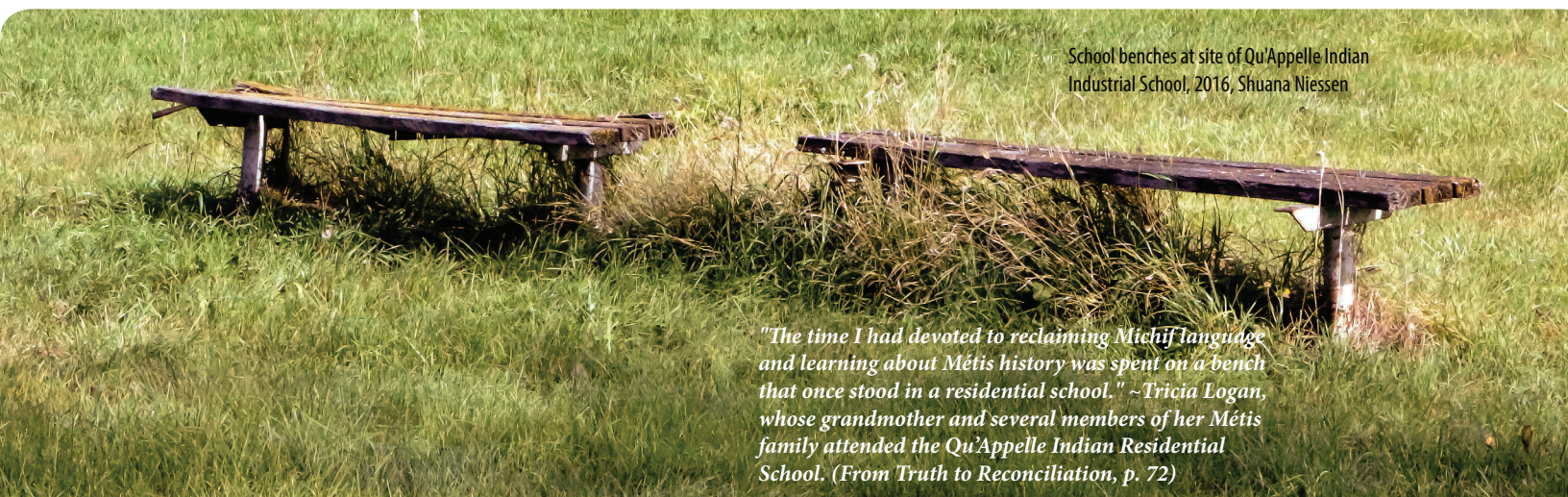
Scott seemed intent on covering over residential school issues that became public. In response to a reporter who questioned him about cruel treatment and a lack of food after a student complained at St. Barnabas Indian Residential School (Onion Lake), Scott made the incredible statement that "ninety-nine per cent of the Indian children at these schools are too fat."³ In reality, Scott was aware that there had been ongoing concerns about the quality of food at St. Barnabas Indian Residential School. As a government official, with churches operating the schools, Scott did not, however, have authority to fire principals or staff.

Scott is also considered one of Canada's major poets, and his poetry is included in the Saskatchewan curriculum. Some of his poems portray a sensitivity to experiences of Indigenous peoples that seems to contradict his colonial ideals. (i. e., "A Scene at Lake Manitou" written in 1933, explores the thoughts and feelings of an Indigenous woman struggling to deal with the effects of 'civilization' on her dying family. Also, his poem "Forsaken," is about an Indigenous woman who has fulfilled her purpose as a mother and is left behind to die: He wrote, "Then there was born a silence deeper than silence, Then she had rest.")⁴ Scott's poetry conveys deep feeling about the plight of the First Nations people he governed, yet his firm belief in assimilation as the "solution," and perhaps a belief in the myth that there was nothing to be done for a disappearing people, seems to have blinded him to the effects of colonization, and to his own contributions to their suffering.

² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 289

³ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 508

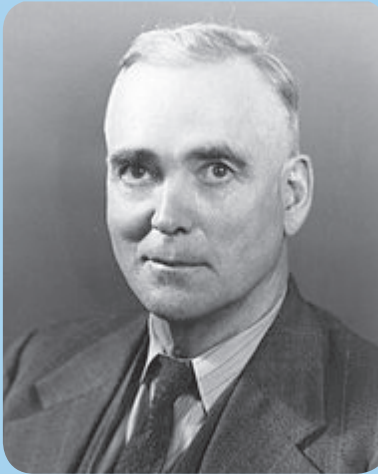
⁴ Scott's poems could be used to explore the complexity of issues of assimilation and Indian residential schooling. For instance, "Healing the Wound: Cultural Compromise in D. C. Scott's 'A Scene at Lake Manitou'" explores the poem critically.



School benches at site of Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, 2016, Shuana Niessen

"The time I had devoted to reclaiming Michif language and learning about Métis history was spent on a bench that once stood in a residential school." ~Tricia Logan, whose grandmother and several members of her Métis family attended the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School. (From Truth to Reconciliation, p. 72)

THE ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS LEAGUE OF SASKATCHEWAN AND DR. R. GEORGE FERGUSON



Dr. R.G. Ferguson, O.B.E., B.A., M.D., LLD, (1883-1964). [Source Link](#)

"I feel as though it would be unwise to initiate human experimental work among Indian children who are the direct wards of the Government, and for which reason they are not in a position to exercise voluntary cooperation. Furthermore in case of difficulties arising, the Government itself could not be without responsibility"

~ Dr. R. George Ferguson

In 1911, Dr. Maurice Seymour, Commissioner of Public Health, formed the Saskatchewan Anti-Tuberculosis League (SATL). "Seymour advocated the establishment of a sanatorium to treat and cure early cases of tuberculosis in Saskatchewan's population, thus reducing the further spread and development of the disease."¹

In 1917, Seymour hired Dr. R. George Ferguson as acting Medical Superintendent. Ferguson had moved to Yorkton area with his family in 1902. He graduated from Manitoba Medical College in 1916, and in 1919 was appointed Medical Director. In this position, he oversaw the completion of the Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium (Fort San), which was completed in 1926.

Though the sanatorium provided conditions for the treatment of tuberculosis, treatment was expensive and lengthy, and space was limited. Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in Saskatchewan, with 1-2 deaths per day from the disease. In 1926 First Nations peoples were ten times more likely to die from the disease. Because First Nations were especially vulnerable to the disease, Dr. Ferguson began to research into the causes of their susceptibility. As secretary for the Saskatchewan Anti-Tuberculosis League (SATL) Commission, set up to assess the prevalence of TB in children and adults across Saskatchewan, Ferguson directed the research and wrote the report that made 21 recommendations, 12 of which were implemented by the government. In 1921, the SATL commission surveyed school children to gauge the level of TB infection in the province. Fifty-four percent of 1,184 non-Indigenous children tested positive to tuberculin tests, which indicated infection or exposure, and 92.5 % of 192 Indigenous children tested positive.² Under Ferguson's leadership, research was conducted that demonstrated "the problems with existing residential school admission policies and the ways in which the health of First Nations children could be improved and protected."³ Ferguson began a study at the File Hills and Qu'Appelle Indian Residential Schools in 1927. Though Ferguson study notes reflect the social and medical stereotypes and cultural misreadings of his time, his mission against tuberculosis, which

focused on Indigenous peoples, would take Saskatchewan into the lowest tuberculosis death rate in Canada from 1921 to 1940.⁴

In 1929, Saskatchewan became the first jurisdiction in North America to provide free TB diagnosis and treatment. Indigenous peoples were given equal access to TB treatment and care. "With funding from the National Research Council and Indian Affairs, the SATL established a Qu'Appelle Indian Demonstration Health Unit (commonly referred to as the 'Fort Qu'Appelle Health Unit') in 1930. The unit promoted measures intended to improve living conditions, including the provision of better housing and water supply, dietary supplements, visiting nurses, and hospitalization of all active tuberculosis cases. These measures alone led to a 50% decline in the First Nations tuberculosis death rate by 1932."⁵ Two more sanatoria were opened: Prince Albert San and Saskatoon San. By 1933, students testing positive for TB in at File Hills and Qu'Appelle schools had dropped from 92% of students testing positive to TB to less than 60%. Ferguson concluded that as a result of the strict admission and discharge policy that the health unit had enforced, healthy students at these two schools had been protected. He recommended that Indian Affairs extend the unit's work province wide. Ferguson committed the Saskatchewan Anti-Tuberculosis League travelling clinic to the examination of children in other residential schools in the province in 1933. He asserted that the schools were the battleground for the fight against tuberculosis in Indigenous people.

Ferguson's plan, which included "testing of all residential school dairy herds, x-ray testing of all First Nations students at the start of each year, and the conversion of a residential school into a sanatorium dedicated to the education and treatment of children with active TB or who were infectious,"⁶ mirrored Dr. Bryce's recommendations from 1907, that some residential schools be transformed into government-run sanatoria. Some of the churches even supported this idea in the 1930s. However, no such sanatorium was established at this time. Indian Affairs did, however, support the travelling clinic that examined students in all Saskatchewan residential schools by providing the salaries of one physician and one nurse. By doing so, the service of four physicians at the two schools and two reserves could be eliminated--a cost saving for the government. In 1934, a TB survey of 921 students at 11 residential schools found 67 students who needed to be discharged, 17 of whom Ferguson recommended be moved to a sanatorium. Ferguson remarked in 1935, "we now feel convinced that the same policy of segregation of spreaders will have the same results when applied to the Indians as has been proven in the case of the White residents of the province."⁷

In 1933, Ferguson conducted a trial on the effectiveness of the bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine in providing resistance to tuberculosis. He expressed misgivings about BCG because long-term effects were still unknown and because of a BCG experiment-gone-wrong in Lubeck, Germany in 1930. However, an investigation had concluded that the vaccine in Lubeck had been contaminated with tuberculosis bacilli. The government was supportive of the BCG trial because, if successful, it would provide an inexpensive treatment against TB. Ferguson believed, if successful, the vaccine would provide "a practical programme for the control of tuberculosis

¹ <http://sain.scaa.sk.ca/collections/index.php/saskatchewan-anti-tuberculosis-league-fonds:rad>

² Lux, M. (1998). Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial. *CBHM/BCHM* 15, 277-295

³ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 430

⁴ http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/tuberculosis_control.html

⁵ The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 430

⁶ Missing Children and Unmarked Graves, Vol. 4, p. 72

⁷ Lux, M. (1998). Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial. *CBHM/BCHM* 15, p. 287

among Indians where limited accommodation was available for segregation of the tuberculous sick, and where segregation would not be practical for the older generations."⁸ His research into the vaccine left him so certain, he wrote, "I also vaccinated my children before vaccinating others." Dr. Ferguson performed the tests on newborn infants while they were in the Colony cottage hospital and the control group, who did not receive the vaccine, were infants born at home. The trial was a success. From 1933 to 1945, there were only six cases of TB and only two deaths among the infants who were vaccinated and 39 cases of TB and nine deaths among the unvaccinated infants. Due to the number of deaths among the vaccinated infants that were not related to tuberculosis, however, the study also highlighted the fact that "poverty, not tuberculosis, was the greatest threat to Native infants."⁹ Ferguson wrote privately to the president of the National Research Council regarding the testing of residential school children: "I feel as though it would be unwise to initiate human experimental work among Indian children who are the direct wards of the Government, and for which reason they are not in a position to exercise voluntary cooperation. Furthermore in case of difficulties arising, the Government itself could not be without responsibility." Nevertheless, to address the high death rate from TB, Ferguson began "the selective BCG vaccination" with children in residential schools in the fall of 1933. There were no deaths among the school children who had been vaccinated or from the control group, but this may also "have been due to Ferguson's policy of excluding infectious students from the schools."¹⁰ He also set up a BCG trial among sanatorium personnel. TB death rates remained high in residential schools until the 1950s. When tuberculosis began to decline, it was due to enhanced BCG vaccination programs and the introduction of effective treatment for tuberculosis.¹¹

Implementation of Dr. Ferguson's recommendations was slowed in 1937, when Indian Affairs introduced drastic spending cuts to medical care: Agents were instructed to remove Indigenous peoples with chronic conditions from hospitals, and no funds would be available for TB surveys or treatment in sanatoria or hospitals. Ferguson sent an angry letter to the Liberal minister, insisting that this cut "will result in a lot of bad feelings and criticism among those who have supported the Anti-Tuberculosis programme so loyally in an effort to clean up Saskatchewan." The SATL had subsidized half of the costs of examination of Indigenous schoolchildren. Ferguson also noted "It is only fair to tell you that one of the worst conditions [is] maintain[ed] at the Duck Lake school near Prince Albert in [Prime Minister] Mr. King's own constituency."¹² The Canadian Tuberculosis Association put pressure on the government about its cuts. "The minister recognized that 'public opinion was growing in favour of more active steps taken to improve the tuberculosis situation not only for the benefit of the Indian but to protect the White population as well.' The committee recommended that infected children be removed from schools."¹³ The government increased its spending on First Nations tuberculosis in 1938 and 1939. Indian Affairs informed Indian agents to "secure tuberculosis control of residential schools," which involved discharging students with active TB,¹⁴ a directive that should have been issued 20 years earlier after Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce's report. The government's failure to adopt measures recommended by medical professionals and to put in place inadequate and unenforced policies was a failure that unnecessarily cost the lives of many Indigenous students living in Indian residential schools as wards of the government.

⁸ Ferguson, R. G. & Simes, A. B. (1949). BCG Vaccination of Indian Infants in Saskatchewan. *Tubercle* 30(1), 5-11.

⁹ Lux, M. (1998). Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial. *CBHM/BCHM* 15, p. 290

¹⁰ *The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939*, Vol. 1, p. 432

¹¹ *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: Vol. 4*, p. 73

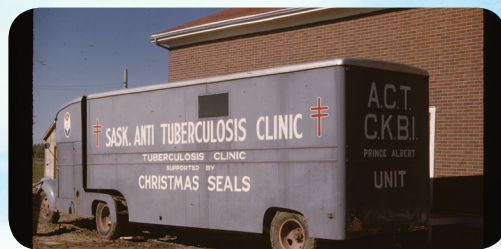
¹² Lux, M. (1998). Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial. *CBHM/BCHM* 15, p. 290

¹³ Lux, M. (1998). Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial. *CBHM/BCHM* 15, p. 291

¹⁴ *The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939*, Vol. 1, p. 435



Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium - showing new wing. Fort Qu'Appelle, Sk, ca. 1927, Saskatoon Library, PH-2006-84



Anti TB clinic on wheels, Gravelbourg. June 12, 1947. Everett Baker (Photo courtesy of Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society)

UNNECESSARILY HIGH DEATH RATES AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

"The Commission has identified 3,200 deaths on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Register of Confirmed Deaths of Native School Students and the Register of Confirmed Deaths of Unnamed Residential School Students... Aboriginal children in residential schools died at a far higher rate than school-aged children in the general population... The federal government never established an adequate health and regulations to guarantee the health and safety of residential school students... The failure to establish and enforce adequate health standards, coupled with the failure to adequately fund the schools, resulted in unnecessarily high death rates at residential schools... (Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 1). The following are a few of the names of those who died in Saskatchewan Indian

SCHOOL	NAME(AGE)	DATE	NOTES			
File Hills IRS	Archie Feather (age 7)	Nov. 1, 1912	Drowned	Guy IRS	Genevieve Ninine (age 7)	April 15, 1944
Round Lake IRS	Joseph Louison	1934	Drowned during recess	Guy IRS	Nelson P. Spence (age 8)	May 7, 1944
Round Lake IRS	Percy Ochapowace	January 13, 1935	ran away in -32 degrees Celsius weather and was found frozen to death on January 17 by father	Guy IRS	Ubaldo Niculus (age 11)	1944
Lac la Ronge IRS	Zephaniah Charles	May 24, 1936	TB Meningitis	Guy IRS	Margaret Moose (age 8)	Dec 15, 1944
Lac la Ronge IRS	Grace Sophie Eninew	Mar. 12, 1937	Gradually lost her sight.	Guy IRS	Helen Bear (age 10)	Winter 1945
Lac la Ronge IRS	John Bird	June 7, 1937	Measles made TB active	Guy IRS	Emile Morin (age 13)	During holidays
Lac la Ronge IRS	Matthew McKenzie	May 30, 1937	Had rickets TB made worse by measles	Guy IRS	Marie Bear (age 10)	Aug. 22, 1946
Lac la Ronge IRS	Absalom Bird	May 29, 1937	TB made worse by measles	Guy IRS	Suzette Merasty (age 15)	June 14, 1947
Lac la Ronge IRS	Daniel Cook	July 12, 1937	TB made worse by measles	Guy IRS	Leo Sauteux (age 15)	Sept. 21, 1947
Lac la Ronge IRS	Ellen McKenzie	Nov. 2, 1939	TB	Guy IRS	Jimmie Adam (age 10)	Sept 21, 1949
Gordon's IRS	Andrew Gordon (age 11)	March 11, 1939	ran away, found frozen 3 days later by his father	Beauval IRS	Marcel Lemaigre (age 7)	Night of September 19-20, 1927
Gordon's IRS	Myrtle Jane Moostos (age 16)	June 14, 1947	by drowning		Jimmy Iron (age 8)	
Gordon's IRS	Margaret Bruce (age 11)	June 14, 1947	by drowning		Alex Opikokew (age 8)	
Gordon's IRS	David Thomas Anderson	1963	Died in fire in basement		Simon Sayers (Sayesc) (age 8)	
Gordon's IRS	Kenneth Lloyd Anderson	1963	Died in fire in basement		Raphael Corrigan (age 9)	
Gordon's IRS	Peter Michael Anderson	1963	Died in fire in basement		Jules Coulionner (age 9)	
St. Philips IRS	Alfred Whitehalk	June 4, 1965	Drowned attempting to cross Assiniboine River		Samuel Gardiner (age 9)	
Guy IRS	Madeleine Head (age 6)	March 5, 1932	died at school		Roderique Iron (age 10)	
Guy IRS	Jacob Okimaw (age 6)	Feb. 7, 1936	died at Hospital in The Pas		Joseph Sayers (Sayesc)(age 10)	
Guy IRS	Josiah Constant (age 11)	November 15, 1936	died at Hospital in The Pas		Thomas Alcrow (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Bibiane Bighetty (age 10)	Dec. 30, 1936	died at school	Beauval IRS	Freddy Bishop (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Julian Bighetty (age 9)	July 1937	died at Cumberland House	Beauval IRS	Antoine Durocher (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Josephte Mead	July 18, 1937	died at Pakitawagan	Beauval IRS	Patrice Grosventre (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Gabriel Colomb (age 11)	November 1937	died at Pakitawagan	Beauval IRS	Frank Kimbley (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Elizabeth Rat (age 7)	October 18, 1939	Coughing pneumonia (attended 2 months)	Beauval IRS	Alfred Laliberté (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Leon Merasty (age 13)	May 9, 1940	died at The Pas Hospital (admitted Aug. 1939)	Beauval IRS	Moise Larivière (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Martial Siwap (age 8)	Sept 21, 1940	died at The Pas Hospital	Beauval IRS	Zéphrin Morin (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Elise Okimaw (age 8)	March 1940	died at The Pas Hospital	Beauval IRS	Albert Sylvestre (age 11)	
Guy IRS	Marguerite Linklater (age 6)	March 12, 1941	died at The Pas Hospital (attended 6 months)	Beauval IRS	Ernest Bishop (age 12)	
Guy IRS	Elie Caribou (age 7)	April 24, 1943	TB died at sanatorium	Beauval IRS	Sister Lea Bellerose	
Guy IRS	Jimmie Beanouni (age 8)	July 20, 1941	died at The Pas Hospital (attended 10 months)	Thunderchild IRS	Francois Deneyozare (age 9)	May 3, 1943
Guy IRS	Madeleine Michell (age 13)	Sept. 1942		Thunderchild IRS	Claire Lariviere (age 9)	June 30, 1945
Guy IRS	Pierre Okimaw (age 13)	July 1942		Thunderchild IRS	Emilie Dazay (age 15)	April 6, 1948
Guy IRS	Joseph Michell (age 7)	January 1943	died at the sanatorium (attended 3 months)	Thunderchild IRS	Elise Durocher (age 8)	May 4, 1947
Guy IRS	Emilie Michel (age 11)	During holidays 1943		Thunderchild IRS	Marie Alexandra Opikokew	Jan. 30, 1945
				Thunderchild IRS	Josette Couillonneur (age 9)	Feb. 13, 1945
				Thunderchild IRS	Robert Lonesinger	1990
				St. Michael's IRS	Henry Peeteetuce (age 8)	Dec. 5, 1935
				St. Michael's IRS	Regis Thomas (age 8)	Aug. 11, 1936
				St. Michael's IRS	Alma Levi	May 24, 1928
				St. Michael's IRS	Mary Josephine Daniels	May 12, 1939
				Thunderchild IRS	Elmirie Mirasty	May, 1916
				Principals who died in office during the early 1900s in what is now Saskatchewan: Regina principal A. J. McLeod (died of a violent attack of hiccups in 1901); Regina principal J. A. Sinclair (died suddenly in 1905); Onion Lake, Anglican school principal John Matheson (1916); Qu'Appelle principal Joseph Hugonard (who suffered from Bright's disease in 1916); Gordon's principal H. W. Atwater (1925); Beauval principal Mederic Adam (typhoid, 1930); Marieval/Cowessess principal J. Carriere (1933); Kamsack principal C. B. Fisher (1933); All Saints and St. Alban's Principal G. W. Fisher (died in 1949 due to overwork)		

**Named Residential
schools died
the set of standards
regulations was
and enforce adequate
ols." (Missing
residential schools:**

died in hospital

died at sanatorium

died at home

died at home

1945

died at sanatorium (attended 1 year)

died at sanatorium

died at home

died at sanatorium

ber

Nineteen students and
one teacher died in fire.

entered school Aug. 15

died in hospital

taken to hospital Jan. 6

died at Hospital Feb. 1

pneumonia/beaten
to death by staff(?)

lung TB

died at home from Meningitis TB

died at home on sick leave

Vascular disease of the heart
(hemorrhage)

hewan:
00);

ease and lung problems died in 1917);

rouillet (1935).
rwork).



BEARING WITNESS



PROJECT OF HEART: COMMEMORATING THE CHILDREN



Sylvia Smith

While studying with the University of Regina, Sylvia Smith, an Ottawa-based history teacher, developed the Project of Heart, which is a commemorative project that facilitates student learning about residential schools. The project is an inquiry-based, collaborative, intergenerational, and artistic journey to examine the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada, leading to the acknowledgment of the losses incurred by former students, their families and communities. The project includes the creation of a commemorative tile to honour those who attended residential schools and those who died while attending a residential school. Following is an interview with Sylvia in which she briefly outlines what a Project of Heart looks like.

Initially, Project of Heart (POH) had five distinct parts, and now it has six.

Part 1 deals with learning about the Indian Residential Schools (IRS), why they were created, how many there were, what the conditions were like for the students, and so on. Because there were virtually no resources for teaching about the IRS at the time, materials donated by Legacy of Hope (LOH) filled the kits. With respect to the loss of life and deaths due to the IRS, I relied on primary source documents that I got from visiting Library and Archives Canada. The primary source documents were ways for the students to see that these children actually existed and that they never stopped resisting attempts to make their lives better, even if it meant fleeing the schools and many of them, dying while trying. These primary source

documents brought the horrors of so many of these schools to life!

Part 2 is where the students choose a particular Indian Residential School and then learn something about the Nation on whose land that School stood, and their contributions to Canadian society. The facilitator or teacher can proceed with doing this part in whatever way that best meets the learners' needs. Often, it is the first time that students find out the name of the Original Peoples of the territory that they're living on. What students find out after doing this part is that no matter how hard the Canadian Government tried to "kill the Indian within the child" they were not successful. Students are able to see—and feel—that Indigenous peoples and their cultures must be incredibly resilient to have survived an onslaught that started 500 years ago and continues to this day.

Part 3 is the first gesture of reconciliation. It is the part where students take what information they've gleaned from doing Parts 1 and 2, and use their skill/talent at communicating, through art, their feelings. They may feel sadness, anger, or they may not even know how to feel. They may feel hope, especially after finding out that Indigenous people are not a dying race—that there are many who are devoted to rebuilding their communities and relearning their languages...and know that there is a place for them in today's society. But whatever it is they are feeling, they communicate it through art. They decorate a small wooden tile, each tile symbolically representative of the life of one child who died. This child's memory is brought back to life.

Part 4 is where an Indian Residential School survivor (or a cultural worker or an IRS intergenerational survivor, or an Elder) comes to the school (or church or business) and answers questions, gives a teaching, or just talks to the students about life. Normally, if it's a survivor, she will answer questions from the group. This is where lived experiential

knowledge is transmitted to the learners.

Part 5 is the social justice piece, the second gesture of reconciliation where settlers who are doing this project, "walk the talk." This part is missing from most government promises. Our Canadian Government, under the leadership of Mr. Harper, said we were sorry. But we didn't mean it, because there were NO actions undertaken that would prove that we (as a country) were sorry. Project of Heart provides a way for its learners to truly enact our citizenship responsibilities, putting empathy into action, in a respectful way. (We want to build trust. We want to walk with, not over, Aboriginal people.) It demonstrates to Indigenous people that non-Aboriginals are prepared to act in support of their resistance struggles, whether it be for justice for the horrific number of Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or murdered, or the over-the-top numbers of Aboriginal kids who are in state care through various ministries of child and social services.

Part 6 is a relatively recent addition. It was instituted after the TRC National Event in Saskatchewan while under the care of Charlene Bearhead. One of the teachers in Saskatoon Catholic Board, Lynette Brossart, and her students, who had completed Project of Heart, were invited to come to the National Event. Lynette was very concerned to find out that there were IRS Survivors there who had never heard of Project of Heart and felt the need to do something about it. She came up with the idea of the learner groups making cards for the survivors. With this step, when there are events that Survivors are attending, they could be given a card with one Project of Heart tile attached to it, which would let them know that the learners cared about them, and that they were learning about their situation so that this would never happen again. It worked! Project of Heart had now come full circle.

What led to the development of the Project of Heart?

There were a few 'circumstances' that led to the development of the project, but the easiest to explain is the fact that I couldn't justify to my Grade 10 students why such a major part of our history was invisible. Young people will challenge their teachers if something doesn't make sense, and in the only mandatory history course there is in Ontario high schools (contemporary Canadian History), there was a huge, absolutely gaping void. When a particularly inquiring student, Andrea, was finding evidence in her research that was creating a cognitive dissonance for her (it was the number of students that had perished while at the schools) she would not give up trying to figure out why this egregious part of history was so neglected. I had no choice but to be gently led by her curiosity, fast-becoming-anger. Our textbook dedicated two paragraphs (63 words) to the IRS era. Andrea couldn't believe it, and I couldn't either. So between her righteous anger and my integrity on the line as a history teacher, we decided that if the textbook couldn't tell us the truth, we would find it and learn it on our own! And not only that, but also we'd help others whom we knew were as ignorant, maybe even more-so, than we were! So Andrea got to work, continuing her research and at the same time, building contacts in both the Aboriginal and settler community that could help her and her classmates make sense of their past. They all felt betrayed. They had grown up proud to be Canadian, and now that identity was being challenged in a major way.

In a nutshell, there were a lot of relationships made, guest speakers invited, (IRS survivors in the community), and activists who supported the students in this educational endeavour right from the start. The students did what was within their capability to do (write proposals so we could get some money to buy the wooden tiles, and pay honouraria for Aboriginal guests to come and talk to us) and I did my part. Project of Heart began with

the first ceremony to honour the children who had died.

After the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been struck, and there was a call for proposals to do "Commemorative Projects," I thought, "Why not? Let's do what we're doing in the class already, and just formalize it?"

To fulfill the requirement of a master's course I was taking, the project of Heart was envisioned, and its parts fully explained. Supporters came through to help us build the teaching module. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers supplied all the boxes, free of charge. The Legacy of Hope Foundation gifted them with thousands of dollars worth of resources with which they would fill the kits. I would purchase the small tiles and fill the kit with a pre-arranged number. And perhaps the most important thing—cost—I wanted potential users to know that they could experience this transformative learning, for less than the cost of textbook. The only caveat was that their heart had to be in it, and they had to be willing to engage the Indigenous community. Project of Heart would only work if it was centered on Indigenous people and their experiences.

So, it is these resources that Sylvia sent out to any learner group who wanted them. "It was truly a labour of love. My partner created the website (www.projectofheart.ca) where groups who do the project could upload pictures and a report on their experiences doing Project of Heart." This part was essential because as schools and other learner groups reported on their experiences, they gave ideas and inspiration to other groups. I insured that facilitator directions were packed in the boxes and that an inventory of what was included in the kit was included.

Interested in doing a POH with your students? Check out Saskatchewan's POH website:



Charlene Bearhead

Project of Heart is now a program within the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Education. In 2017, Charlene Bearhead was the Education Lead for the NCTR and the National Coordinator for Project of Heart. Charlene says that the Project of Heart was brought to her attention by a friend and colleague Elder Maggie Hodgson in 2009. Charlene says, "When I was recruited to the role of Program Manager for the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation in 2011 one of my first priorities was to take the time to find out more about Project of Heart." What she loved about the Project of Heart was that it was prescriptive enough that it offered teachers a place to start and a path to follow, but it was also open enough that it invited each facilitator and student to make the Project their own. "This is engaged and authentic learning in my view," says Charlene. She hopes to see Project of Heart continue to offer a starting point for teachers, families, and community groups to embark upon their journey of seeking truth and walking a path of genuine reconciliation.



While student-teachers, Jane Brundige and Brooke Alexander co-facilitated a Project of Heart with students from Imperial Community School in Regina

SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS



Battleford Industrial School
(1883 - 1914)



Beauval Indian Residential School
(1860/69 - 1995)



Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School
(1821-1976)



Crowstand Indian Residential School
(1889 - 1915) Cote Improved Federal Day
School (1928 - 1940)



Fort Pelly (1905 - 1913)/St. Philip's
(1928-1969) Indian Residential School



File Hills Indian Residential School
(1889 - 1949)



Gordon's Indian Residential School
(1888 - 1996)



Guy/Sturgeon Landing Indian Residential
School (1926 - 1952)



Lebret/Qu'Appelle Residential School
(1884 - 1998)



Marieval/Cowessess Residential School
(1899 - 1997)



Muscowequan Indian Residential School
(1889 - 1997)



Onion Lake/St. Anthony's Indian
Residential School (1894 - 1974)



Onion Lake /St. Barnabas Indian
Residential School (1892 - 1943)



St. Alban's Indian Residential School
(1943-1951)



Lac La Ronge/All Saints Indian Residential
School (1907 - 1947)



Prince Albert (All Saints) Indian Residential
School (1947 - 1997)



Regina Industrial Residential School
(1891 - 1910)



Round Lake Indian Residential School
(1888 - 1950)



Duck Lake/St. Michael's
Indian Residential School (1894-1996)



Thunderchild /St. Henri/Delmas Indian
Residential School (1901 - 1948)

Student residences still in operation in 1990s in Saskatchewan: Beauval, Duck Lake, Gordon's, Marieval (Grayson), Muscowequan (Lestock), Prince Albert, and Qu'Appelle. Qu'Appelle was the last to close in 1998. (Photo credits on the school profile page)

MAP OF INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL LOCATIONS IN WHAT IS NOW SASKATCHEWAN



- Anglican Church of Canada
- Roman Catholic
- Presbyterian/
United Church of Canada



Île-à-la-Crosse
Residential School
1821-1976

Beauval (1866/69-
1995) Lac la Plonge
Boarding/Mission
School

Lac La Ronge
(All Saints) IRS (1907 - 1947)

Sturgeon
Landing
Guy IRS
(1926 - 1952)

Onion Lake
St. Anthony's IRS (1894 - 1974)
St. Barnabas IRS (1892 - 1943)

Prince Albert
Emmanuel College (1879 - 1883)
St. Alban's IRS (1943 - 1951)
All Saints IRS (1947 - 1951)
Prince Albert IRS (1951 - 1997)

Delmas
Thunderchild
IRS
(1901 - 1948)

Battleford
Indian
Industrial
School
(1883 - 1914)

Duck Lake
St. Michael's
IRS
(1894 -
1996)

Cote Improved Federal Day School (1928 - 1940)
Fort Pelly IRS (1905-1913)/St. Phillip's Indian
Residential School (1928-1969)

Punnichy
Gordon's IRS (1888 - 1996)

Lestock Muscowequan
IRS (1889-1997)

Kamsack
Crowstand IRS (1889 - 1915)

Balcarres The Hills IRS
(1889 - 1949)

Regina
Indian
Industrial
School
(1891 - 1910)

Lebret
Qu'Appelle IRS
(1884 - 1998)

Grayson Marieval/Cowessess IRS (1898 - 1997)

Whitewood
Round Lake IRS (1888 -1950)

Did you know that the word "Saskatchewan" comes from the Cree word "kisiskatchewan sipi," which means "swift-flowing river"?

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In 2013, Port Perry High School students commemorated students who attended Battleford Indian Industrial School.



Battleford Indian Industrial School, the cricket team, ca. 1895, Library and Archives Canada/PA-182265

[Click here to read about Charlie \(No. 20\) from Onion Lake and the alleged ill-treatment reported by the Gazette from an interview with Indian Agent Mann. \(And other stories on supplementary page\)](#)



A photograph of the students and staff of the Battleford Industrial School taken by D. Cadzow, undated. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo Collection/S-B 70

BATTLEFORD INDUSTRIAL

Battleford Indian Industrial School (1883-1914) was located at Battleford, on Treaty 6 land. The school was set up in the Old Government House, which previously served as the residence of the lieutenant-governor (Edward Dewdney) when Battleford was the Territorial capital of the North-west Territories in what is now Saskatchewan. During the North-West Resistance, the school was damaged and evacuated (1885-1886). Battleford Industrial School was operated by the Anglican Church of Canada and later, in 1895, the Diocese of Saskatchewan took over operations. Rev. Thomas Clarke (who learned to speak Cree in 1877 at Sandy Lake and Snake Plains)¹ became the first principal. He was principal from 1883 to 1894. As one of the first three industrial schools established on the recommendations made by the Davin Report and Edgar Dewdney to Prime Minister Macdonald, the federal government covered all the costs associated with the operation of this school until it was transferred to the per capita model in 1895. In 1892, the federal government significantly reduced funding per student at its industrial schools, which at Battleford went from \$175.45² to \$140.00. In 1893, the church authorities refused to take management of the school and the federal government continued to pay the expenses until 1895, when the Diocese of Saskatchewan took over operations. Archdeacon John A. Mackay became interim principal from January to April in 1895, and Rev. Edward K. Matheson was then appointed as principal in May 1895 where he remained until the school closed in 1914.³

Half-Time Model: Child Labour Camp

Industrial schools operated under the half-time model in which students spent half of the day receiving classroom instruction and the other half receiving farming or trades instruction. Trades included carpentry, blacksmithing, shoemaking, printing, and farming. Girls were enrolled after the North-West Resistance; Their out-of-classroom learning included housework, sewing, knitting, washing, ironing, and cooking. Survivor Mary Angus of Moosomin Reserve, who attended the school while Principal E. Matheson was in charge (1895-1914), said that after getting up at 6:00 a.m. they dressed, washed, recited prayers and ate breakfast; they then had this routine: "We did all the work, cleaning up, make the beds upstairs. Some of the girls were washing dishes in the kitchen. After that we go to work. We kept changing work every month. I used to work at the sewing room, another month I go to knitting stockings for the children on the machine, another month I go to the kitchen and another month I go to the laundry. We were changing all the time."⁴

Water and Sanitation Problems

With instructions from Dewdney to exercise "the strictest economy...in all particulars," and Hayter Reed's directive, "The internal economy of the institution will be based on the military plan, and strict enforcement of the round of duties insisted upon,"⁵ Rev. Clarke began his work. However, within a year of the opening, there were problems that resulted from the money-saving decision to locate the Battleford school in what had formerly been only a private residence. "In June 1884, Principal

Clarke reported that 'the need of having a good supply of water near the Institution is daily becoming more urgent.' The closest water supply was from the river, which was almost a kilometer away at the bottom of a steep hill.⁶ After the school was damaged in the North-West Resistance, Dewdney believed that the most cost-efficient solution was to build a new school. However, federal government officials chose to repair the buildings instead. In 1901, Battleford was reported as still having poor water supply/unsanitary sewage.

Language Loss

In 1887, Clarke noted that the students were making good progress with learning to read, write and speak English; however, they seemed to prefer speaking in Cree after class.⁷

Wasylow (1972) reported that according to survivor Sam Benson, who attended the school from 1888 to 1898, "The children were not restricted from talking in Cree to each other. Benson believed that the restrictions came into effect later, possibly after he had left."⁸ Benson was 9 years old when he started attending the school. In 1890, Hayter Reed reported, "Discipline is not what it should be, neither is proper regard had to making the children speak English. During the whole time of my visit there appeared to be a marked lack of endeavour upon the part of the officials to see that they [the students] used English in preference to the vernacular."⁹

By the time survivor Mary Angus attended Battleford in 1893, there were restrictions on

¹ Wasylow, W. J. (1972). History of Battleford Industrial School for Indians. [Thesis] University of Saskatchewan, SK, p. 155.

² "if converted to per capita rates, ...\$175.45." The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 218.

³ Wasylow, W. J. (1972). (See pages 155-159 on life of E. K. Matheson)

⁴ Wasylow, W. J. (1972), p. 447

⁵ Wasylow, W. J. (1972), p. 63

⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 162

⁷ Wasylow, W. J. (1972), p. 76

⁸ Wasylow, W. J. (1972), p. 446 (interview conducted in 1969)

⁹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 221

"We must never forget and we must continue to be a voice for those who had theirs taken away—we honor their spirit by what we do today." Wanda Wilson, President, SICC



This commemorative cairn bears a plaque identifying 50 of the 74 people (mostly students) buried in the Anglican cemetery connected with the Battleford Industrial School. Photo courtesy of sicc.sk archive

"In 1984, the site was designated as a Provincial Heritage Property by the province of Saskatchewan partly due to its association with Battleford Industrial School. In 2003 the structure was destroyed by fire (Parks Canada n.d.)."¹⁷

In 1975, the Saskatchewan Indian reported that "the reconsecration of the Anglican cemetery connected with the Battleford Industrial School was recently marked with a special ceremony. A cairn has been erected bearing plaques identifying the cemetery and containing the names of 50 persons known to be buried there....Seventy-four people, most of them students who attended the school, are buried in the cemetery, although records have been found for only some 50 of them."¹²

1 Brace, A. (2012). Heritage Alternatives
2 Sept. 30, 1975, *Saskatchewan Indian*, 5(17), 6



Government House (Government of Saskatchewan, Photo by Frank Korvemaker, 1979)



Stabilized ruins of the 2003 fire. Government of Saskatchewan, Photo by Calvin Fehr, 2004

AL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

speaking in Cree. She said, "They strapped girls too. They didn't allow us to talk Cree, and those that talked Cree and got caught talking Cree—they lose all their hair, cut up like men's cut, always straight up (up on the head). That's what they did with you—bald head like. All the hair cut to be as a man, that what they do, for us not to talk (Cree). We were afraid of that, to have our hair cut."¹⁰

Death and ill-treatment

In 1884, a missionary on the Blood Reserve, F. Bourne, objected to sending children to schools that were so far away from home. He believed the students were dying from "sheer homesickness."¹¹ In 1886, based on an interview with Indian Agent Mann, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that parents were refusing to send their children to Battleford because of the ill-treatment of one boy. The charge was denied and a letter drawn up with an "x" for signature from Charles (No. 20), stating that he had not been treated badly by the teacher. ([Read the reports here](#))

Unsanitary Conditions

An 1890 inspection concluded the school had no fire protection and a sanitation system that was an invitation to an epidemic. There had been no directives given to the Principal Thomas Clarke regarding admission of children with health issues, especially infectious diseases. Thus, sick children were housed with well children; students were dying at high rates from infectious diseases such as pneumonia, influenza, and tuberculosis, which were being spread throughout the school.

In 1891, "Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed concluded that the hospital ward in the school was in such poor shape that they had to move the children in it to the staff sitting room. Reed explained that, 'the noise, as well as the bad smells, come from the lavatory underneath.'"¹²

Abuse

In a fall 1892 report, "Indian Affairs official Alex McGibbon wrote that another Indian Affairs official had locked a boy in a cell," against the wishes of the principal.¹³ Also in 1892, "students were made to stand alongside a fence for two hours as punishment."¹⁴

Decreased Enrollment and Deficit

To address low enrollments, regulations were put in place by Hayter Reed in 1895, in which power was "given ... to bring back deserters" and principals were free to exercise discretion about enforcing them. Reed added, "Schools which have not their full complement of pupils, such as Battleford and Regina, can now be filled and the Department would like you to communicate with our Agents with a view to securing orphans to fill vacancies."¹⁵ However, with the Liberal victory in 1896, Reed's replacement, James Smart, backed away from this compulsory approach.¹⁶ During Rev. Matheson's term as principal (1895 - 1914), the number of students attending continued to decline. Enrollments of children (mostly from Montreal Lake) were especially low because the parents were unwilling to send their children away

from home for an education.¹⁷ In 1899, Matheson criticized the government for not enforcing the attendance regulations: "The policy of the department—that of insisting on the education of the children—is the proper one. But one thing remains, and that is to put *the policy into force*. Until this is done the full results desired cannot be shown."¹⁸ Lower attendance resulted in a lower per capita grant, leading to a deficit of over \$2,000 by the end of 1911. This pattern continued into 1912 when enrollment dropped to 35. [Duncan Campbell Scott](#), Indian Affairs superintendent of Indian Education, concluded that "the school had outlived its usefulness,"¹⁹ recommending its closure.

"When the Battleford school closed in May 1914, Principal Matheson reminded Indian Affairs of the school cemetery that contained the bodies of 70-80 individuals, most of whom were former students. He worried that unless the government took steps to care for the cemetery, it would be overrun by stray cattle."²⁰ In 1975, the Battleford school cemetery was re-consecrated. A cairn was erected bearing the names of 50 (mostly students) known persons to be buried there.²¹

[Read more about Battleford IRS](#)

¹² Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 143

¹³ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 97

¹⁴ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 99

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 256

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 258

¹⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 268

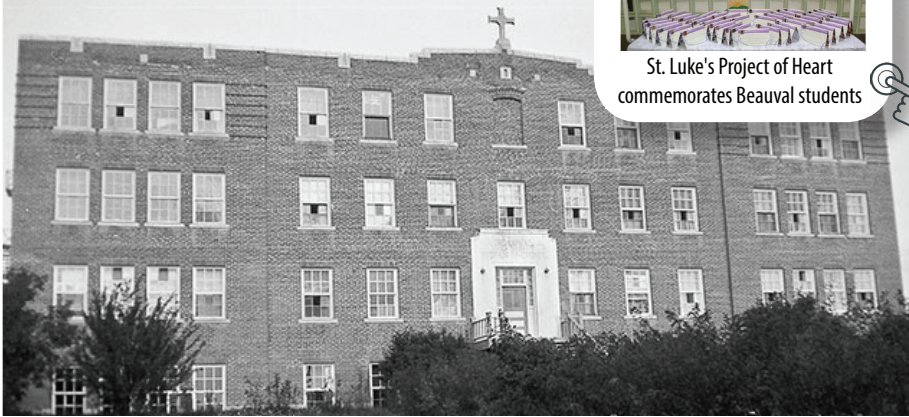
¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 259

¹⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 268

²⁰ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 119

²¹ <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a75sep3006.htm>

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St. Luke's Project of Heart commemorates Beauval students



"The appeal court noted that Leroux had regularly and repeatedly abused boys as young as nine years old. According to the decision, Leroux would give the youngsters mixed drinks, including martinis, before assaulting them. In some cases the assaults took place in his quarters at the school. Sometimes the boys were assaulted in their bunks." (CBC News, May 05, 2015).

Classes were taught in French at Beauval because the teachers did not speak English well. In 1912, a debate arose over whether the classes should be taught in English. A First Nation leader wrote a letter in Cree to "the Great Master in charge of schools" that if the Government banned French it would "be very difficult for us to send our children to school." French and Michif were the local languages. (The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 626) Photo: Beauval Indian Residential School, ca. 1951, St. Boniface Historical Society, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas/N2730



Maria Campbell, author of *Halfbreed*, went to Beauval school at the age of seven. [Read more...](#)

Sept. 26, 1946, A little girl wearing a school uniform and a hat. St. Boniface Historic Society, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas/ N1679

BEAUVAL INDIAN RE

Beauval (Lac La Plonge) Indian Residential School (1860¹ - 1995) was initially located in Île-à-la-Crosse, in what became Treaty 10 land.² It became an official boarding school in 1897 with government funding for 12 children. In 1906, the Roman Catholic Mission³ that operated the school moved the site at Lac la Plonge. The Mission ran the school until the federal government took control in 1969. The government worked in cooperation with the Board of Directors (comprised of the Chiefs of the Indian Bands in the Meadow Lake District) until the mid-70s, when the government transferred control of the residences to a First Nations parent group in response to their proposals. The school land became part of the La Plonge Indian Reserve in 1979. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council ran the school as the Beauval Indian Education Centre (an amalgamation of La Plonge High School and the Beauval Student Residence) from 1985 to 1995. The school buildings were demolished by former students in 1995.⁴

Fire and Student Deaths

In 1909, some "students died of burns when garbage disposal fires set their clothing on fire."⁵ In 1920, a fire destroyed the convent and residence and a young girl with disabilities died in the fire. In 1923, due to a boating accident, three boys drowned along with Sister Cecille Nadeau (29 years old) who died while attempting to save them. In 1926, the convent and school were rebuilt again after another fire destroyed it. In September, 1927, 19 students and one staff person died in a fire that destroyed the Beauval school.⁶ "Sister Lea and 19 boys, from the ages of 7 to 12, died...," wrote Principal Father Mederic Adam (translation). Sister Lea Bellerose had been teaching in Beauval since 1917 and spoke Cree fluently. She was in charge of the boys dormitory.⁷ The lack of access to safe fire escapes contributed to the high death toll. This tragedy prompted a national circular from Duncan Campbell Scott, that all fire-escape doors should open outward, and if sealed, only as much as a young pupil could break through, and a supervisor should have a bed near the fire exit.⁸

A new school was built and opened in 1932, but by the 1950s, this school was deemed a fire hazard. A 1952 inspection concluded the fire alarm system and facilities for evacuating children in case of fire were neglected. The

school was locking the fire-escape doors. In 1956, it was reported that the fire door had been nailed shut. That year, two fires were started deliberately, and in 1966, two 13-year-olds were caught attempting to set fire to the building. In 1970, a report stated the building was still not meeting fire codes. In 1984, the government received quotes for installing a sprinkler system at the insistence of the Fire Commissioner's office, but the record does not show whether these were installed, though the residence continued to operate until 1995.⁹

Epidemics and Student Deaths

During the 1936 epidemic of influenza and measles, the school and rectory were converted into hospitals. There were 60 deaths, 20 at the school and 40 among the families at the Mission. "In the course of last winter (1936) an epidemic of influenza and measles ravaged the north-west part of the Vicariat. It first started in Beauval and struck almost all the population. Our Indian school and the rectory were immediately converted into hospitals and despite the heroic efforts of the religious personnel there were 60 victims, 20 at the school and more than 40 among the families of the Mission. ... With an equal violence the epidemic arrived rapidly to our other Missions of the north particularly Île-à-la-Crosse, Buffalo River (Dillon) and Portage La Loche. In each of these Missions the death toll was around

¹ Joseph Bourbonnais (OMI), Principal Beauval Indian Residential School offers this date in "Considerations on Schooling in the Past. Voice of the North (1966-67 p. 6) http://archives.algomau.ca/main/sites/default/files/2012-21_003_036.pdf

² Treaty 10 was an agreement that was not signed until 1906 (after the province of Saskatchewan was formed), resulting in difficulties with government funding of schools in this territory.

³ The religious groups who operated and administrated the school from the beginning until the mid-1960s were the Oblate priests and brothers along with Sisters of St. Joseph or Grey Nuns of Montreal remained in the school into the 1970s. Vicar Apostolic Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas This archdiocese, based in Manitoba, operated two schools in Saskatchewan (Beauval and Guy at Sturgeon Landing).

⁴ As noted in [Heritage Alternatives at Sites of Trauma: Examples of the Indian Residential Schools of Canada](#).

⁵ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 75

⁶ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 3

⁷ <https://sites.google.com/site/portagelalocherhistory/6-residential-schools>

⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 475

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 333.

Student attempts at burning down schools were acts of resistance and survival. Even as an adult, one former student expressed the desire to burn down his former residential school: "Mervin Mirasty told the Commission that both he and his brother were sexually abused at Beauval residential school: To this day, I've always wanted to go back and burn the place, and I never did."

(Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 185)

Read Survivor Stories



Beauval (La Plonge) School that burned down Sept. 20, 1927, killing 19 boys and 1 nun. The dormitory was on the top floor. Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

The following list of boys who died in the fire was taken from the memorial monument:

Marcel Lemaigre age 7
 Jimmy Iron age 8
 Alex Opikokew age 8
 Simon Sayers (Sayesc) age 8
 Raphael Corrigan age 9
 Jules Coullonner age 9
 Samuel Gardiner age 9
 Roderique Iron age 10
 Joseph Sayers (Sayesc) age 10
 Thomas Alcrow age 11
 Freddy Bishop age 11
 Antoine Durocher age 11
 Patrice Grosventre age 11
 Frank Kimbley age 11
 Alfred Laliberté age 11
 Moise Larivière age 11
 Zéphrin Morin age 11
 Albert Sylvestre age 11
 Ernest Bishop age 12



Monument to the children who died in the 1927 fire. Inscription reads: "Many Aboriginal children were forced from their homes and institutionalized at the Beauval Mission School in 1927. A Fire at this School Killed 19 Aboriginal Students." (Photo courtesy of www.theinquiry.ca/wordpress/)



Beauval students, ca. 1911-1937, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

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50 people." (Bishop Lajeunesse in 1937, translation)¹⁰

Accidental Student Death

In 1942, a student at the school was killed when hit by a truck driven by the school principal, Francois Xavier Gagnon. In the report, "Gagnon said he thought the boy had been struck while attempting to jump onto the truck's running board."¹¹ (Read [RCMP report](#))

Métis Admission Policy Inconsistent

Indian Affairs wrote the school in 1925 to demand that the 45 "Half-breeds" as they were then called, be immediately discharged from the school to make space for "Treaty children." The principal responded, informing the government that the majority of children at Beauval were Métis, and most of these were orphaned, "only five of the forty-five students had living fathers and mothers."¹² The government withdrew the order, but continued to threaten that Métis children should expect to be discharged by June 1926. In 1928, Indian Affairs requested the discharge of eight "Half-breed" children. Again, the school defended their presence, referring to the Duncan Campbell Scott's ruling that "half-breed children living the Indian mode of life on reserve" were eligible for admission.¹³

¹⁰ <https://sites.google.com/site/portagealaloche/history/6-residential-schools>

¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 233.

¹² The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 26.

¹³ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 26.

In 1929, the provincial government provided grants for Métis day students.¹⁴

Sexual Abuse

In 1979, Paul Leroux, a former dormitory supervisor (1959 - 1967) at Beauval, was convicted with the sexual assault of a student at Grollier Hall (Inuvik, NWT). He spent four months in jail, but was later pardoned and his criminal record cleared. According to the NCTR, there is no record of an investigation in 1979 to determine if Leroux had assaulted other students at either Grollier Hall or the Beauval school.¹⁵ While at Beauval, Leroux had directed boys' choir, helped develop intramural hockey as well as competitive fastball and softball, and was coach of the Beauval Warriors. Between 1996 and 1998, Leroux was convicted of nine counts of gross indecency for incidents that occurred from 1967 - 1979, involving 15 students at Grollier Hall.¹⁶ He was again convicted of sexual assault in 2011 and 2013 for molesting 14 male Beauval students, 50 years after his time there as supervisor. Initially given a 3-year sentence, Leroux was out on parole in just two years. His parole was appealed in May 2015, and his sentence was increased from three to eight years, sending him back to jail. A June 2016 Battlefords Now news post states that Leroux was released on parole after serving one-third of his sentence.

¹⁴ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 33.

¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 414

¹⁶ http://www.nnsi.com/frames/newspapers/1997-06/jun16_97sex.html

"In 2004, Norbert Dufault, a former principal of the Beauval school [1963-1965], was sentenced to two years in jail for sexually assaulting eight young girls during the 1950s and 1960s. The assaults took place at the remote Dene community of Dillon, SK. ...Many of the girls he had assaulted in Dillon were also sent to Beauval. When one of these girls discovered that Dufault had arranged to have her younger sister see him after class, she confronted him. She told him that if he assaulted her sister, she would publicize the assaults that had taken place at Dillon. The girl's stand saved her sister from assault, but led to her own dismissal from the school, cutting short her education."¹⁷

Overcrowding

In 1952, the school was overcrowded with 140 students enrolled. Four years later, it was still overcrowded: "Indian Affairs J. R. Bell wrote that 'this condition may not meet with approval, however, I feel the children are immeasurably better off at the school than they would be at home, as regards food, clothing, health, cleanliness and education.'"¹⁸ That same year a father was charged and fined for refusing to send his son back to school.¹⁹ In a 1963 School paper, Voices of the North, the enrolment is reported as 183 students.

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 449

¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 187

¹⁹ LeBeauf, M-E. (2011). The Role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police During the Indian Residential Schools System, p. 383

THE MÉTIS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN SASKATCHEWAN

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Île-à-la-Crosse convent (residential school) and hospital, ca. 1939, St. Boniface Historical Society, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas /N3539



Girls at residential school, Île-à-la-Crosse, ca. 1913-14, Glenbow Archives, Thomas Waterworth/ PD-353-22

"For 'half-breeds' or 'Métis,' the federal government did not consistently provide funding. They were considered the responsibility of the provinces and territories. Thus, Indian Agents were often instructed to remove Métis students from residential schools. For many years, provinces failed to ensure that there were schools in Métis communities, nor did they ensure Métis children were admitted in public schools. After World War II, the provinces began to provide residential schools for Métis children. Their histories have not yet been documented." (Canada's Residential Schools: The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 4).

ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE RE

The Roman Catholic Church operated residential schools for boys and girls at Île-à-la-Crosse from 1821 to 1976 in what became Treaty 10 land. "Île-à-la-Crosse [*Sakitawak* in *Michif*] is one of the oldest, most culturally homogenous Métis communities in the Canadian subarctic."¹ The Order of Sisters known as the Grey Nuns of Montreal arrived in Île-à-la-Crosse in fall of 1860. Within a month, they had set up St. Bruno Boarding School, with 15 students attending. The girls used the classroom for their sleeping quarters, and the boys stayed in the rectory with the priests.² After the mission house burned in 1867, another boarding school was established, built for 33 children. Sara Riel, sister of Louis Riel, served in the school from 1871 until her early death in 1883. A 1905 flood forced the school to relocate to Lac la Plonge (Beauval Indian Residential School). In 1917, Father Marius Rossignol opened the School of the Holy Family for 22 children and 4 boarders in Île-à-la-Crosse. Over time, additions to the school allowed for more students. Métis students lived in these residences and the First Nations students attended Beauval Indian Residential School.³ In 1944, a report on the state of education in northern Saskatchewan called the provincial government to open two residential schools, with one located in Île-à-la-Crosse. Due to lack of federal funding and resistance from the Catholic Church, the schools were not established. However, in 1946, after renting classroom space from the mission school, paying the mission school teachers' salaries, and assisting with student board for a time, the Saskatchewan government agreed to open a

¹ MacDougall, B. (2009). *West Side Stories: The Blending of Voice and Representation Through a Shared Curatorial Practice*. In S. Sleeper-Smith (Ed.), *Contesting knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (p. 161).

² http://216.174.135.221/documents/The_Story_of_A_Dream_by_WJDuffee.pdf

³ From <http://metis.tripod.com/flora.html> (However, the Beauval institution continued to have a high number of Métis students.)

school for Métis children and "by 1947, there were 168 students in 5 classrooms, 124 of these were boarders."⁴ By 1959, a new school had been built to accommodate 231 students, 113 of which were boarders.

Fires and Tragedies

In 1964, the boys' boarding house burned down. At that time there were 331 students with 100 boarding at the school. In 1972, 12 classrooms were destroyed by fire. After this fire, a group of local residents/parents petitioned the provincial government for "greater local control over education in the community." As a result, an order in council passed for the establishment of two autonomous elected school boards: the Île-à-la-Crosse School Division Board and the Northern School Board. This change caused turbulence in the community because not everyone supported the idea. In 1976, the boarding school was closed and replaced by the locally administered Rossignol Elementary and Rossignol High School.⁵

Funding Issues

From 1889 to 1937, the federal government's admission policy for Métis and "non-status Indian" students at residential schools had been inconsistent and disorganized. Métis children attended the Indian residential schools: "Per capita funding of residential schools made it advantageous for Indian residential school administrators to admit Métis students when numbers of First Nations students were low, to move them from one school to another to adjust enrolments, or to exclude them altogether."⁶ During Duncan

⁴ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 33

⁵ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 33

⁶ Logan, T. (2012). *A Métis Perspective on Truth and Reconciliation*. In *Speaking My Truth*. http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=690

Campbell Scott's administration of Indian Affairs, a letter classifying the Métis was sent out, which categorized three classes of "Half-breeds" in order to determine which class would qualify for federal funding: "Those who live, in varying degrees of conditions, the ordinary settled life of the country; those who live, in varying degrees, the Indian mode of life; and those who are the illegitimate offspring of Indian women, and of whom white men are not the begetters."⁷ Those Métis considered closer to the First Nation communities (geographically or culturally) were to be considered for admission to Indian residential schools.⁸ Thus Métis experiences with residential schools were varied. "The Métis generally fell outside any plans or provisions made by the federal government for either the new settlers or the First Nations people included in the treaties. This resulted in Métis people having less involvement with residential schools than First Nations."⁹

With the signing of Treaties 6 and 10, a new era began, in which Canada extended its legal and political structures into the North, arbitrarily creating distinctions between Status and non-Status First Nations and "Half breeds," with First Nations signing treaties and "Half Breeds" issued scrip, and with First Nations governed by the 1867 Indian Act and Métis considered citizens of state. However, it wasn't until the provincial government of Saskatchewan was formed, and had obtained authority over natural resources, that these distinctions were felt by the region. For generations, Métis livelihood had been based on hunting, trapping, and fishing, and in a cash-strapped region, the cost of being licensed to do so in

⁷ *Forgotten: The Métis residential school experience. Legacy of Hope.*

⁸ *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada, p. 65*

⁹ *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada, p. 99*

"Daniels Decision": On April 14, 2016 the Supreme Court of Canada declared that Canada's Métis and non-status Indians are indeed "Indians" under the Constitution.

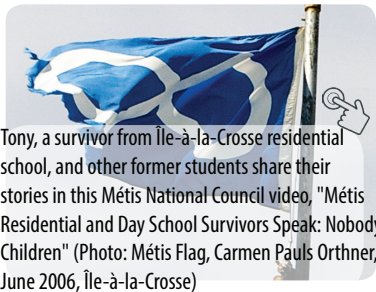
What Does the Daniels Decision Mean?



paNow News articles: Île-à-la-Crosse residential school to be torn down and Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School torn down [boys' residence] (Photos courtesy of paNow)



Louis Riel's sister, Sara Riel worked at the Île-à-la-Crosse school. [Read more...](#)



Tony, a survivor from Île-à-la-Crosse residential school, and other former students share their stories in this Métis National Council video, "Métis Residential and Day School Survivors Speak: Nobody's Children" (Photo: Métis Flag, Carmen Pauls Orthner, June 2006, Île-à-la-Crosse)

In 2014, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples stated, "reconciliation [with Métis groups] is necessary in order to provide a solid foundation for present and future generations of Métis in Canada... Canada should develop a reconciliation process to support the exercise of Métis section 35 rights and to reconcile their interests."

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

their own homeland, was often too great a financial burden.¹⁰

In 1982, the Métis were officially recognized as one of three Aboriginal societies in the Constitution Act. Still, Île-à-la-Crosse former students (and [Timber Bay/Montreal Lake Children's Home](#), which housed Métis students who attended the local public school) were excluded from the [compensation payments](#). However, the TRC did conduct [a hearing in Île-à-la-Crosse](#) in November 2012.

Sexual Abuse

According to an unidentified former student, physical and sexual abuse was common in the school with older boys molesting younger boys at night in the dormitory and priests and supervisors molesting their "favorite boys." In addition to physical and sexual abuse, cultural abuse was also prevalent.¹¹ Robert Durocher said that some staff preyed on students' loneliness. "Clement Chartier, a student for 10 years at Île-à-la-Crosse, said that 'many, many of us suffered physical and sexual abuse.'¹²

"Mike Durocher, who had been abused, said he was expelled at age 15 for putting up posters that identified abusers. The principal called him a liar, and his parents and grandparents refused to believe his story."¹³

Language and Culture Loss

Île-à-la-Crosse is a Cree-Michif speaking community and this language was banned in the school. A former student stated that much of the loss of traditional culture and language was a direct result of the residential

school and its treatment of Métis communities. Former student Alphonse Janvier remembers the anger and hurt he felt on arrival: "I was put on this old barber's chair. I remember my head being shaved and all my long hair falling on the floor, and the way they dealt with my crying and the hurtful feeling was with a bowl of ice cream."¹⁴

"For lapsing into the wrong language, Janvier was made to stand holding books above his head, to stand in a corner, or to stand at the blackboard, pressing his nose within a chalk circle. He felt that he was also taught to be ashamed of his heritage: 'We were taught that all Indians did was raid farmhouses, kidnap women, and burn houses.'¹⁵

"Robert Derocher, who called the time he spent at Île-à-la-Crosse 'the worst year that I ever lived,' recalled being punished for speaking Cree. 'It was so hard, you know, not to be able to communicate with other native children there.'¹⁶

"Yvonne Lariviere, an Île-à-la-Crosse student from 1947 to 1955, recalled, 'I didn't know why I was being hit because I didn't speak English. I was seven years old and I had never been hit before in my life.'¹⁷

Loneliness and Separation from Family

Alphonse Janvier spent 5 years at the school. He had grown up in an affectionate, love-filled home. His mother had hugged him a lot, but after he went to the school, he doesn't recall ever being hugged.¹⁸ Janvier said that being

separated from his parents was "the hardest experience in my life." He remembers being "a 7- or 8-year-old child put on a red plane—taxiing away from your mom standing on shore, crying. It seems like a long time ago, but it's also very fresh in my memory, and that was my very first experience of the feeling of abandonment."¹⁹

"Even Sister Thérèse Arcand, who reported being 'happy' [as a student at Île-à-la-Crosse, and who] went on to become a Grey Nun herself, observed that 'at the same time, I was very, very lonesome. I should have come to school the year before, I guess, but I couldn't decide to leave my mother.' She described returning to school after holidays as emotionally wrenching: 'We stayed there the best part of two months. At the middle of August we had to come back to school again, and, I just cried! I never found it easy to leave home. Never! I went home for the summers of '22 and '23 and then I didn't go back home again.'²⁰

Alphonse Janvier recalled not being allowed to speak to his own niece: "You were not allowed to talk to them [girls] because this playground had an imaginary boundary that we could not cross. We talk about it now and we wonder why we had to put up with that. We used to eat in the same dormitory with a wall dividing us and two doors and we used to wave at each other and that was the only way of communication with my nieces."²¹

[Read more stories on supplementary page](#)

¹⁰ MacDougall, B. (2009)

¹¹ Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada, p. 21

¹² The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 49

¹³ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 49

¹⁴ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 46

¹⁵ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 49

¹⁶ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 46

¹⁷ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 49

¹⁸ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 53

¹⁹ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 46

²⁰ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 46

²¹ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 53

PROJECT OF HEART BRINGS HOPE, HUMILITY, AND HEALING TO SUNTEP



Armed with Sharpie markers, small wooden tiles, a legacy to honour, and the “heart” to make a difference, SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program) Regina students went to work to preserve and reclaim the memory of the many Métis and First Nations children who attended and lost their lives in residential schools. All SUNTEP students participated in the artistic social justice project entitled Project of Heart (POH) over the past 2 semesters.

Project Coordinator Sylvia Smith, a high school teacher from Ottawa, describes Project of Heart as a “hands-on, collaborative, inter-generational, inter-institutional artistic endeavour. Its purpose is to commemorate the lives of the thousands of Indigenous children who died as a result of the residential school experience.” After learning about the truths of Indian residential schools in Social Studies class, Sylvia Smith’s students wanted to do more to bring greater public

awareness to the large number of deaths that had occurred in residential schools across Canada. Along with their teacher’s help, they developed a social justice project that is now growing in recognition and has recently been awarded the Governor General’s Award for Excellence in Teaching.

A key objective of POH is to encourage “ownership” of this historic injustice by the non-Indigenous community. By doing so, non-Aboriginal Canadians can then be moved to take responsibility for the continued oppression of Indigenous people in Canada, and be inspired to take action. Smith also explains that the project “commemorates the families and communities to whom those children belonged. It is designed to bring awareness both to the settler community of predominantly European Canadians and communities of new Canadians from other parts of the world.” Many students of all ages, all across Canada have been involved

in the project, by decorating tiles, doing research, visiting with Elders and becoming more aware of the effects of residential schools on generations of Indigenous people.

Project of Heart also seeks to expand the opportunities available for the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders to be heard within mainstream, educational/religious institutions. By joining with other groups who are making a space for Indigenous knowledge, institutions can help to change attitudes and behaviours—hearts and minds—as Elders give voice to the traditions that were suppressed by residential schooling.

During their involvement in this unique social justice project, SUNTEP students shared stories of people and relatives they knew who attended the residential school. Some were stories of pain, some were stories of relationships that developed while in residential school and some were humorous

anecdotes passed down from grandparents and great-grandparents. Through the sharing of stories, we gathered together as students, teachers, artists, and activists to remember the forgotten and to piece together this influential, yet poignant part of Canadian history. Being able to talk about the residential school experience has been painful to some students, but in some ways it started a healing process aided by research, the sharing of the experience with family members, the smudging of the tiles, and visits with an Elder/residential school survivor.

On this journey for understanding through heart and spirit, SUNTEP students decorated 10-12 tiles each (400 in total), with imagery, words and symbols created in memoriam to the Aboriginal culture, language, and self-esteem stripped away by assimilation and racism embodied at residential schools. Through their art, SUNTEP commemorated Île-à-la-Crosse, a Northern Saskatchewan community with a high Métis population. As evidence of the project's lasting impact, as the social justice activism component of the project, SUNTEP students have developed lesson and unit plans to use in their field placements so Project of Heart will continue to be shared and honoured.

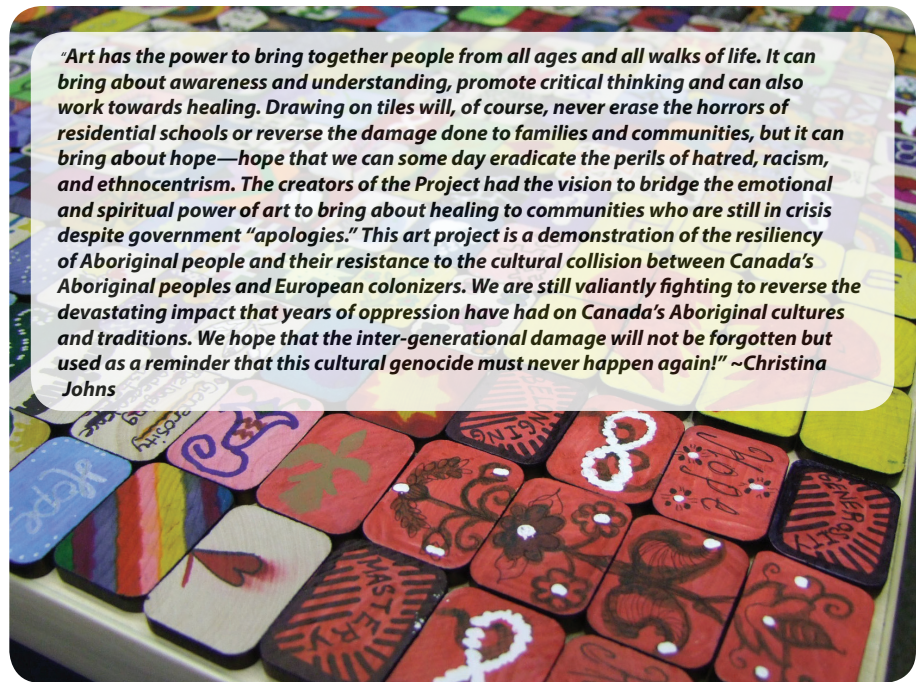
The project's goal is to have 50,000 decorated tiles, each one representing a life lost in the many residential schools across Canada. Although the future and final resting place of the tiles is still uncertain, there is a possibility of an installation of the tiles as a part of the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. This is only a small gesture of reconciliation for the past and continued oppression of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Art has the power to bring together people from all ages and all walks of life. It can bring about awareness and understanding, promote critical thinking and can also work towards healing. Drawing on tiles will, of course, never erase the horrors of residential

schools or reverse the damage done to families and communities, but it can bring about hope—hope that we can someday eradicate the perils of hatred, racism, and ethnocentrism. Sylvia and her students had the vision to bridge the emotional and spiritual power of art to bring about healing to communities who are still in crisis despite governmental “apologies.” This art project is a demonstration of the resiliency of Aboriginal people and their resistance to the cultural collision between Canada’s Aboriginal

peoples and European colonizers. We are still valiantly fighting to reverse the devastating impact that years of oppression has had on Canada’s Aboriginal cultures and traditions. We hope that the inter-generational damage will not be forgotten but used as a reminder that this cultural genocide must never happen again!

Story and photos by
Christina Johns. (First printed in
Education News in 2012)



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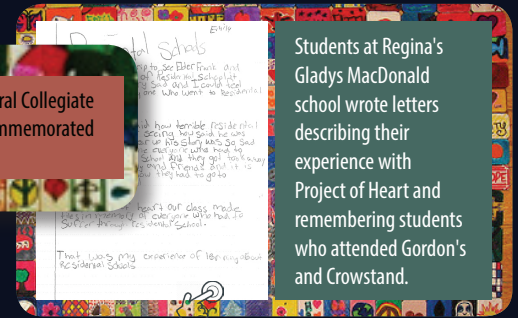


Crowstand Mission Boarding School, ca. 1901, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A4077- R-A4079-(1)-(2) ([Source Link](#))

In 2013, Moose Jaw Central Collegiate Grades 9-12 students commemorated Crowstand IRS.



Crowstand mission school pupils and staff, n.d., Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A4080 (4)



Students at Regina's Gladys MacDonald school wrote letters describing their experience with Project of Heart and remembering students who attended Gordon's and Crowstand.

CROWSTAND INDIAN

The [Crowstand Indian Residential School](#) (1889 - 1915) was operated by the [Presbyterian Church](#). It was located near Kamsack on [Cote First Nation Reserve](#) on [Treaty 4](#) land. When the school closed in 1915, it was replaced by [Cote Federal Improved Day School](#), located on Cote First Nation Reserve, and was also operated by the Presbyterian Church, and after 1925, by the [United Church](#) (The Women's Missionary Society). The government officially approved boarding students at Cote Federal Day School from 1928 to 1939/40.¹

Poor Conditions

In 1893, an inspector "described the sewer as 'a menace to the health of all occupants of the building.' He recommended that the sewer be removed as well as the soil beneath it, as it had been contaminated by leakage."²

In 1897, a teacher was described as wearing "a fur coat in the classroom" and the classroom so cold that "water in a jug remained frozen all day, and a sewing machine could not be operated because the room was too cold."³

Treatment of Children Who Ran Away

In 1907, the inspector of Indian Agencies, W. M. Graham reported that the Principal W. McWhinney "had been experiencing unusual trouble" with boys running away. Graham did

not think McWhinney's method of dealing with the boys was wise. He writes, "Mr. McWhinney goes after the boys and in one or two instances has tied ropes about their arms and made them run behind the buggy from their houses to the school." Some parents complained, saying "the children are not dogs." [Graham](#) told the principal to "stop this practice at once." McWhinney was instructed instead to seek consent to remove "the worst offenders to another school."⁴ Indian Affairs official Martin Benson asked the Deputy Minister whether McWhinney's behaviour entitled the department to demand his resignation. McWhinney provided an explanation of the particular occasion in question to the Indian mission Committee: He wrote that he had gone looking for a group of runaways boys, one of whom had run away four times the previous year and four or five times that year. He was in the school buggy, accompanied by his wife. He found the three boys eight miles (almost 13 kms) from the school, accompanied by the smaller two boys' father. He took the smallest boy into the buggy and instructed the older boys to run behind. When they were approaching a bluff a half a mile later, Mr. McWhinney noticed that the boys were preparing to escape, so he tied a rope loosely round the arm of each and drew the rope over the back of the buggy and the seat, but did not

fasten it to the buggy.⁵ "Thus we proceeded to the school, the horses walking or trotting slowly, so that the boys could follow without danger of hurting themselves in any way."⁶ Benson's response expressed the opinion that the committee's report appeared to exonerate the principal from the scandalous occurrences at the school. He believed McWhinney's explanations to be "a lame excuse" and Benson questioned why McWhinney had brought his wife along at all because without her there may have been enough room to allow all the boys to ride.⁷ McWhinney's explanation, though considered lame, was accepted by the Presbyterian Church officials and he continued as the principal until the school closed, and carried on as principal of the Cote Federal Day School.

Lack of Supervision

In 1891, when male students and men from the local reserve were discovered visiting the girls' dormitory, A. J. Macrae, an Indian Affairs inspector wrote: "It is not to be wondered that the Indians regard the school with the gravest disfavor when it is remembered that the pupils concerned in these immoral occurrences were entrusted to the guardianship of the school authorities when of most tender years, and as one of them said to me, 'they have been

¹ [Read about staff relations at the school](#)

² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 459

³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 461

⁴ [Report of Mr. Inspector Graham on the Crowstand Boarding School, July 4, 1907, Indian Affairs, School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1, Public Archives of Canada.](#)

⁵ McWhinney to Dr. Farquharum, July 8, 1907. Indian Affairs. School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1. Public Archives of Canada.

⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 526

⁷ Martin Benson's letter to the Deputy Superintendent General. Indian Affairs. School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1. Public Archives of Canada



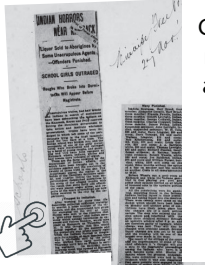
Dr. Orton Irwin Grain, Medical Officer (1894). Photo Source: The Canadian Album: Men of Canada or Success by Example, (Vol. III).

In 1914, the department's medical officer, Dr. Grain, said of Crowstand it was "the worst residential school I have had to visit, for the Department, as yet."

The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 413-414



When the school closed in December 1915, it was replaced by the Cote Improved Federal Day School, operated by the Presbyterian Church, and, after 1925, by the United Church. Photo: United Church of Canada, Sask. Conference/A381.VI.G.9(q)



Click here to read letters and articles regarding school scandals. (and other stories)



The case of the farm hand who was sexually abusing female students underscores the important point that, by 1914, government and church officials were well aware that notifying the police was a key element in an appropriate response to allegations of a staff member sexually abusing a student at a residential school. Despite this, no official policy was issued in relation to this question. In coming years, church and government officials would continue to dismiss staff rather than call in the police. (The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 64)

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

allowed to grow up in wickedness which their mothers might have protected them from."⁸ On November 27, 1907, a *Globe* newspaper article reported that "debaucheries" had taken place on several reservations, including a break-in to the girls' dormitories at Kamsack. The men who had broken in were charged with burglary and criminal assault. The male students involved were neither charged nor transferred, but McWhinney was instructed to discharge them.⁹ (See [supplementary page](#))

When Principal McWhinney discovered that the boys and girls had been visiting each other's dormitories at night on several occasions, he punished the students and put new latches on the windows to prevent them from opening fully and "the stops were securely nailed on. The doors also were kept locked."¹⁰

Death and Illness

In 1909, Principal McWhinney wrote of his realization of "how, in the school's early years, many of the students who had been recruited 'should never have entered school.' Many of these students died."¹¹ This statement was made two years after the [Bryce Report](#).

Fire

In 1912, Principal McWhinney reported that a male student attempted to set fire to the school and was punished "severely." In 1913, two male students attempted to set fire to the school. These boys were "locked up" and eventually transferred to Manitoba Industrial School for Boys, a home for delinquent boys.¹²

Sexual Abuse and Failure to Report

In 1914, when farmhand H. Everett, after realizing his actions had been discovered by a co-worker, confessed to Principal McWhinney that he was "having unlawful intercourse with some of the girls in his room,"¹³ McWhinney "fired the man immediately and recommended that he catch that night's train," but did not report this discovery to Indian Affairs or the police.¹⁴ McWhinney minimized the offence, rationalizing that Everett was a "well meaning young man who had fallen in a time of weakness and to prosecute him would only ruin his life and give publicity to a matter that I hoped might otherwise be kept quiet."¹⁵ McWhinney's 1907 comment, "The Indian boy or girl you may know, yields easily to any impulse or desire and from twelve upwards their passions are peculiarly strong," was reflective of the church's attitude towards sexual offenses in residential schools. However,

"students complained to their parents, who in turn complained to the Indian agent. A warrant was issued for Everett's arrest but, by then, he had fled the area."¹⁶ The members of the Cote Band criticized the administration because it hadn't taken proper precautions to ensure the safety of the girls. In response to their criticism, the Government notified the church that all the girls were to be discharged and sent home, and that the Principal should be sent to some other field of work. With the girls sent home, the enrolment was so low there was now an argument to be made for a day school.

In 1914, the department's medical officer, Dr. Orton Irwin Grain, "described the school as 'the worst residential school I have had to visit... ! Conditions were so bad he could see no alternative other than to close it down.'¹⁷ The school was closed in December 1915. It was replaced by the Cote Improved Federal Day School. Following pressure from the United Church, in 1928 the federal government constructed a dormitory at the Cote Day School to house students from Mondays to Fridays. In 1932 the accommodation in the dormitory was judged to be inadequate. The following year, the government cut its food grant to the school. The number of students who boarded fluctuated between four and eight. The dormitory was closed in 1940.

⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 649

⁹ Indian Affairs School Files (RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1) Public Archives Canada

¹⁰ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 650

¹¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 281

¹² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 469-479, 485

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 563

¹⁴ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 104

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 563

¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 563

¹⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 413-414

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St. Philips Indian Residential School, built in 1927 and torn down in the 1960s, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Roland A. Pinsonneault, HPI/R-A25317



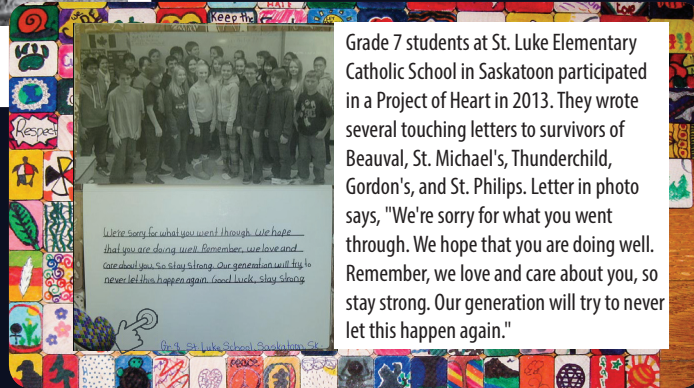
Click to hear Grant Severight's Survivor Story in Where are the Children exhibit (Legacy of Hope). "The experience in itself dislocated the children from the nucleus of the family warmth and the family caring."



St. Philips School, ca. 1928, Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface Archives/M5/03



"Girls working in the kitchen", St. Philips School, ca. 1935, Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface Archives/M5/14



Grade 7 students at St. Luke Elementary Catholic School in Saskatoon participated in a Project of Heart in 2013. They wrote several touching letters to survivors of Beauval, St. Michael's, Thunderchild, Gordon's, and St. Philips. Letter in photo says, "We're sorry for what you went through. We hope that you are doing well. Remember, we love and care about you, so stay strong. Our generation will try to never let this happen again."

FORT PELLY/ST. PHILIPS IN

There are separate listings for the [Roman Catholic church](#) schools near Kamsack at [Keeseekoose First Nation, \(Treaty 4\)](#), but these refer to the same institution. [Fort Pelly school](#) was established by [Rev. Jules Decorby](#) in 1895 on the [Fort Pelly Trail](#), about two miles (3.22 kms) west of the St. Philips Mission.¹ The government began paying per capita grants to the school in 1905. Fort Pelly closed in 1913 due to the ill health of its second principal, Father Ruelle, low enrolment, and poor conditions. The second Indian Residential School, St. Philips, (1928 - 1969), was built in 1927. At its peak, the school had 132 resident students in the 1964/65 school year.

Poor Supervision

In 1909, "a federal Indian Agent reported that female students had been sneaking out of their residences to meet with young men from the Key and Keeseekoose Reserves. The Agent suggested that the 'local ladies' who had taken over from the Sisters who had previously worked at the IRS had no experience in working with pupils and 'let the children do very much as they please...' The federal government advised that the Principal

was in charge of discipline at the IRS and should be more vigilant in light of the recent staff changes."²

Abuse

In 1911, the intoxicated assistant principal threatened staff and students with a rifle, saying he was going to shoot some of them. When the federal government requested that Principal J. DeCorby explain the incident, he tendered his resignation instead and shortly after the assistant principal became the principal (Father Ruelle).³

In May 1965, due to a report from the school nurse, the regional supervisor of Indian Affairs, K. Kerr, dismissed the boys' supervisor, Ralph Jubinville,⁴ from his position for inflicting "burns on the arms, hands, and necks"⁵ with a lighter, as punishment on at least seven boys. "Andrew Quewezance said that after nine years' employment at the school, this **man was fired when** school authorities asked

² [SPR-001936; SPR-001937; SPR-001938], Fort Pelly, NCTR summary, p. 3.

³ [SPR-000062; SPR-001943; SPR-001945; SPR-000063; SPR-001947], Fort Pelly NCTR summary, p. 4.

⁴ An Online Message board posts that Ralph Jubinville was married to Helen Nanowin, a First Nations, Catholic nurse from Pine Falls, Manitoba, who froze to death in 1965 near Kamsack, only one to two years after marrying Ralph. Their only son Mark died in Edmonton of drowning in 1973 at about 11 years of age. (<http://boards.ancestry.ca/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=216&p=localities.northam.canada.saskatchewan.kamsack>)

⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 391

students about their scabs and were told they were caused by being burned with a hot lighter."⁶ Newly appointed Principal Turenne concluded that "these incidents reveal a definite sign of sadism on the part of this man." Although Indian Affairs notified the local Mounted Police of Jubinville's actions, the RCMP took no further action. However, in 1994, complaints from former students led the police to revisit the case. In May 2004, Jubinville was convicted on three charges of assault causing bodily harm and fined \$500.⁷

Student Death

Three boys ran away on June 4, 1965. "One of them, Alfred Whitehawk, died when he attempted to cross the Assiniboine River. The principal stated that he expected he would 'need the help of the RCMP to bring back to school the other boys who are still at large.'"⁸ He complained, "I feel that we do not get from the people the cooperation we need in locating these boys. The reserves are too big an area for me to cover, especially when some of the people purposely hide the children and

⁶ Miller, J. R. (1996). Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools, (p. 510).

⁷ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 101; The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 450

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 348

¹ Archdiocese of Regina: A History, (1988).



She Didn't Just Survive. She Thrived. Elaine Durocher & Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

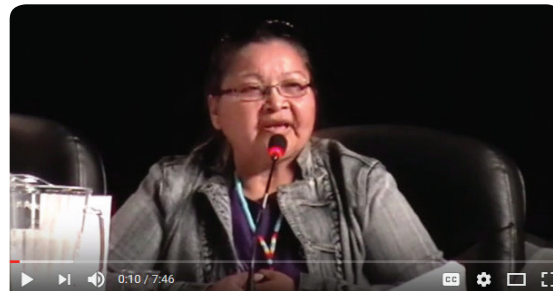
Still courtesy of TELUS

Elaine Durocher: "As soon we entered the residential school, the abuse started right away. We were stripped, taken up to a dormitory, stripped. Our hair was sprayed... They put oxfords on our feet, 'cause I know my feet hurt. They put dresses on us. And were made, we were always praying, we were always on our knees. We were told we were little, stupid savages, and that they had to educate us." (The Survivors Speak, p. 41)

"They were there to discipline you, teach you, beat you, rape you, molest you, but I never got an education. I knew how to run. I knew how to manipulate. Once I knew that I could get money for touching, and this may sound bad, but once I knew that I could touch a man's penis for candy, that set the pace for when I was a teenager, and I could pull tricks as a prostitute. That's what the residential school taught me. It taught me how to lie, how to manipulate, how to exchange sexual favours for cash, meals, whatever, the case may be." (The Survivors Speak, p. 120)

Read former student stories

In making the case for a boarding school on the Keeseekoose Reserve, Roman Catholic missionary J. Decorby informed Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1899 that "children could no longer be sent from here to industrial schools. Already a good number have been sent. Although care was taken to send only those who gave the best assurances of health, all are dead, with the exception of one girl." Decorby promised that if the government built a Catholic boarding school on the reserve, "the number of children would be small" and "on the first symptom of the disease appearing they would be sent home." (The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 395)



Helen Quewezance is also an overcomer. Her story is one of resistance and inner strength. Footage by Trevor Sutter.

DIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

pretend not to know where they are."⁹ One can only wonder how dire the situation at school must have been for students to risk their lives in order to escape, and for parents to hide their children from school officials.

Harsh Punishments

"In May 1965, Indian Affairs ordered an investigation into allegations that students who had run away from school "had been punished by having their hair cropped. Instructions were issued to stop the practice immediately. Part of the investigation was a review of the school files." Indian Affairs supervisor Kerr and the Principal Turenne "could not find a copy of the Indian Affairs regulations regarding discipline."¹⁰

Sexual Abuse

Father Martin Houston, who was convicted as a child molester in 1962 for sexual offences committed at Grollier Hall (Inuvik, NWT), had been a supervisor of young boys at St. Philip's in the 1958-59 school year. He was given an indefinite sentence and served nine years in a federal penitentiary before being released in 1971. In 2002, he was again convicted of sexual

abuse for new offences that occurred during his time at Grollier Hall. His 1990 ordination had angered former students who had been sexually assaulted by him.¹¹

Fire Hazard

In July 1955, Principal Raymond Beauregard "sent an urgent telegraph message to Ottawa,... warning that, because of a 'critical' problem with the school's water pipes, there was a 'danger of fire.' A Saskatchewan government inspector reported in November 1955 that the Kamsack school's alarm system is completely out of order, and fire escapes are not marked at all. The existing hoses are leaking badly and the valve if opened will not close off again."¹²

A 1968 inspection report described the school as a "fire hazard and a potential threat to the lives of the children still living in it."¹³

Principal Turenne "reported that students had tried to set the school on fire on two consecutive days in the spring of 1968. On one occasion, three girls set a cardboard box on

fire in their dormitory. Two of them then went to bed in the dormitory, while a third called the matron. The principal said that one of the children who set the fire was "very deeply disturbed." The fire was put out quickly before it could cause any damage. The next day, a girl set a sheet on fire in the laundry."¹⁴ The dormitory "was judged to be beyond repair in 1968, and the following year, the residence closed."¹⁵

Commemoration Project

"In 2012, the St. Phillips Residential School Project Council, with the support of the Keeseekoose First Nation, commemorated the legacy of Indian residential schools with a three-part project that included statement gathering in the language of the St. Phillips students using video and audio formats. A monument and commemorative plaques were installed at the site of the St. Phillips Residential School, and a variety of events and activities were held to educate the community and general public about the legacy of residential schools."¹⁶

¹¹ Struzik, E. (May 11, 2002). School counsellor convicted of sex abuse now working as Catholic priest. *Edmonton Journal, Canadian Press*

¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329

¹³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329

¹⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 324

¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 185

¹⁶ <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1370974253896/1370974471675#k>

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 348

¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 391

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The school building, constructed in 1910, as it looked in the 1940s. Mission to Partnership Collection, "File Hills Indian Residential School, Balcarres, Sask.," 93.049P1127 N, United Church of Canada Archives - Digital Collections

"Melvina McNabb was 7 years old when she was enrolled in the File Hills school, and [she says,] 'I couldn't talk a word of English. I talked Cree and I was abused for that, hit, and made to try to talk English.'" (Vol 1, Pt. 1, p. 623)

[Click to read more stories](#)

The late Elder Charlie Bigknife of Starbarket Reserve spoke on the half-time model at Indian Residential Schools: "I believe a lot of us today went to those boarding schools across Canada, we could've been doctors, nurses or whatever. We could've made something of ourselves but we were denied these privileges."

Callahan, A. B., 2002, On Our Way to Healing: Stories from the Oldest Living Generation of the File Hills Indian Residential School. Masters Thesis. University of Manitoba, p. 42.



The cairn at File Hills Residential School erected June 1939 by the W.M.S. to commemorate 50 years of Christian service among the Indians at File Hills. Mission to Partnership Photograph Collection. 93.049P1136. (The cairn is all that remains on the site.)

FILE HILLS INDIAN R

The [File Hills Indian Residential School](#) (1889 - 1949) was run by the [Presbyterian Church](#) from its opening in 1889 until the [United Church of Canada](#) took over in 1925. The school was located north of Balcarres on the boundary of the [Okanese reserve](#), and adjacent to the File Hills Agency Indian reserves on [Treaty 4 land](#). The school could initially accommodate 25 children. By 1948 enrollment was up to 100 students, an overcrowded situation. The plumbing was deemed unsanitary, and the building a fire hazard. The school closed in 1949. Children close by attended day school, while others were sent to Brandon or Portage la Prairie residential schools.¹

Deaths and Illness

File Hills school was plagued with illness. Two years after opening the school, in 1890, a report was filed that small pox had broken out.² In 1908, [Principal Kate Gillespie](#) (who had formerly taught at Crowstand) reported the death of two girls due to tuberculosis and believed the cause was the girls' dormitory since the boys were generally healthy.³ Overcrowding meant some of the boys slept outside. In 1909, Principal Jennie Cunningham wrote letters of complaint that "for the past 2 years, 10 boys have slept in a tent both winter and summer." It would take another 2 years before an addition was constructed. In 1912,

there was a measles outbreak, and in 1916 another small pox outbreak.

In his 1922 publication (based on his 1907 report), [Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce](#) drew particular attention to the fate of 31 students who had been discharged from the File Hills school: Nine were in good health, and 22 were dead. ***Dr. Bryce stated that at File Hills, "75 percent were dead at the end of the 16 years since the school opened."***⁴

In 1926, 92% of the students at File Hills and Qu'Appelle tested positive for tuberculosis. By 1933, after a health unit was set up to test for TB, the percentage of students testing positive, although still very high, had dropped to below 60%. "Given these results, [Dr. R. George Ferguson](#), the director of medical services for the Saskatchewan Anti-Tuberculosis League and medical director of the Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium, recommended that Indian Affairs extend the unit's work to the rest of the province."⁵ Appropriate testing policies made it possible to reduce the level of TB in residential schools. Dr. Ferguson had led Saskatchewan from the out-of-control TB epidemic in 1911, to the lowest death rate from 1921 to 1940.⁶

Suicide

In her memoirs, [Eleanor Brass](#) wrote about

"a boy who had hung himself for fear of discipline" at the File Hills school in the early 20th century: "The poor youth was in some kind of trouble which was not so terrible but apparently it seemed that way to him."⁷ Brass recalled how the body of [the] boy was buried on the Peepeekisis Reserve, even though his parents lived on the Carlyle Reserve.⁸

According to [documents from the Canada Public Archives](#), in October 1939, Kenneth Stonechild, a Deaf student who had repeatedly run away, made a suicide attempt, claiming his actions were due to staff treatment: a teacher had lost patience with him and had "boxed his ears." He was also incessantly teased by older children. The doctor disputed the claim that the student had attempted to commit suicide. Another student, Reginald Keewatin, had also attempted suicide for the same reason in November, 1939. For his punishment, Reginald had been "well spanked in the presence of an RCMP official." Both incidents were considered behavioral problems in students who were believed to be trying to discredit staff.⁹

Fire

Deficiencies in the fire escapes were reported in 1932. In 1942, two classroom buildings were destroyed by fire. The fire had been [deliberately set](#) by three young boys, who

¹ <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/file-hill/#ftn18>

² LeBeauf, M.-E. (2011). The Role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police During the Indian Residential Schools System, p. 383

³ <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/file-hill/#ftn18>

⁴ <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/file-hill/#ftn18>

⁵ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 71

⁶ http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/tuberculosis_control.html

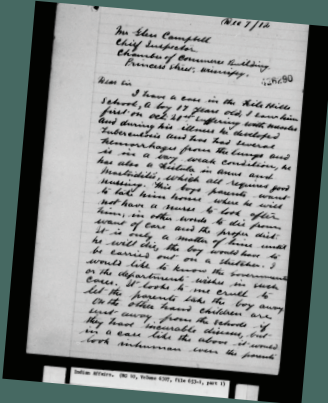
⁷ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 3

⁸ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 120

⁹ Indian Affairs School Files, RG10, Vol. 6307, file 653-1, part 2. Correspondence beginning November 2, 1939

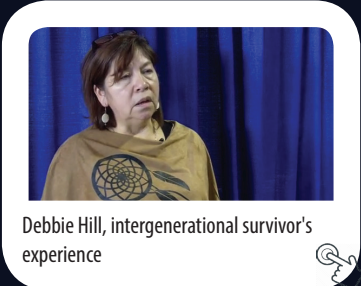


File Hills Indian Residential School Children, ca. 1948, United Church of Canada/93.049P/1132N



Douglas Bear's illness and his parents' struggle to bring him home. The archived letters tell the story of a dying boy whose parents wanted to bring him home in December of 1912, but discharge was refused. After many attempts by the parents, Douglas Bear was finally returned home just three days before his death.

[Click here to read the letters.](#)



Debbie Hill, intergenerational survivor's experience



Read about Eleanor Brass's experience at File Hills (Author of *Walk in Two Worlds*)

[Read interviews with former students of File Hills in Ann Callahan's Master's Thesis, \(pp. 38 - 121\)](#)

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

were taken into custody. "The local Indian Agent, M. Christianson, felt that the boys had been acting on the instruction of older boys... Five students were convicted for their role in setting the fire."¹⁰ One 12-year-old boy and two 15-year-olds served their sentences in the Regina Industrial School (by then, a provincial reformatory); two 16-year-olds were sentenced to a year in the Moosomin jail. At the trial it was revealed that all the other boys at the school had advance knowledge about the fire.¹¹

Inadequate Education

In 1940, when a Mounted Police officer tracked down Wilfred Deiter, a student who had run away from the school, "his father said he did not want the boy to return to school. According to the father, Wilfred 'gets no class work, he is doing outside work, such as hauling hay, cutting wood, and general labouring.' He felt that his son was 'receiving no better education than he would receive at home.'"¹² ([Read Chief Ben Pasqua's similar letter of complaint written in 1913](#))

Former student Charlie Bigknife from Starblanket Reserve, who started attending the school in the fall of 1926, said, "I learned to work after I left boarding school because in that school we went to school three hours a day so we didn't have much schooling.

I believe a lot of us today went to those boarding schools across Canada, we could've been doctors, nurses or whatever. We could've made something of ourselves but we were denied these privileges."¹³

Student Death due to Negligence

On November 4, 1912 a report was made of a "sad drowning accident" involving "three little boys from 7 - 10 years of age." On November 1, the children had been playing on the bank of the lake and one of them, Archie Feather (7 years old), had a hand sleigh and was running on the thin ice quite close to shore, and he was pushed out on the ice by the other boys and he went through the ice and drowned.

The Indian agent reported: "The parents of the child feel very keenly about the matter and think there was gross carelessness on the part of those in charge of the school in allowing children of this age entrusted to their care to play near a lake, especially when the ice is just forming. The Principal tells me he warned the children in the morning and again at noon not to go on the ice." An Indian Affairs official responded: "To my mind this is a case in which it is pretty clear

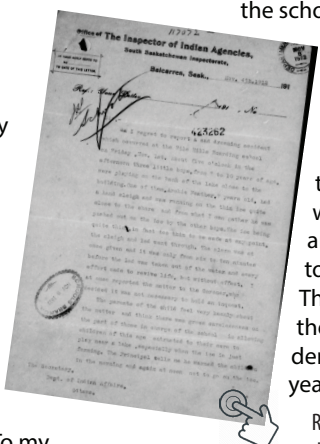
that negligence has resulted in loss of life." He determined that the school was short of staff and the grant would not be paid until there was sufficient staff at the school.¹⁴ ([Read documents](#))

Beaten to Death

In a *Globe and Mail* interview conducted in 1990, Eleanor Brass said that her friend, Cora Keewatin, had "died after being beaten across the back with a belt."¹⁵ ([Read more of Eleanor Brass's story.](#))

Poor Conditions lead to Closure

"A 1948 building inspection... reported that the school's plumbing was in poor shape, the septic tank was not functioning properly, the generator did not supply enough electricity to light the school adequately, the boilers were old, the water supply was insufficient, and only two of the seven toilets were functional. The report concluded that the building should be demolished."¹⁶ The following year the school was closed.



[Read the report regarding the drowning incident.](#)

¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 323
¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 323
¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 135

¹³ Callahan, A. B. (2002). *On our way to Healing: Stories from the Oldest Living Generation of the File Hills Indian Residential School* (pp. 38 - 51). [Master's thesis]. University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB.

¹⁴ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6307, file 653-1, part 1
¹⁵ http://archives.algomau.ca/main/sites/default/files/2010-061_007_060_0.pdf
¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 178

FILE HILLS COLONY: A FAILED EXPERIMENT

“The construction of the colony on the Peepeekis Reserve in southeastern Saskatchewan created one of the most oppressive and distinct colonial landscapes in North America. Founded in 1898 by Indian agent William Morris Graham, the colony was established under what Ann Laura Stoler calls an “administrative anxiety” over the “regression” of ex-pupils back to traditional ways after completing residential school. The “re-socialisation” and “re-education” of Aboriginal children was not as quick or complete as the government had envisioned. Consequently, Graham, predominantly with the collaboration of Kate Gillespie at the File Hills boarding school and Father Joseph Hugonard at the Qu’Appelle industrial school, selected “certain” ex-pupils from various reserves to be settled on subdivided land allotments on Peepeekis and live like non-Aboriginal homestead farmers.

~C. Drew Bednasek, *Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony*



Elders and Indian soldiers in the uniform of the Canadian Expeditionary Force 4th row (l-r): David Bird, Joe McKay, Joe Peters, Ed Sanderson. 3rd row (l-r): L. Harry Stonechild, Leonard Creely, Jack Walker, Alex Brass, Ernest Goforth. 2nd row (l-r): Moostatik, Feather, William Morris Graham, Pimotat, Kee-wisk. 1st row (l-r): Jos McNab, Shavetail, Day Walker, Jack Fisher, ca. 1916-1917, Library and Archives Canada / PA-041366

The File Hills Colony was established by the local Indian Agent William Morris Graham who viewed the colony as a solution to the “problem of regression” due to the lack of opportunity after graduation from Indian Residential Schools.¹ “In January 1898, Graham brought the first of many graduates of the industrial schools to the Peepeekis reserve; this placement on reserve of a non-band member marked the beginning of the File Hills Colony Scheme whereby the most promising graduates of the industrial schools would be moved to this reserve.”² The government, at this time, was realizing that their strategy

¹Bednasek, C. D. (2009). Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony. *Historical Geography*, 37, 53-70
² File Hills Colony: A Breach of Treaty, Indian Act, and Canada’s Fiduciary Responsibility. (2004, May) Landmark A Publication of the Indian Claims Commission 10(1)

to assimilate and enfranchise “Indians” through industrial schools was failing. Graduates were returning to their reserves and to their former cultures and traditions. Graham’s solution was to give graduates an opportunity for an occupation in farming by allocating farm land and offering financial assistance (and thereby continuing their “education”). However, the government was unwilling to relinquish its paternalism with regards to the First Peoples, and set up the colony with complete dependence on the Indian Agent. Edward Ahenakew, “described the File Hills Colony...as a tribute to its founder... but also a continuance of the residential school model of telling First Nations what to do.” Ahenakew’s fictional elder, Old Keyam, puts the matter this way: “I’ve read about the colony at File Hills, made up of graduates from boarding school. They are said to be doing well. I have boasted about them myself when I had nothing better to do. But they are under the guidance of an official who has more authority than most, and he is an able man whose authority these young

people accept in the way to which they become accustomed in boarding school. He is the ‘crank’ that makes the machine start and go.”³

“In 1904, three young former File Hills students, Fred Dieter [Eleanor Brass’s father], John R. Thomas, and Ben Stone Child, were reported to be farming successfully on the File Hills Colony.”⁴ However, these were not the first farmers to be established. “Canadian government documents indicate that within six months of taking the Indian agent job at the File Hills agency in 1897, Graham had already started transferring residential school ex-pupils to Peepeekis. ... [In] a 1902 Annual Report ... Indian Commissioner David Laird wrote that Joseph McNabb and George Little Pine had been farming under a colony scheme on Peepeekis for some three or four years.”⁵

The colony did prosper for several years. In 1907, Graham, overwhelmed with what he considered the success of the colony, wrote: “Although this colony has only been in existence six years, the results obtained have been phenomenal, to my mind. I shall instance cases of young men leaving school seven years ago, at the age of 18, who are to-day settled in comfortable homes, married and have children, who are brought up as white children are, not even knowing the Indian tongue.”⁶

³Ahenakew, E. (1973). *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Ed. Ruth Buck). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, p. 90.
⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1., p. 350.
⁵ Bednasek, C. D. (2009). Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony. *Historical Geography*, 37, (pp. 57-58)
⁶The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 660

Background Photo: File Hills Reserve Agency, ca. 1923, Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada / PA-019374



File Hills Indian Colony band R-A6596 Sask Archives

The government began to encourage other schools to set up similar colonies for their graduates. In 1909, Deputy Minister Frank Pedley instructed Indian agents "wherever possible to give some assistance to discharged pupils to enable them to immediately put to practical use the instructions which they have received. You should therefore give special attention to pupils whose term of residence is nearly completed and consider each individual case according to its needs."⁷

By 1915, over 30 families were farming in the File Hills Colony. Interestingly, "although the colonists were selected because they had done well at residential school, they did not wish to see their own children attend residential school. They managed to win government support for the establishment of a non-religious day school on the colony, but objection from Qu'Appelle principal Joseph Hugonard led to the federal government's abandoning the initiative."⁸

While the official story was that File Hills Colony was a model for other schools, and a "Canadian colonial showpiece that Royalty and U.S. government officials visited to witness Canada's 'successful' management of Aboriginal peoples,"⁹ the colony was in fact controversial. First, it was set up on Peepeekisis Reserve lands. Colonists, graduates from industrial school who were from other reserves, were relocating, taking land from original band members. In 1902, 12 square miles were subdivided for new graduates. In 1906, a second subdivision of 120 lots of 80 acres and 12 lots of 130 acres were portioned off for the colony, leaving less than 8,000 acres for the original band members, who were now a minority on their own Reserve. Between 1945 and 1956 there were ongoing complaints by original band members and at least four investigations

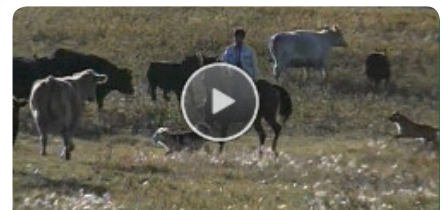
into band membership. A 1954 commission determined that while there was valid reason for original band members to complain, the File Hills Colonists had lived on the reserve for so long that it would be unfair to remove them. Compensation was suggested by an advisory committee, but this recommendation was not acted on by Indian Affairs. The Registrar for the commission decided a hearing would be held into the transfers of protested members. The register decided that 23 of 25 protested members should be included in the Peepeekisis Band. The decision was quickly appealed. Judge J. H. McFadden reviewed the Registrar's decision and in 1956 confirmed 23 of the protested memberships and reinstated the other two. In 1978, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians obtained a copy of the Judge McFadden's decision and in 1986, the Peepeekisis Band submitted a specific claim to the Department of Indian Affairs, stating that the Department had caused the diminishment and alienation of the Reserve lands and the pauperization of the original band members due to negligent and improper administration of the land. In April 2001, the Peepeekisis First Nation requested an inquiry into its claim and the Commission accepted the request.¹⁰

"On May 28, 2004, the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) released its report on the Peepeekisis First Nation's File Hills Colony claim inquiry, which found that Canada had breached its lawful obligation to the First Nation. The Commission recommended that the Peepeekisis claim be accepted for negotiation under Canada's Specific Claims Policy. The federal Crown created the File Hills Colony Scheme on the Peepeekisis First Nation's Indian Reserve (IR) 81. Under this plan, young Indian men from other bands who had graduated from industrial schools were brought to the Peepeekisis reserve to live and farm. The Peepeekisis First Nation alleged that as enrollment in the farming colony increased, the original members of the First Nation were displaced from their homes and deprived of the use of the communal lands."¹¹

Another issue was the government's failure to give up paternalistic control and its continued assimilation strategy. Eleanor Brass wrote of rules against women visiting with each other, and against Indigenous cultural activities, such as fiddle dances, pow-wows, and tribal ceremonies—although Brass does recall attending such ceremonies conducted in secrecy. Bednasek's article, "Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony" tells the stories of Peepeekisis community members' suspicions about Graham's personal wealth coming from the labour and grain production of the colony. The stories also tell of Graham's abuse of power and his use of brutality to manage the colony, using the pass/permit system not only as a means to control, but also as a "calculated strategy to steal band members' money" (p. 61). Further, the allotted 80 acres of land was too small to become prosperous; this was done intentionally to keep the File Hills Colony farmers from competing with settler farmers.



"The Old Generation" of File Hills Reserve Agency; ca. 1914; (l-r) back row: Mrs. Keewaydin; Mrs. Jack Fisher; Mrs. Miss-ta-tik; Mrs. Buffalo Bow; Day Walker; Mrs. Yellow Belly; Mrs. Pimottatt; and Mrs. Playful Child (Tuckanow). (l-r) front row: Chief Hawke; Crooked Nose; Chief Star Blanket; Pointed Cap (Cheepoostatin); Buffalo Bow; Miss-ta-tik; and Quinness (Cree). Province of Saskatchewan Archives/RB1854



Video Resource: To Colonize a People: The File Hills Indian Farm Colony
By Evelyn Poitras

⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 659

⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 660

⁹ Bednasek, C. D. (2009). Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony. *Historical Geography* 37, 53-70

¹⁰ File Hills Colony: A Breach of Treaty, Indian Act, and Canada's Fiduciary Responsibility (2004, May) Landmark A Publication of the Indian Claims Commission 10(1)

¹¹ File Hills Colony: A Breach of Treaty, Indian Act, and Canada's Fiduciary Responsibility. Landmark: A Publication of the Indian Claims Commission, 10(1), May 2004

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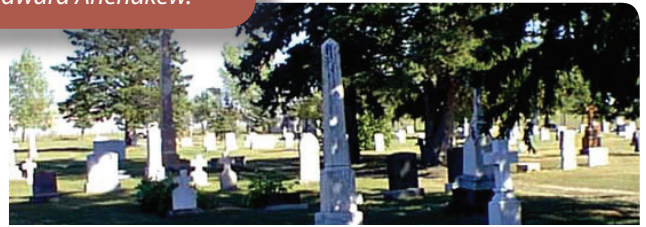
Prince Albert's first residential school was the Anglican Emmanuel College, which operated from 1879 to 1908. (Photo from Project Canterbury <http://anglicanhistory.org/canada/sk/twenty/photos.html>)



Buildings that make up the Emmanuel College in Prince Albert, ca. 1897, U of S Libraries/ MSS-C555 [See more photos](#)

Old Keyam said, "Again and again I have seen children come home from boarding schools only to die, having lost during their time at school all the natural joys of association with their own families, victims of an educational policy, well-meant but not over-wise." Old Keyam is a fictional character created by Edward Ahenakew.

In commemoration of the Indian Residential School legacy, the Prince Albert Grand Council developed a two-phase project. The first phase was the development of a Denesuline dictionary that includes Denesuline cultural and spiritual traditions. The dictionary was dedicated to former residential school students from each of the three Denesuline communities – Black Lake, Fond du Lac and Hatchet Lake First Nation. Researchers went to each of the communities to interview elders and collect stories which will aid in curriculum development in the future. The second phase of the project was the creation of a virtual museum to celebrate the resiliency and legacy of former residential school students.



Emmanuel College Cemetery (St. Mary's Anglican), Sept. 5, 1998 (Photo courtesy of Timothy W. Shire)

EMMANUEL COLLEGE



Rt. Rev. John McLean, 1874-86
The General Synod Archives,
Anglican Church of Canada/
P7565-30

Emmanuel College (Indian Boys Industrial School)¹ was founded at Prince Albert in 1879 by the Anglican Church of Canada under Rev. John McLean (first Bishop of Saskatchewan District) as a "training College for Native Helpers." Though the school began with a general education curriculum, by 1886 it was entirely devoted to training teachers for Indian schools.² "Rev. John Mackay was one of the original staff members and taught Cree grammar and composition." Mackay was of mixed blood from Mistassini, Quebec. As the son and grandson of Hudson's Bay Company employees, he did not want a job in fur trade, and chose mission work instead. His ordination was part of a mid-19th century attempt to create Indigenous native clergy in Rupert's Land.

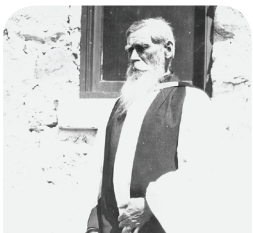
Samuel Blake, an Anglican, Ontario lawyer and supporter of Dr. Peter Bryce's 1907 report, noted in 1908 that nearly one-quarter of the students (32 out of 133) who had passed through Emmanuel College during a 17-year period had died.⁴

In 1905, George Exton Lloyd (a founding settler of Lloydminster) accepted an invitation from the bishop of Saskatchewan, Jervois Newnham, to move to Prince Albert as archdeacon and general superintendent. In this position, Lloyd converted Emmanuel College from an Indian school to an Anglican divinity training school. He became principal in 1908.

In 1909, Emmanuel College moved to Saskatoon (where, since 1883, it has been known as the University of Saskatchewan).



Emmanuel College in Saskatoon, ca. 1912, University of Saskatchewan Archives/A-334



Archdeacon John Mackay, ca. 1917, General Synod Archives,
Anglican Church of Canada/
P2003-08-1

"When Emmanuel College was established as a government-funded boarding school in 1890, it was supported by the Prince Albert chiefs."³

¹ Fernwood Books 1997, <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/590454/pdf>
² Indian Missions Diocese of Saskatchewan (January 1, 1903 - June 30, 1904) <https://www.saskarchives.com/saskarchives1905/sab.swf>
³ Grant, A. (1998) Review of Dyck, N. (1997.) Differing Visions: Administering Indian Residential Schooling in Prince Albert, 1867-1995. Halifax:
⁴ Blake, S. (1908). Don't You Hear the Red Man Calling? p. 12



Edward Ahenakew, ca. 1910, a former Prince Albert boarding school student. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-B11359

Edward Ahenakew (1885 - 1961), grandnephew of [Chief Poundmaker](#), was born at Sandy Lake ([Ahtahkakoop First Nation](#)) in what is now Saskatchewan. He attended Ahtahkakoop Day School until the age of 11, when he went to Indian Boys Industrial School (Emmanuel College), an Anglican boarding school at Prince Albert. "I shed no tear, but the pain in my heart was great, as I watched my father walking away. He did not look back once. I was much depressed....Then two who were my cousins ran over and took charge of me. They had been in the school for more than a year, and they told me about it..."¹

After graduating in 1903, 18-year-old Ahenakew worked as a teacher with his father at a missionary school on the [James Smith Reserve](#). He began producing a monthly handwritten newsletter in Cree syllabics, which he continued with the rest of his life.² In 1905, he went to Wycliff College in Toronto and then to Emmanuel College (University of Saskatchewan) in Saskatoon where he graduated with a Licentiate of Theology and was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1912.³

Once ordained, he moved to Onion Lake to assist Rev. J. R. Matheson (who had taken ill in 1911) at [St. Barnabas Residential School](#). He spent much of his life as a missionary to northern Indigenous people, travelling by dogsled in the winter and canoe in summer to visit remote northern communities. During the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic at Onion Lake, Ahenakew said, "the church was piled high with bodies. On the reserves so many people were dying that mass funerals and burials were being held."⁴ With a desire to care for the sick, he enrolled in the Faculty

of Medicine at the University of Alberta, but after three years of study, withdrew due to a nervous breakdown in 1923. While recovering he recorded Chief Thunderchild's (Peyasiw-awasis) stories along with his own stories, an unfinished manuscript that would be [published later](#) through the efforts of [Ruth Matheson Buck](#), daughter of Onion Lake Principal John Matheson. After his recovery, Ahenakew returned to missionary work, making use of the three years of medicine to further assist those who had no access to health care. During his life he collected and transcribed many legends and stories, which were published in 1929 as the [Cree Trickster Tales](#).⁵ He worked with Archdeacon Fairies in preparing a Cree-English dictionary⁶ (which had been started by Archdeacon J. A. Mackay). In 1933, Ahenakew privately expressed anger at a bishop who gave him no choice but to resign his vice-president role in the [League of Indians for Western Canada](#).⁷ He was also privately pessimistic about the government's management of Indian Affairs, thinking it malevolent and manipulative.⁸ In 1947, Ahenakew was honoured with a degree of Doctor of Divinity by Emmanuel College.⁹

Ahenakew passed away in 1961 on a trip to Manitoba where he was helping to establish a summer school.¹⁰ His book, published posthumously in 1973, is entitled *Voices of the Plains Cree*. It includes the memoirs of Chief Peyasiw-awasis as told to Ahenakew and the memoirs of Old Keyam, a fictional character created by Ahenakew. Old Keyam is a boarding school graduate who at one time had been energetic, but who had slackened and taken on a name that means "What does it matter?" or "I do not care!"¹¹

The book sheds light on the effects of residential school education. "On returning to his home community from school, [Ahenakew wrote,] a former residential school student 'is in a totally false position. He does not fit into the Indian life, nor does he find that he can associate with the whites. He is forced to act a part. He is now one thing, now another, and that alone can brand him as an erratic and unreliable fellow' who sits on the fence dividing the white and Aboriginal worlds, but belongs to neither! He thought the residential school might make sense in certain remote areas, [but 'for most Indian children, I hold that](#)

⁵ Treat, J. (2003). *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era*. Palgrave Macmillan US

⁶ U of R Canadian Plains Research Centre. (2004). *Saskatchewan First Nations: Lives Past and Present* (p. 10).

⁷ Stan Cuthand's preface to Ahenakew, E. with Ruth. M. Buck. (1974). *Voices of the Plains Cree*, xviii.

⁸ Stan Cuthand's preface to Ahenakew, E. with Ruth. M. Buck. (1974). *Voices of the Plains Cree*, p. xviii.

⁹ <http://portal.usask.ca/index.php?sid=661305836&id=18285&t=details>

¹⁰ Stan Cuthand's preface to Ahenakew, E. with Ruth. M. Buck. (1974). *Voices of the Plains Cree*, p. xix.

¹¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 180.

boarding schools are unnatural, that they are contrary to our whole way of life.' He said that, thanks to their highly regimented life, former students were like old style cars that required cranking before they would start. The residential schools, he said, have taken from their students 'all the initiative there may be in an Indian. He will work only when he feels like it. He will never take advice from his elders amongst us.'¹²

"He described the File Hills Colony as a tribute to its founder, Indian agent William. M. Graham, but also as a continuance of the residential school model of telling First Nations people what to do. In some cases, the return to the reserve had an even more tragic outcome."¹³

Old Keyam said, "Again and again I have seen children come home from boarding schools only to die, having lost during their time at school all the natural joys of association with their own families, victims of an educational policy, well-meant but not over-wise." Old Keyam contemplated taking responsibility for Indian education away from the churches, whose only merit was in the fact that they "voluntarily undertook work that no one else was willing to do."¹⁴

Ahenakew suggested that by making each reserve a school district and equipping each with enough resources to hire qualified teachers, the problem of poor attendance at day school could be addressed. "Old Keyam was also critical of the quality of the education offered at day schools, asking why First Nations people should be saddled with unqualified teachers. 'The Indian has paid more than any school tax. The Treaty stands as witness to that.'¹⁵

In 1921, Ahenakew wrote of the day school on Little Pine Reserve, which had been closed by the government, that he "had never seen a more desolate looking place." It was "the pitiful ruin of a government educational enterprise—the result of inefficiency, indifference, and want of inspiration." He reopened the school with the help of the community and Archdeacon John Mackay. "He played a similar role on Thunderchild's reserve, working with the elderly chief to open the day school on the reserve in 1923."¹⁶

¹ http://library.usask.ca/indigenous/history_essays/edward-ahenakew.php

² Stan Cuthand's preface to Ahenakew, E. with Ruth. M. Buck. (1974). *Voices of the Plains Cree*, p. xi.

³ <http://portal.usask.ca/index.php?sid=661305836&id=18285&t=details>

⁴ http://library.usask.ca/indigenous/history_essays/edward-ahenakew.php#_ftn1

¹² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 181.

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 181.

¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 181.

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 181.

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 180.

CHIEF PEYASIW-AWASIS'S DAY SCHOOL: A STORY OF RESISTANCE



Chief Peyasiw-awasis (Thunderchild), ca. 1910 - 1919, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan//R-A-17725

In 1876, Chief Peyasiw-awasis (Thunderchild/Kapitikow, 1849 - 1927), joined Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear) with a number of other chiefs who rejected Treaty 6.¹ However, in 1879, "after a winter of desperation"² without buffalo for sustenance, Chief Peyasiw-awasis' headmen signed an adhesion to Treaty 6. Peyasiw-awasis was revered as one of the most knowledgeable storytellers on the plains, and as a warrior and hunter.³ Edward Ahenakew recorded his stories in 1923 while he was recovering from a nervous breakdown following three years of medical school. His notes were published posthumously in 1974 in *Voices of the Plains Cree*.

Chief Peyasiw-awasis, by not participating in the North-West Resistance, and thereby having more sway with the Government, was chosen by his people to negotiate permission to hold a Sun Dance. The annually held Sun Dance had been forbidden after the North-West Resistance. Peyasiw-awasis found his opportunity to make the request while in a meeting with the Indian Agent, who wanted him to purchase a stallion. Peyasiw-awasis negotiated for the Sun Dance: If the Agent would give permission for the Sun Dance, Peyasiw-awasis, would purchase the

¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 178. (Supplementary reading)

² Ahenakew, E. (1974 posthumous). *Voices of the Plains Cree*, p. 2

³ Backhouse, C. (1999). *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*, (Note 49). Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History

stallion. Being certain that no religious official would approve of the Sun Dance, and wanting to end the discussion, the agent agreed to allow the Sun Dance if Peyasiw-awasis had permission from the clergymen. The next day, Peyasiw-awasis showed up with letters from both clergymen denying that they disapproved of anything in the dance.⁴

In 1897, Peyasiw-awasis, with four other Cree men, were jailed at Battleford for participating in a give-away dance (Mahtah-e-to-win).⁵ Many years later, Peyasiw-awasis spoke of this injustice: "*It is heartrending. [...] Can things go well in a land where freedom of worship is a lie, a hollow boast? To each nation is given the light by which it knows God and each finds its own way to express the longing to serve Him. It is astounding to me that a man should be stopped from trying in his own way to express his need or his thankfulness to God...*"⁶ In early 1900s, Peyasiw-awasis, along with others such as O-ka-nu, Charles Fineday, Joe Ma-ma-gway-see, Chief Red Dog, Blackbird, Chief Ermineskin, Chief Matoose, Chief Day Walker, demanded First Nations rights to freedom to participate in traditional cultural practices. In 1921, the League of Indians of Canada held an important conference at Thunderchild Reserve to discuss the promotion of Aboriginal religious freedom and the best means of educating children.⁷

"Thunderchild's Band originally was located on good farmland west of Battleford in what is now Saskatchewan. To make the land available to Euro-Canadian settlers, early in the 20th century, the federal government began to pressure the band to agree to relocate. The pressure created divisions in the band, which eventually agreed to be relocated to Brightsand Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1909. This relocation left the band without a day school."⁸

Chief Peyasiw-awasis was against having a Roman Catholic school on his reserve,

⁴ Jefferson, R. (1929). *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan*, pp. 40 - 41

⁵ Backhouse, C. (1999). *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*,

⁶ Backhouse, C. (1999). *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*,

⁷ Huel, R. J. A. (1996). *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, (p. 220). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press; McHugh, R. (2003). *First Nations and Métis Milestones*. Western Development Museum/Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, p.

⁸ "One delegate at the conference, John Tootoosis Sr, would later become very much involved with the Indian political process including the eventual formation of the League of Indians of Western Canada (LIWC)."

⁹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 178

(though Bishop Vital Grandin believed he was a minority, and that the majority on the Reserve were Catholics)⁹ and eventually led a movement to tear the school down. He had negotiated for one school and one missionary in the treaty. He was not against having a school, but he wanted it to be within First Nations control. However, under government pressure, he allowed the Catholics to re-establish the school.¹⁰

"In 1910, Chief Peyasiw-awasis requested that the government live up to its Treaty obligations and build a school on the reserve. Thirteen years later, there was still no school. This led him to write a lengthy letter to Deputy Minister Duncan Campbell Scott:

My people find it very hard to part with their children to have them go to school. It is not that they do not desire to have them educated but they are not favourable to Boarding Schools and I must give you their reasons so that you do not think this is some idle fancy. I am not going to touch on the side of sentiment, that part of it you will readily understand, knowing the Indian as you do. A spruce tree taken while young from a low lying moist soil when transplanted into light soil dies in most cases. If it lives, it will be but short and stunted, where it would have been tall and straight had it been left in its natural soil. It will be like this despite the greatest of care. It is not because it has no capacity for growth, it is because it is taken out of its natural environment where it would have done well. I have no education but my hairs are grey. I have seen and observed life. I have learnt the ways of nature and I see that the Boarding Schools and their effect on our young can be explained by this parable. The system is not natural, it seems artificial and the fruit of it, so far as I can see it in my Reserve and elsewhere has been very poor. Many a pupil has come home to die, being in the last stages of consumption. The strict discipline, the changes of environment, the close confinement, the different food, has lessened the vitality of our young and made them susceptible to the germs of tuberculosis with which the Buildings are always in time saturated. I learned this from the Boarding School that was in Battleford when it was taken over by the Seventh Day Adventists

⁹ Huel, R. J. A. (1996). *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, (p. 183). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.

¹⁰ Backhouse, C. (1999). *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*, (p. 89). Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History.



Chiefs' conference at Thunderchild Reserve, ca. 1922, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A10196 (Rev. Edward Ahenakew sitting in front)



"Indian children in front of log school at Thunderchild Reserve," n.d., Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A7674 (1)-(2)

they were obliged to pull down almost the whole building because in order to insure against infection from the germs that had played havoc among the Indian children. From the Indian point of view that school, although in very capable and trustworthy hands was a long history of sorrow because of the disease in it. Then we found that the continual supervision in everyday work meant the killing of all initiative in the pupils. They came back with good records, knowing English well and other things taught to them but they were neither white men nor Indians. They don't seem to know how to make the start. They had lost the ordinary Indian mode of livelihood and were unable to do as the white man did. They were victims of their educational opportunity. The sense of ownership and the desire to increase what is owned is a thing that should be developed in childhood stage. All this is lost to the child in the Boarding School while there he works at cows, horses, cleans rooms, plows and helps in harvest but he feels that he is getting nothing in return. I myself know he is actually working for himself, but he does not see it that way. He has no chance therefore to couple work with its reward. This teaches

him to look upon work as a drudgery and in many cases this idea pervades through life."¹¹

He wrote to persuade Scott that a day school on the reserve would allow parents to "have the children in our care which is natural." They would learn both worlds: "to read and write at school, and learn from their parents 'the way of rustling around for a living.' Living among their own belongings would teach them to care for them. If boys, for example, had their own cows or horses, they would 'develop a sense of ownership and that means a great deal.' As well, [Peyasiw-awasis] wrote, the student would be 'growing up and developing in his own natural elements.'"¹²

Peyasiw-awasis reminded Scott that he was one of "the last of the old chiefs who took part in the first treaty. To me there personally was promised a school in my Reserve if I and my people desired it. Having this Treaty promised fulfilled would 'give to my grand children at least one heritage which would be of real

and lasting value to them and my one remaining and consuming ambition. If I can do this item I can leave the world in peace."¹³

However, Peyasiw-awasis's arguments did not persuade Duncan Campbell Scott. So Peyasiw-awasis (Thunderchild) "built the school with his own band's funds, essentially shaming the government into paying for the teacher."¹⁴



"Crowd in front of school on Thunderchild Reserve..." ca. 1937, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A7677

¹¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 178-179
¹² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 179

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 180
¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 180

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"The new Gordon's Indian Residential School," ca. 1929, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Mathilda Wilkings/P8801-207



"Playmates," ca. 1926, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Mathilda Wilkings/P8801-1



"First day of school," ca. 1926, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Mathilda Wilkings/P8801-186

GORDON'S INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

The [Gordon's Indian Residential School](#) (1888-1996) was managed by the [Anglican Church of Canada](#) from 1876 to 1946. It was located on the boundary of [George Gordon Reserve \(Treaty 4\)](#) as a Day School in 1876, and expanded for boarders in 1888. Gordon's was later managed by the Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission from 1946 to 1969, and by the Government of Canada from 1969 until its close in 1996. The Anglican Church continued to provide chaplaincy into the 1990s.¹ The school was destroyed by fire on February 1, 1929 and reopened in 1930.

"The school had a long history of poor management, sexual abuse of students, and complaints that discipline was harsh and abusive. Throughout the school's later years, its management did not control the staff. The result was relentless abuse of students. There are examples of staff members belittling students' families, slapping students, banging their heads against doors, banging their heads against walls, and grabbing students by the hair. Punishments of this sort continued into the 1990s."²

Punishment and Physical Abuse

In 1928, all except three boys who ran away were, reportedly, "punished corporally but whether severely enough to check them remains to be seen."³ It is recorded that students were confined to the infirmary as punishment in the 1930s. In 1938, boys were

also put on bread and water for truancy.⁴ In 1938, an Indian Affairs official advised against the practice of cutting girls' hair, which had been used as discipline.⁵

In 1957, the Saskatchewan inspector of schools was asked to investigate allegations against Principal, Rev. A. E. Southard: Two girls who had run away had their heads shaved, one girl was hospitalized after severe punishment in 1956,⁶ and students were being bullied by the principal. When he arrived, the inspector discovered that the principal had already resigned and left the country. He was informed that in previous years the girls' hair had been closely cropped, but that at the advice of the local Indian Agent, the principal had quit this practice. It was confirmed that one girl had been hospitalized a year earlier, and "all but one staff member of the previous year had resigned in frustration over the principal's 'overbearing attitude.'"⁷

In 1967, employee L. C. Bishop reported that he "saw a childcare worker strike a student in the face with an open hand. The man then pulled the student from his bed and kicked him in the side. Bishop inspected the student, who complained of being beaten with a stick, and found 'one ugly red mark along the lower back, four welts, and two more red marks on his left buttocks.' Bishop noted the beating had been administered in a state of acute anger, and that there had been previous reports of students being 'kicked, slapped, and cuffed.' The sixty-

four-year-old employee was fired the following month.⁸

In 1977, a staff member was suspended without pay for three days for hitting a boy in the head and kicking him in the ribs to get him out of bed, before he dragged the boy to the lounge. This was in response to the boy slamming his door to express frustration at the cancelation of a trip into town to attend a hockey game.⁹ For talking back to a supervisor in 1978, a student was struck so hard with a broom handle that it fractured her arm. In 1986 students complained that a "childcare worker had grabbed them by the throat and hair, pushed them around, banged their heads against doors, and verbally abused them."¹⁰ Another childcare worker was suspended in 1985 when he threw a student out of bed. Incidents of abuse were reported throughout the 80s and into the 90s.

Sexual Abuse and Failure to Protect Students

In 1945, Gordon's school engineer E. Holfeld (or Schofield/Holdfeld) "was kept on staff after he was convicted of assaulting a female student."¹¹ Holfeld was an alcoholic, and according to acting Principal J. H. Corkhill, "there are also several other things in his makeup which are quite bad for one mixing with young children as he does."¹² Principal Corkhill, however, feared that he would not be able to find a replacement for the school engineer and so

¹The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 99

²Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 101

³Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 93

⁴Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 98

⁵Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 98

⁶Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 100

⁷The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 387

⁸The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 392

⁹The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 396

¹⁰The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 396

¹¹Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 104

¹²The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 444

From 1949 to its closure in 1997, the Gordon's school (later, the "Gordon Residence"), operated by the Anglican Church in Punnichy was one of the worst-run schools in the entire residential school system. Students were at risk of harsh discipline and physical and sexual abuse for extended periods of time. (Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 444)



Former Gordon's residential school student Riley Burns speaks about his experience at school in Where Are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.



Meal time at Gordon's, January 1954, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Grace Reed/M2008-10-P78



Memorial to Gordon's Indian Residential School, Punnichy, SK. August 20, 2008. Incorporates former school bell, cross from roof, and "1929" corner stone, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Ted Wickson/P2008-02

The CBC's *Red Road Forward* is a documentary in which former students of Gordon's Indian Residential School talk about the abuse that they experienced while attending the school. Co-produced by Brett Bradshaw and Carol Morin



"A few young girls out in the snow," ca. 1927, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada/P8801-206

[Click to read former student stories](#)

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

did not dismiss him. This failure to act on behalf of students would have ongoing effects. Later that year, due to a complaint of the new Principal, D. L. Dance, Holfeld was convicted of two charges of buggery and one of attempted buggery and sentenced to two years in jail.¹³ The damage had been done, however. In 1947, when a student was diagnosed with venereal disease, he revealed that he had been sodomized by his supervisor, William McNab, a former student who in turn claimed that he had been abused by Holfeld. Indian agent R. S. David believed that this had been an ongoing problem for years, and that the "whole school is polluted [*sic*] with it." He blamed the church authorities for "engaging ...misfits."¹⁴

In 1955, a student became pregnant by a school supervisor, for which he was prosecuted and fined.¹⁵ In 1956, four girls charged the Principal, Rev. A. E. Southard, of sexual impropriety; this charge was denied by the principal and investigated by a senior teacher who exonerated him. The principal then resigned his position. There is no record of a report to Indian Affairs or the police.¹⁶

In 1993, William Peniston Starr, a director at Gordon's from 1968 to 1984, was convicted of 10 counts of sexual assault of students. He admitted to having abused hundreds of young boys over a 40-year period.¹⁷ ([Read more](#))

Student Deaths

Eleven-year-old Andrew Gordon ran away from the Gordon's school on Saturday, March 11, 1939, and was found by his father frozen to death one mile from home and seven miles from school on Tuesday, March 14. His father had heard that his son was not in school by a visitor. Principal R. W. Frayling (neither teacher nor clergyman) had not organized a search nor had he informed the family, Indian Affairs, or the police.¹⁸ "A coroner's jury concluded that there was no negligence surrounding Andrew['s]... death due to exposure..."¹⁹ However, the Indian Affairs official Thomas Robertson believed there was negligence, writing, "the death should never have occurred." He concluded that no action should be taken, however, unless there was action by the people of the district. Superintendent Hoey sent the principal a letter outlining what should be done when students escaped from school. However, he did not send out a circular to inform other schools of how to respond to students who run away, and there is no evidence of a pre-existing policy.²⁰

In June 1947, two girls, Myrtle Jane Moostos and Margaret Bruce, drowned when they and one other girl took a raft out on the lake. The investigation found that the children were often playing outside unsupervised, as staff had other duties to attend to inside. Many of the students had escaped the playground that day and had crossed the road and gone down to the lake, which was only a short distance away. Acting-Principal Wickenden suggested

the cause of the girl's behaviour was because "perhaps those from far away Reserves feel the restrictions and the fact that they never get home during the year....the girls concerned are those that live at a distance."²¹

In 1963, four students, David Thomas Anderson, Kenneth Lloyd Anderson, Peter Michael Anderson, and Bucky Arnold, all died in a fire in the basement rumpus room.²²

Bad Water and Illness

In 1945, it was reported that the water supply, a small, nearby lake, had declined due to drought, affecting supply and quality, and making those who drank it sick. The following year, it was concluded that the water was unfit for human consumption. This issue caused the school to be closed sporadically until 1950.²³

Medical Tests on Students

In the 1960s, researcher F. Vella took blood samples from students at Qu'Appelle to study the hemoglobin of First Nations people in Saskatchewan. To extend his research he requested the consent of Gordon's school to take blood samples of students there. The principal, Noel Goater, despite recognizing that the nature of the research required parental permission, gave his consent instead because he felt that getting parental consent would be an "administrative headache."²⁴

¹³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 445

¹⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 445

¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 446

¹⁶ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 104

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 105; <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-church-school-scandal/>

¹⁸ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 110

¹⁹ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 113

²⁰ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 113

²¹ Canada Public Archives. Gordon Residential School - Deaths of Pupils Vol. 6312

²² Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 75; The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 304

²³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 180

²⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 230



Guy Indian Residential School at Sturgeon Landing, ca. 1927-1945, (Ecole Ste Therese Sturgeon Landing, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin)



Sparks from a torch being used by maintenance staff during a repair job ignited a fire in the engine room of the Sturgeon Landing school. The fire quickly spread and burned the school to the ground. Photo: Mgr. Martin Lajeunesse O.M.I., R.P. Antonio Giard O.M.I. in front of the burning Sturgeon Landing School, on September 4, 1952, St. Boniface Historical Society Archives, The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas/N3637



Guy students, ca. 1937, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

GUY INDIAN RESI

The Guy (St. Therese) Indian Residential School (Treaty 6), managed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Roman Catholic church (Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas), began operations in 1926 at Sturgeon Landing, Saskatchewan. Father Doyen, the first principal, was reportedly, "in the habit of taking destitute half-breed children into the School as resident pupils." These students had not been examined by a doctor, which Indian Agent Samuel Lovell thought created a "grave possibility of these children taking diseases into the School." Indian Affairs Philip Phelan directed Lovell to have the principal discharge the students because they were a "Provincial responsibility."¹

On May 18, 1944 Joseph (16) and Jeremie (15) Colomb and Frank Morin (15) went missing from the school. The RCMP were notified but they could not locate the boys. They returned voluntarily unharmed on May 20, due to lack of food.² A 1949 inspection reported that "this school is overcrowded." That year, it was reported that students in residence increased from 125 to 156. By 1951 it was "woefully overcrowded" with a "rather serious epidemic" affecting 19 boys.³ It burned to the ground September 4, 1952, and was then relocated to Manitoba. A temporary school opened in The Pas, Manitoba and a new school building opened in 1959, located in Clearwater Lake, Manitoba.

¹Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6314 File 655-10, part 1. April 11, 1940 Samuel Lovell Indian Agent.

²Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6314 File 655-10, part 2. RCMP report May 23, 1944

³NCTR school narrative "Guy Hill"

Jane Glennon, a retired Social Worker, counsellor and teacher who lives in Prince Albert, spent her first year of residential school at Guy Indian Residential School at Sturgeon Landing. Jane's experience, included in the following, is posted online (mediaindigena.com), entitled, *Sihkos' Story*.⁴

In September 1951, on a nice, cool fall day, my sister and I walked through the doors of a residential school for the first time in our lives. Located in the midst of a small Saskatchewan settlement known as Sturgeon Landing (roughly 9 hours' drive northeast of present-day Saskatoon), the school was built in the vicinity of Sturgeon Lake.

The school was operated by an Oblate Missionary, with nuns of the St. Joseph order teaching and supervising about 200 girls and boys. Most of the students were Woodland Cree from the surrounding area. Meantime, the few native families who actually lived in the settlement had their children enrolled in a day school located on the other side of the lake.

Immediately upon their arrival at Sturgeon Landing IRS, the children were told by the nuns to throw away the clothes they had been wearing and to put on a kind of dark uniform instead. We were also assigned a number at that time: mine was '32.' This would serve as your "ID" throughout the year. When your number

⁴<http://www.mediaindigena.com/guest/issues-and-politics/sihkos-story-part-ii-sturgeon-landing-residential-school> (reprinted with permission from author)

was called, it was usually for 'misbehaviour' (in their eyes, anyway); otherwise, it was for routine situations like being called to do chores, or seeing the doctor for your annual check-up.

It would only occur to me later on that this sort of treatment—where you're only known by your number—was not much different than what would happen in jail or in the army. We were like robots then: always told what to do, feel, and say. Our behaviour was always monitored. Everything had to be done in unison with the other girls. Individuality was non-existent in every aspect of our lives.

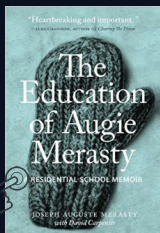
That first day at Sturgeon Landing, every child was subjected to delousing, whether we needed it or not. It began by soaking our heads with coal oil; I still remember that burning sensation when the sister rubbed it into my scalp. Short haircuts followed, for both boys and girls. (Happily for me, I was exempted from this procedure: as a condition of me going to school, my parents had come to an agreement with our local priest and Indian agent that my hair would be kept long. But my happiness would be short-lived. With my jet-black hair done up in pig-tails, I was an easy target for hair-pulling by jealous girls who'd lost theirs. I requested that my waist-length locks be cut off like the others soon after.)

But the de-lousing was not done: there was still the DDT. Once the nuns applied the white, pungent powder, they covered our now

When Philip Phelan, Chief of Training Division heard word of two student deaths at Guy, (Josiah Constant and Bibiane Bighetty) he wrote to Indian Agent, S. Lovell in January 1937 to inform him that all student deaths need to be reported through a form that was to be filled out after an inquiry into the cause of death. Lovell responded that he had no such forms, and that it was impossible for him to fill out forms because he was 60 miles from Sturgeon Landing. He was then instructed to send forms to the principal to be filled out by him. Lovell replied that he had received a form from the principal but it had been improperly filled out and was spoiled. After this correspondence, several student deaths were reported.

Students at the Sturgeon Landing school were vaccinated with BCG in 1948, leading to a low number of students who tested positive for tuberculosis in 1949. See a record of student deaths in the late 30s and 40s on pages 38 & 39.

"The Chief and Councillors [sic]...all complained regarding the Guy School at Sturgeon Landing. They wanted more education in the classroom and they wanted the children to receive a better training in cooking, sewing and in plain carpentering. They laughed at the idea of doing fretwork and said the boys should know how to make handles for tools and cut rafters and boards. They pointed out this was the kind of work they would be required to do and so they should have training along this line." Extract from Inspector Hamilton's report dated 6th August, 1945.



The late Joseph Auguste (Augie) Merasty's memoir, written with David Carpenter, tells of Augie's experience at residential school at Sturgeon Landing. Records show he was discharged in 1944 after nine years at Guy and that he was "very good at wood work and printing." Book Publisher: University of Regina Press. Cover Designer: Duncan Campbell. Cover Photographer: Alan Clark.

Former Student Stories



Guy students, ca. 1927-1934, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

chemical-laden heads with towels. We were then sent to bed, made to wear this DDT-towel combination overnight. If anyone knew at the time that DDT could be extremely dangerous to human health, they sure didn't tell us children.

The 200 children at the school that year were evenly divided between 100 girls and just as many boys. They ranged in age from six to 18 years. Children were strictly segregated by gender almost the entire time; the only exceptions were at mealtime or Sunday services. Even then, girls would be placed on one side of the dining room or chapel, boys the other. Neither side was allowed to speak to the other, though I do remember some of us would sneak in a smile and wave across the gap at mealtimes now and then.

Not surprisingly, religion was a part of daily life for the students. The chapel was actually located within the school itself. Other than Sunday, boys and girls would attend mass separately, and on alternate days. Prayers were recited at every meal. Every week saw us stuck in confession, whether we had something to confess about or not. Just to have something to say, I remember once telling the priest that I had sworn at another kid under my breath, even though I hadn't. In fact, we all went to church so often that I remember sleepwalking down two flights of stairs towards the chapel. Only good luck prevented me from falling down and hurting myself.

As for the food we had to eat, it was usually rationed (i.e., single servings, small portions) and all too often rotten. Our diet consisted mostly of fish, typically whitefish. Even though it came from nearby Sturgeon Lake, the fish was not always very fresh. I recall one time when I had to keep washing down my dinner with tea and water because of how spoiled it smelled. Breakfast typically meant porridge, and almost every time it came with the privilege of having it sprinkled with mouse droppings. Eggs, meanwhile, were a rarity despite the fact there was a farm with chickens right behind the school.

Looking back on those ten months at Sturgeon Landing Residential School, I recall feeling deprived in almost every way: emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. Affection between students such as touching or holding was strictly discouraged and regarded as sinful, even among siblings.

Constricted and restricted most of the time, I was extremely careful not to misbehave at the school. I remember vividly how sick children had to suppress their coughing at night for fear a nun would come along and give you the belt. I remember this one big, mean nun — Kimâmânaw, as some of the girls called her, or 'our mother' in Cree. I did not understand why they would honour her with that name: I distinctly remember how this Sister once grabbed a girl by the hair, then banged her head

on the cement basement floor of our so-called 'playroom.'

As I wrote in my first installment, I was inconsolable that first night at the school, despite my sister's best efforts to comfort me. But the tears kept coming, night after night. I was an introvert and internalized my pain at being separated from most of my family. But somehow I made it through to June, when I would once again rejoin my family in Southend for the summer. I tried to make the most of it. Every time I thought about returning to Sturgeon Landing, I vowed that I would find a way to not make it happen, which eventually became a plan to run away into the bush when the time came for the plane to take us back.

Then came one blissful day in late August 1952, when the local priest informed all the parents in Southend that the school at Sturgeon Landing had burned down. That was one of the happiest days of my life. It renewed my hope that I could now stay with my family and rebuild what was there before between us. I had yet to experience the disappointing news that another residential school would become available and all too soon take over my life again.



Regina's St. Bernadette Catholic School decorated tiles in memory of the students who went to Sturgeon Landing school

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The industrial school at Lebret was built in 1905 to replace one destroyed by fire the previous year. It, too, burned in 1932. Photo: Qu'Appelle Industrial School, ca. 1907, Grey Nuns of Montreal Archive



First communion, Lebret, ca. 192-
St. Boniface Historical Society
Archives, 0096/SHSB-23085



Young boy, Lebret, St. Boniface
Historical Society Archives, 0001/
SHSB-1317



The first school buildings were destroyed by fire in 1903. Church and cemetery (Sacred Heart Catholic) remain open. Canada. Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada/PA-023092

LEBRET (QU'APPELLE)

The Lebret (Qu'Appelle, St. Paul's, Whitecalf) Industrial School, (1884 - 1998), operated by the Roman Catholic Church (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns) from 1884 until 1973, was one of the first three industrial schools that opened following the recommendations of the Davin Report, and was fully funded by the government (Battleford was the other in what is now Saskatchewan). This school was located on the White Calf (Wa-Pii Moos-Toosis) Reserve, west of the village of Lebret on Treaty 4 land. Lebret school has a long history as one of the first industrial schools to open and the last to close.

Father Hugonard opened the school and was the principal until he died in 1917. In 1983, the school property was established as a reserve of the Star Blanket Band. In 1984, the Star Blanket Band took over operations of White Calf Collegiate. "As we took it over we made a decision that the young kids should be taught closer to home. We moved up the grades taught at the school from Grades 6 to 12," said former student Vern Bellegarde.¹ At its height, during the Star Blanket Band's operation, the school was reportedly, "on its way to being ... an academically challenging finishing school for the best and the brightest young people."² The school closed in 1998. In June, 1998, half of the 185 students who attended lived in

residence.³ Wrecking crews tore it down in 1999.

Fire

The school was first destroyed by fire in 1904 and was rebuilt by 1906, against the advice of W. R. Tucker, Moose Woods Day School principal, who provided a list of the students from the reserve where he worked who had died while attending the Qu'Appelle school as well as other industrial schools.⁴ In 1927, it was reported that the school had limited fire-fighting capacity and in 1932 it was destroyed by fire again due to an electrical short-circuit.⁵ It was rebuilt again by 1936. Though the school had already burned down twice, in 1973 it was reported that the fire exits were locked (a dangerous practice intended to keep students from leaving the residence). In 1977, the Qu'Appelle school had a numbers of fires: a fire in the junior boys' dormitory in March, a fire in the senior girls' playroom in April, a trash-can fire in May, and a fire in the junior girls' locker room in June. In September, a staff member overheard a few boys saying "they wished for the school to burn down so as they could go to a different school." Later that day, she found evidence of an attempt to set a fire in the boys' locker room. In April 1978, some girls set fire to the curtains in the senior girls' dormitory. According to an incident report, "All girls concerned were spoke[n] to" by staff. It

does not appear that any of the students were prosecuted for these activities.⁶ In 1980, the senior boys dormitory was determined to be in violation of national building and fire codes.

Death and Tuberculosis

In her memoir of her years as a student at the Qu'Appelle school (1914-1917), Louise Moine⁷ wrote regarding a tuberculosis epidemic: "There was a death every month on the girls' side and some of the boys went also. We were always taken to see the girls who had died. The Sisters invariably had them dressed in light blue and they always looked so peaceful and angelic. We were led to believe that their souls had gone to heaven, and this would somehow lessen the grief and sadness we felt in the loss of one of our little schoolmates."⁸

In 1886, the TB death rates on the Qu'Appelle Reserve reached 9,000 deaths per 100,000 people, the highest on record.⁹ This same year five children died at Lebret (Qu'Appelle) school. Despite the TB epidemic, "when Dr. Maurice Seymour applied for the position of medical attendant to Qu'Appelle school in 1885, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney did not accept his application, stating there was 'no necessity for a doctor.'"¹⁰ He believed medical

¹LaRose, S. (1999). Wrecker's ball claims White Calf Collegiate. Saskatchewan Sage 3(8).

²LaRose, S. (1999). Wrecker's ball claims White Calf Collegiate. Saskatchewan Sage 3(8).

³nctr.ca summary "Lebret"

⁴The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 395-396

⁵The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 465

⁶The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 324

⁷Moine, L. (2013). Remembering Will Have to Do: The Life and Times of Louise (Trottier) Moine. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

⁸Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 2

⁹The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 384

¹⁰Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 62

supplies and the Sisters would suffice.¹¹ In 1891, "the Qu'Appelle school reported that since opening in 1884, it had discharged 174 students, 71 of whom [had] died"(40.8%).¹² By 1892 Dewdney had changed his mind and had given Qu'Appelle access to a medical attendant. Contaminated water supply reported in 1897 added to health problems at school.¹³

By the late 1800s it was understood by the medical community that tuberculosis was an infectious disease that could be overcome by isolating the sick and by providing adequate diet, ventilation, and care. However, economy was chosen over the health of students, and tuberculosis experts' advice to screen out children infected with the disease and to send children to sanatoriums to recover was ignored, contributing to the high number of deaths at residential school.

School administrators, such as Principal Hugonard, resisted sending students with TB to the sanatorium at Fort San: In 1907,

increased cost of supplies, fuel and labor and the difficulty of recruiting pupils."¹⁶

Language and Culture

In 1886, Principal Hugonard sought to have Métis English speaking boys admitted because he believed it would motivate other boys to practice speaking English. His request was opposed by Hayter Reed and Edgar Dewdney at first who thought the influence would either be reversed or imperfect. In 1886, however, Dewdney agreed to allow them because a greater number of "white boys" would supply the First Nations children with a moral influence.¹⁷ Upon his arrival in Canada, Father Hugonard, born and raised in France, had learned Cree, Saulteaux, and English. He taught daily catechism class in Cree, and encouraged the Grey Nuns to teach students in Cree first, then in English. "He also prepared a Cree-English primer, and arranged to have the federal government pay for printing 2,000 copies."¹⁸ However, Hugonard was also strongly and vocally

- In 1950, an allegation of abuse and excessive corporal punishment was made against a Girls' Supervisor. The pupil's mother made the complaint.
- In 1973, a grandparent of two students claimed that two to three Supervisors were cruel towards the pupils at the IRS. A Supervisor allegedly broke a girl's arm and then laughed. Female pupils ran away from the IRS to avoid that Supervisor.
- In 1980, a Child Care Worker wrote to the Minister of Indian Affairs, requesting that the IRS be investigated regarding the alleged suffering of children
- In 1983, a Child Care Worker allegedly threw a student out of his bed, causing injury to the student's elbow.²⁰

Parental Resistance

In 1930, 8-year-old John Yuzicappi's parents felt he was too ill to attend school, and refused to send him to the Qu'Appelle school. "Having obtained a different opinion from a local doctor, Indian agent R. S. Davis had

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

Principal Hugonard argued that many students with scrofula had "no better place to be sent" than school. At the time, despite medical evidence, he believed that TB was not contagious but hereditary.¹⁴ In 1922, Principal "G. Leonard refused to carry out a physician's instruction to send TB students to Fort San, claiming that the students would be 'better off at school than in a sanatorium."¹⁵

"Too Much Economy," Not Enough Funding

Poor diet was a contributing factor to poor health in residential schools. In 1893, Inspector T. P. Wadsworth wrote that at the Qu'Appelle school, "very great economy has been exercised in repairing the children's clothing, darning, patching and repairing blankets. In this connection, I may observe that much of it was worn after the poorest white person would have considered the garment worn out: the condemned clothing is only fit for the rag bag."

In 1903, in response to a request for an increase for the school's per capita, Martin Benson wrote that "there is almost too much economy exercised at this school as regards the clothing and diet of the pupils,—this having been rendered necessary by the

opposed to the practice of Indigenous ceremonies.

By the time Greg Rainville attended school at Lebret in the mid 60s, however, students were being punished for speaking Cree. Rainville said, "I was punished because the nuns would get frustrated with you when they talk to you in French and English, and you're not knowing what they're talking about, and you're pulled around by the ear, and whatnot, and slapped on the back of the head, and stuff like that. And I didn't know what I was doing wrong. No matter what, I tried to do good, but I couldn't understand what they were saying, and they couldn't understand what I was saying, but I was punished."¹⁹

Physical Abuse

- In 1917, parents complained that the Assistant Principal had a violent and uncontrollable temper and that he abused the children.
- In 1932, a female pupil reported that she had been imprisoned in hospital and threatened for a two-week period. Both the principal and doctor claimed that she was put there for a nervous condition and that no threats were made.

the Mounted Police locate the boy and escort him to school [at a fee of 25 cents per mile]. Four years later, the boy ran away from school. On January 28, 1934, a Mounted Police office travelled to his home reserve and visited his parents, but could find no trace of him, although he 'believed the boy was hiding somewhere in the neighbourhood.' He warned John's parents 'of the folly of harbouring the lad by keeping him away from school.' He was informed on February 2 that the boy had returned to the school."²¹

Failure to Screen Staff

In 1966, Kevin (Keavin) Amyot, who that same year had been convicted of an act of gross indecency on a neighbour's child, was hired by recommendation as a supervisor for the Qu'Appelle school where he worked for eight months before transferring to a school in Mission, BC.²² He was convicted again in 1969 of an indecent assault on a child in Edmonton, and in 1987 pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting four Inuit boys while a social worker in the Northwest Territories. Amyot died in 2003 before he could face charges against him by former residential school students from Mission, BC.²³

Lebret/Qu'Appelle continues on next page

¹¹ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 62

¹² Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 28 (Death rates do not distinguish between current and former students.)

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 459

¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 406

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 420

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 508

¹⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 618

¹⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 619

¹⁹ The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 106

²⁰ Summary sheet from nctr.ca

²¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 583

²² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 414

²³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 428

FATHER HUGONARD



In 1924, a celebration and Indian pageant was held at the Lebre/Qu'appelle Mission to observe the 50th Anniversary of Father Hugonard's (founder of the Lebre Indian Residential School) coming to Lebre. The monument seen above was dedicated to his memory in 1927 and stands in the cemetery at the entrance to the school site. ([Source Link](#), Photo credit: Shuana Niessen, Sept. 2016)

Two accounts of student recruitment

A [1955 historical account of Qu'appelle Residential school](#) states that: "Early in 1885, Father Hugonard, accompanied by agent Lash, set out on the reserves to recruit pupils. They succeeded in getting 22 boys, who arrived at the school in the spring. In 1886 the enrolment was 45, all boys." A clearer picture of how these boys were obtained is seen in an account by Ochankuga'he – "Pathmaker" (Daniel Kennedy), who was taken to Lebre Indian Industrial School in 1886. In his memoirs, Kennedy wrote: "In 1886, at the age of twelve years, I was lassoed, roped and taken to the government school at Lebre..."²

An account of stealing children

On December 31, 1900, Indian agent Magnus Begg in a letter to Indian Affairs official David Laird reported that Rev. Father Hugonard was accused by the members of the SheSheep

Band of "the stealing of ... two boys from Widow Penna," the mother of the boys. In his follow up letter on January 19, 1901, he wrote that Widow Penna said, "The Rev. gentlemen and the two police-men overtook her about 25 miles from Qu'Appelle and 40 miles from the Reserve, and without speaking to her, told the police to put the boys in the waggon, she said the eldest boy clung to her but they pulled him away. She was left alone and would not have had a match if one of the boys had not stopped the waggon and given her some...She has been very sick since." Begg had interpreted a letter from Father Hugonard for Widow Penna that informed her that the boys were doing well and invited her to come and see the boys, but "She said the distance was too long, the snow too deep, and she was sick and wanted her children back." Widow Penna would have preferred the boy were taken to Cowessess school where she could see them. "The Indians were very bitter in their expressions against Father Hugonard and said there would be trouble over it yet, meaning I suppose, when the children escaped from school and returned to the reserve, that the police could not take them again so easily as when only having one old woman to deal with."³ Agent Begg was unhappy with the incident because "Before this occurred I think I was having some influence in getting them to reconsider their long objections to either having a school on the reserve or sending their children to one of the schools, but this has put my work back." He also notes that "Sec. 9...of [the 1894] "Education of Indian Children regulations, that a child may be committed by a Justice of the Peace or an Indian Agent without giving notice. The Rev. Father Hugonard is neither, but of course I did not read this part of the section to the Indians." In a January 9, 1901 letter, Hugonard wrote that he had "obtained a warrant from the Justice of the Peace at the Fort authorizing me... to take the two boys aged respectively 10 and 11 years." He stated several reasons for his actions: the boys were taken "after all other efforts had failed; persuasion having been used with this band for the past 15 years without any result"; because "the mother of the two boys is a widow and seems to be largely dependent on relatives; with her wandering mode of life she could not bring the children up properly, and utterly refused to send them to any school"; because "the reduction of half the grant for all new children under 10 years places this school at a great financial disadvantage, and without maintaining the complete number the management will become embarrassed...any opportunity for securing recruits should be taken advantage of"; and because the "brother-in-law ... who was supporting them, as well as the mother-in-law... asked me ...to use force to take the children into school." Indian Affairs official David Laird wrote Hugonard to address the issue and added: "Agent Mitchell also sent me information to the same effect: he also previously advised me that you had used similar means to take children from [Muscowpetung]. Further, Laird referred Hugonard to the notice prefixed to the 1894 regulations that stated the regulations "are to be put in force by any Agent only after being authorized by the Department of Indian Affairs" Laird wrote, "I am not aware that the department has given such authority to the Agents at Crooked Lakes and Muscowpetungs." Inspector McGibbon thought it "highly improper for any Principal or Teacher to go to some irresponsible J.P. and get a warrant and serve it themselves along with a constable."⁴ "Indian Affairs officials were not prepared to inform parents of their rights, or to order that a school principal return children to their parents, even though, in taking them by force, he had overstepped his authority."⁵ ([Read correspondence regarding this incident](#))

¹Sister G. Marcoux, Grey Nun (1955). *The History of the Qu'Appelle Residential School* (page 11)

²The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol 1, pp. 173-174

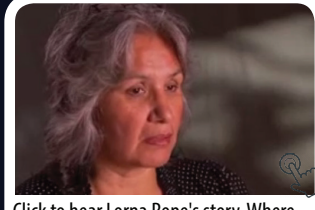
³Indian Affairs. RG Vol. 2552, File 112, 220

⁴Indian Affairs. RG Vol. 2552, File 112, 220

⁵The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 3



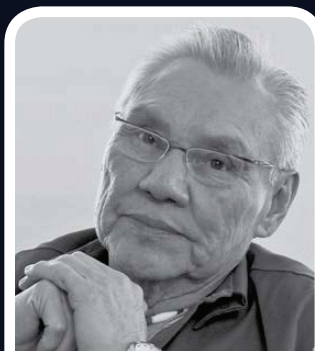
Students and family members, Father Joseph Hugonard, staff and Grey Nuns on hill overlooking the Qu'Appelle Industrial School, May 1885, Photographer Oliver Buell, Library and Archives Canada/PA-118765



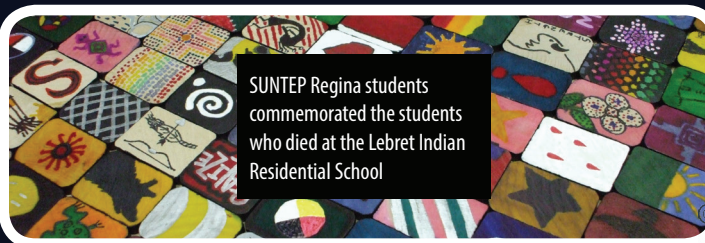
Click to hear Lorna Rope's story. Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.



Daya Madhur dance/drama portrayal of the narratives and site in Lebret



Click to read Noel Starblanket's story



SUNTEP Regina students commemorated the students who died at the Lebret Indian Residential School

Click to read stories from former students

"In 1886, at the age of twelve years, I was lassoed, roped and taken to the Government School at Lebret. Six months after I enrolled, I discovered to my chagrin that I had lost my name and an English name had been tagged on me in exchange." Daniel Kennedy
 Click to read more...

[Back to Overview](#)



Marieval Cowessess Indian Residential School in Elcapo Creek Valley, Saskatchewan, n.d./ St. Boniface Historical Society Archives, 0001/SHSB 1461

Sides differ over preservation of residential school

Tekawennake News (Ohsweken, Ontario), 21 Jul 1999



Indigenous boys of the Indian School of Marieval identified without any order: Louis Agecontay, Frank Lerat, Isidore Smoker, Fred Acoose, Marvin Rainville, W. John Delorme, Solomon Still, Louis Swarvier, Willie Adams, Clifford Lerat, Vincent Delorme, George Red, George Delorme, Laurence Sparvier, Ernest Still, Edward Pelletier, Lernard Tanner, Robert Redwood, Noel Acoose et Pierre Lavallée, ca 1934. St. Boniface Historical Society, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba/ SHSB-28847



Photograph of an unidentified Oblate and a nun with her class of Aboriginal students in Marieval, ca. 194-, St. Boniface Historical Society, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée du Manitoba/ SHSB 24652



Marieval Indian Residential School with classroom block, St. Boniface Historical Society Archives, 0001/ SHSB 1466

MARIEVAL (COWESSESS) INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

The Marieval (Cowessess, Grayson) Indian Residential School, which operated from 1899 to 1997, was located 24 kms north of Broadview, east of Crooked Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley on what became part of the Cowessess First Nation Reserve in 1981 (Treaty 4). The Roman Catholic Church operated the school, first by four Sisters of Notre Dame des Missions de Lyon and from 1901 - 1979 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Hyacinthe.¹ Previously, a day school had existed at Crooked Lake from 1886 - 1888, but it closed and Catholic students were transported to Qu'Appelle school until the boarding school opened in 1899. The Federal Government purchased the property for \$70, 000 in January 1926.² "In 1949, citing their rights under Treaty 4, the parents at the Cowessess Reserve petitioned the government for a non-sectarian day school. 'We ask for a higher standard of education so as our children will grow up in the spirit of self reliance.'³ This petition was dismissed, at that time. The Government assumed responsibility for the residential school in 1968 and in 1970 proposed the closure of the residences. This proposal was protested by David Ahenakew because it was

"not the wish of the Indian people affected." The residence's existence continued to be precarious and there were arguments made for its existence into 1978.⁴ The Cowessess Band took over operations in 1981. The school closed in 1997 and was controversially demolished in 1999 and finally (50 years after the petition) replaced with a day school. "The church, rectory, and cemetery remain."⁵

Payment for Pupils

"Indian Commissioner David Laird reported in 1902 that the Indian agent for the Cowessess Reserve believed 'it has been a rule with the Roman Catholic Schools to be generous to the parents of pupils they may get.' Laird added, 'This 'generous' practice is not confined to R. C. Schools, and I have had occasion within the last year to censure what appeared more like a payment for pupils than mere generosity.'⁶

From Excellence to Substandard Education

In a 1925 inspection report, when Principal Carriere was in charge, Inspector Murison reported that the children had large portions of meat and buttered bread left over after

a meal. All but four of the 88 children were present and "very neatly clothed," and had "a well nourished appearance." "There is plenty of good wholesome food provided including all the milk the children desire."⁷ Indian Commissioner Graham responded: "The report on the Cowesses school is encouraging and shows ... the children are getting a proper training."⁸ A 1929 inspection also indicated the "everything ... is in first class shape and good work is being done."⁹ However, Agent Ostrander wrote to criticize the discipline in the boys classroom and to recommend that the sister who was teaching the class be replaced. A 1932 inspection suggested a substandard education at the school: "The teaching as I saw it today was merely a question of memorizing and repeating a mass of, to the children, 'meaningless' facts."¹⁰

Physical Domination of Students

"Indian agent J. P. B. Ostrander refused to transfer a boy from the Cowessess school to another school in 1919 for fear that 'the other boys may form the opinion that the Brother [in charge of discipline at Cowesses] is afraid

¹Archdiocese of Regina: A History (1988)

²Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Dept of Justice to Myall to Chief Accountant Paget, January 7, 1926

³The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 145

⁴February (1978). Marieval Student Residence is Serving a Tremendous Need. *Saskatchewan Indian 8(2)*

⁵Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 129

⁶The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 283

⁷Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Inspection Report Murison to Graham, 1925

⁸Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Commissioner Graham to Department, July 1925

⁹Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Letter from Commissioner Graham, Sept. 25, 1929

¹⁰The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 63



Rectory of the Sacred Heart of Mary Parish (Elcapo RM 154, Saskatchewan Government of Saskatchewan, Dwayne Yasinowski). The building was constructed in 1897 in conjunction with an adjoining Cowessess Residential School. In 1968 the Department of Indian Affairs took control of the Residential School. The Oblate Brothers remained administrators of the school until 1971. Now a private residence, the Sacred Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Rectory remains on its original location beside the Sacred Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church and is one of the oldest structures in the community. From Canada's Historic Places <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=4959>

[Click to read former student stories](#)

Carol Lavallee: "When they came and took me to residential school at six years old they came and got us in a cattle truck...I remember I was so small that I couldn't see over the box. My sister was standing right tight against me to hold me still so I wouldn't be bounced around in the back of this cattle truck."

Although that was the only time she and her siblings were transported by cattle truck to the Marieval Residential school, it's a memory that has stuck with her. It was in the back of that cattle truck she was taken from a loving and safe home to face years of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. (Kerry Benjoe, LeaderPost, Sept. 21, 2007)



All Saints Catholic School in Kanata, Ontario participated in Project of Heart to commemorate the lives of those children who died at three residential schools in Saskatchewan: Muscowequan IRS, Marieval IRS, and St. Michael's IRS, all run by the Catholic Church.



Students from the Marieval IRS, ca. 1934, Oblats de Mary Immaculate of Manitoba/SHSB28846

Wendy McNab shares intergenerational effects of residential schools. Her mother went to residential school at Lebret and Marieval.

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

of the big boys.' Ostrander's letter made it clear that staff were expected to physically dominate students. He wrote, approvingly, 'Of course when he is strict there will be a big boy occasionally who will try him to see how far he can go, but so far the boys have found that the Brother is their master and I think it does them good.'¹¹

Parental Visits

Until the death of Principal Carriere in 1933, it had been the custom of the school "for Indian parents of children attending ... to visit the school at any time but the more especially on Sunday and take their children from the school to their homes or camps and eat a meal with them, sometimes staying with them several hours." Fr. Chatelain, the new Acting Principal wanted the practice to end. "He wished to make a rule that the children would not be permitted to visit in their own homes in the future during the regular school term except under special circumstances." The parents went to discuss the matter with Agent Ostrander, who explained to the parents why he considered the principal "quite correct."¹² Secretary A. F. MacKenzie responded with "the children must not visit

their home during the regular term without special permission. Parents may visit the school to see their children as arranged by the Reverend Principal."¹³ One year later, Principal Chatelain, wrote to the Department, that "after experiencing the new regulation...I am believing that ... it would be better to let the children go home, not every Sunday, but on the first Sunday of each month."¹⁴ Principal Chatelain was told to discuss the matter with Indian Agent Ostrander who would make a recommendation.¹⁵

Running Away

"In October 1940, the Mounted Police located and returned a boy who had run away from the ... school."¹⁶ When two 13-year-old girls ran away for a second time in October 1944, the principal called the RCMP who "located them at the home of the father of one of the girls and returned them to the school. According to the officer, 'they were warned about their conduct and promised not to cause any more trouble.'¹⁷ In 1945, a female student attempted to leave the school to meet with local boys. "As punishment, her hair was cut. Angered by

¹³ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. MacKenzie to Ostrander, Sept. 7, 1933

¹⁴ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Chatelain, O.M.I., to MacKenzie, July 16, 1934.

¹⁵ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. MacKenzie to Principal Chatelain, July 23, 1934 (This researcher could not discover any further correspondence on the matter)

¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 339

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 340

this treatment, the girl's parents came to the school and withdrew her and her two sisters. An altercation developed between the mother and one of the supervisors. Charges were brought against both parents. The mother was convicted of common assault and fined \$1 plus \$4.50 in costs. The father was convicted under the *Indian Act* provisions regarding truancy, and fined \$1 plus \$4.75 in court costs. Because the girl's hair was not closely cropped but simply left in the 'usual school girl bob,' the Indian Affairs official investigating the matter felt the parents had been unreasonable. He recommended that if the girl 'does not behave in future she be sent to a Reform School.'¹⁸

Fire Hazard

Dr. J. J. Wall reported in 1938 the fire hazard he perceived at the school: The "iced poles of iron, narrow snow or ice filled metal stairs on the outside possibly open to a wall of flames from some window it passes will only add to the panic at night."¹⁹ Despite 1932, 1938, and 1942 circulars instructing that fire exits be kept unlocked, a 1952 fire inspection reported that the fire-escape doors to the boys' and girls' dormitories were locked, further, in the boys dorm, a part of the latch was missing.²⁰

¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 374

¹⁹ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 480

²⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 319, Vol. 4, p. 80

¹¹ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 529

¹² Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol 6303, file 651-1, part 1. Ostrander to the Indian Affairs, Aug. 21, 1933.

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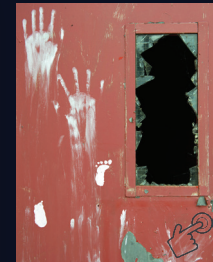
Muscowequan Indian Residential School, n.d., Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface/St. Boniface Historical Society/SHSB 28815



Muscowequan School - 1946 Grades 1, 2, and 3, Archives of the Missionary Oblate Sisters/M19/40



In 2012, St. Luke School in Saskatoon worked with the Project of Heart initiative to decorate 314 tiles, to commemorate the children who lost their lives while in residential school. Their tiles commemorated children in several schools including Muscowequan.



The back door of Muscowequan Indian Residential School in Lestock, Saskatchewan cover image comes from Lana Slezic's visual essay "If These Walls Could Talk." (*The Walrus*, August 17, 2015)

MUSCOWEQUAN INDIAN

Muscowequan (Lestock, Touchwood) Indian Residential School was open from 1889 to 1997. The boarding school was located on Muskowekwan Reserve until 1895 when the residential school was built, aided by the federal government, off-reserve in Lestock, Saskatchewan (Treaty 4), where a stone building was available for use. The Federal Government purchased Muscowequan IRS property from the Roman Catholic Church in 1924, though the church continued to operate the school until 1969 when the federal government took over management. In 1931 a new three-storey brick boarding school opened, the former being destroyed by fire. In 1981, the Muskowekwan Band claimed 28 acres of Crown land on which the IRS was located, as part of its unfulfilled land entitlement. In 1982, the Muskowekwan Education Centre assumed responsibility for operation of the school. The building still stands (The front cover features the back door of the school).

Unmarked Graves

According to an Indian Affairs document, an accidental disturbance of unmarked graves occurred during the installation of new sewer lines:¹ "On July 21, 1992, workers with N.I.S. Construction Ltd. uncovered three unmarked graves, ... On July 22, an additional 15 graves were encountered. They were located in a row paralleling the new gravity sewer main

north of residence 0210-01. The contractor indicated there was evidence of another row of graves north of the first row encountered ... All remains unearthed were placed in plastic bags and stored in a locked building."² Eventually the remains were ceremonially re-interred. An elder who attended the school as a child in the 1940s remembers that in 1944, a priest removed all traces of the cemetery used by the residential school.

Truancy and Poor Education

In July 1924, a Yorkton RCMP officer investigated why Delia, Fred and Emile Malboeuf from Muskowekwan Reserve had not returned to school after a vacation. The officer reported that the children were "averse to returning." Sixteen-year-old Delia complained that "Father Poulette" had made "improper proposals" to her "when she was working in his office at the school." As well, the two teen boys had "received no education in the past six years, being unable to read or write at all, and were employed wholly at farm work."³ J. D. McLean informed the RCMP that Indian Commissioner W. M. Graham had instructed "that no further action ... be taken in connection with the return of these children to the school."⁴ Graham wrote to Scott about the matter, complaining that "you have not dealt

with the serious part of the Constable's report: i.e.—the charges against Father Poulette." (No further correspondence on the matter could be located.) In March of the following year, Inspector Christianson reported that "since Father Poulet has taken charge ... everything now is in first-class order ... there is also a great improvement in the appearance of the children."⁵ Principal Poulet continued as school principal until 1932.⁶

In January 1928, members of the Poorman Band petitioned for better education. "We find that our school officers do not take our children on to the higher grades, but as soon as they are fit to go to a higher grade the child has to set out to work until of age to leave the school...the officials do not allow an Indian child to have any more than a very poor education...our children do not get any education higher than grade 5, and some of them do not go higher than grade 3..."⁷

Read about a father's removal of his son from school one day before his son's 16th birthday...

Running Away

Edward LeRat from Cowessess Reserve ran away in October 1938. The boy told RCMP that "he had been stolen by a man who was driving

² <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/hunt-begins-for-long-missing-students/article1064905/?page=all>

³ Indian Affairs. RG 10, Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. Yorkton Chief Report, July 25, 1924

⁴ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. McLean to RCMP Commissioner, August 19, 1924

⁵ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. Extract from report of Mr. Inspector Christianson, dated March 6th, 1925, on the Touchwood Agency.

⁶ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 564

⁷ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. Extract from petition, dated January 15, 1928, forwarded by Chief Poorman and others...

¹ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 133

"Glen [Crow] and I walked up to the third floor of the residential school and the mood and tone of our conversation changed. Glen told me a story about a boy who was mistreated so badly by the Priests and Nuns of the Muscowequan School that he hung himself in the shower room. From the shower room you can see directly out of this window. I pictured that boy looking out this window as he slipped away from this earth."



Click to read this photo essay by Michael Squier about the last standing Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan

Click to read more stories



Hockey game, ca. 1932, Missionary Oblate Sisters Archives/M19/04

"I'm Irene Favel. I'm 75. I went to Residential School in Muscowequan from 1941 to 1949, and I had a very very rough life. I was mistreated in every way. There was a young girl, she was 7 year old, [and] she was pregnant from a priest there. And what they did, she had her baby, and they took the baby, and wrapped it up in a nice pink outfit, and they took it downstairs, I was in the kitchen with the nuns cooking supper. And they took the baby into the... furnace room, and they threw that little baby in there and burned it alive. All you could hear was [this little cry, like] 'Uuh!' and that was it. You could smell that flesh cooking." (CBC Interview, July 2008)

N RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

an automobile and brought up to the Fenwood district and thrown out." After interrogation, he "admitted that he had run away from the school ... and that his former story was fictitious.⁸ John McDermot and Donald Folstrom ran away in August 1941. The RCMP found the boys "wandering in the village," and they had not been contacted by the school.⁹ Three boys from Fishing Lake and two from Poorman Reserve (one was William Desjarlais) ran away from the school in October, 1944. Four of the boys were returned to the school without incident. William Thomas was found travelling with his mother. "She was against his returning to the school, but finally the boy got in the car."¹⁰ In April 1945, William Desjarlais and Joseph Asapace ran away and were found "begging bread" and "wet through." They were "put to bed" at the Punnichy Detachment and returned the next day.¹¹ The same two boys ran away again in November 1945, this time using a sleigh and team they had stolen from Alfred Manitopyes, who did not wish to prosecute, so the boys were not charged.¹²

In his 1945 quarterly report, Indian Agent R. S. Davis reported that "the school is well run although we have had trouble there, with boys running away, and venereal disease. I

⁸ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 1. Oct. 17, 1938 RCMP report

⁹ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 2. Aug. 18, 1941 RCMP report

¹⁰ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 2. October 7, 1944 RCMP Report (Wadena); Oct. 10, 1944 RCMP report (Punnichy)

¹¹ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 2. April 10, 1945 RCMP report; April 27, 1945, Phelan to Davis

¹² Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 2, November 17, 1945

understand on [sic] boy contracted this when he ran away home. Dr. Golfman advised me also that the boys' supervisor also contracted venereal disease...I have never had an official report on this..."¹³

In December 1945, William and Joseph were transferred to Onion Lake school. Chief Poorman wrote to ask if the principal had authority "to send a boy away from his Residential School...the boy going 15 years old."¹⁴ Agent Davis was instructed by IA Phelan to let Chief Poorman know the reasons for the transfer.¹⁵

Suicide and Sexual Assault

In the spring of 1981, a 15-year-old committed suicide. A few months later, a group of girls, aged 8 to 10, tried hanging themselves with nooses made of knotted towels and socks. "According to a police officer, 'One of the girls confirmed it was her clear intent to commit suicide.' A staff member who alerted provincial social services to the problem complained that there was not sufficient supervisory staff on duty at the residence. The staff member also complained that 'many staff frequently book off sick leaving children unattended.'"¹⁶

¹³ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, File 657-10, part 2. Jan. 4, 1946 Agent's Report for the Quarter ending December 31st, 1945

¹⁴ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, file 657-10, part 2. Dec. 21, 1945 Chief Poorman

¹⁵ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6320, file 657-10, part 2. Phelan to Davis, December 29, 1945

¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 219

In 1989, the "residence suspended two boys for their involvement in 'an assault with sexual overtones' on a female student. After a police investigation and a meeting with the parents of the students involved, the boys were reinstated."¹⁷

Objections to Army Cadet Training

"Chief Poorman of the Poorman Band visited the Indian Affairs office in Ottawa in 1945 to complain that at the Lestock 'the pupils were given too much drilling, with a consequent absence from the classroom.' The principal said that other than the three days of class time that had been given over to inspection during the course of the year, the cadet training had taken place in the evening, usually for about an hour and an half, once a week."¹⁸

School is Dirty and the Children Neglected

Far from Martin Benson's 1904 claim that this school was "the most satisfactorily managed in the territories,"¹⁹ Nurse LeDrew's 1922 report claimed "the school is dirty and that the children are neglected."²⁰ In 1923, Nurse I. M. Lucas reported, "the children at this school do not get the proper nourishing food, or enough. They get no milk and no vegetables, except potatoes, and very small portions."²¹

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 459

¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 485

¹⁹ Indian Affairs RG 10 Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. Benson to Indian Affairs, November 15, 1904.

²⁰ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6318, file 657-1, part 1. Graham to Indian Affairs, Sept. 13, 1922

²¹ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 495



The first Roman Catholic IRS at Onion Lake, ca. 1890s, Glenbow Museum/PA-881-15



The second St. Anthony's Residential School building ca. 192-, Alberta on Record, Musée Heritage Museum, Edmond Pratt/ CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-384



Father Pratt and children, ca. 1928-193-, Musée Heritage Museum, Edmond Pratt/ CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-335

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The third St. Anthony's Residential School building at Onion Lake (built using Duck Lake plans), ca. 1928-193-, Musée Heritage Museum, Edmond Pratt OMI/CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-380



Onion Lake school, ca. 1938, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

ST. ANTHONY INDIAN

The St. Anthony's (Onion Lake) Indian Residential School was operated by the Roman Catholic Church from 1894 until its closure in 1974 (managed by the Sisters of the Assumption, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the Oblate Indian and Eskimo Council). The first and second buildings were located on the Seekaskootch Onion Lake Reserve (Treaty 6). The third constructed by 1927 was located four miles (6.4 kms) south of the original. Over the years, the fathers had been requesting a grant to open a boarding school, but were denied because there was already an Anglican school at Onion Lake. Three Sisters arrived in Onion Lake in 1891 to serve in the log day school that Father Nerre built and by 1892 they had opened a boarding school, which was officially recognized by the government in 1894. After the Sisters arrived, a new school was built by the members of the reserve. The new school was destroyed by fire in 1894. A new school was finished the following year. Oblate Father Adéorat Therien served as first principal of the official boarding school from 1894 - 1896.¹ The second school was destroyed by fire in 1928 (after the construction of a new IRS building had begun at a new location).²

Resistance to Admission Application

Principal W. Comiré wrote in 1897 that parents "seem unwilling to sign the forms of application for admission required by the department. They prefer to keep the liberty of leaving or withdrawing their children from the school at will."³

Illness and Death

"A 1901 outbreak of measles was initially reported as smallpox."⁴ In May 1902, all the children had influenza, one pupil died and another had little hope of recovery. In 1911, a parent requested a doctor visit the school because one of his children had died and another was ill. The following day, a doctor quarantined the school for diphtheria. One student had typhoid fever. An influenza epidemic took the lives of 11 students in 1918.⁵ In 1937 and 1944 the school experienced a measles epidemic. In 1947, 78 students were ill with an unspecified epidemic. Later, one student died in hospital from the illness. In 1957, many students were sick with the flu, some vomited blood and others were in a coma. In 1961, some students had the mumps.

Amebic Study

A 1964 outbreak of Entamoeba histolytica dysentery (amoebiasis) in the Loon Lake district of Saskatchewan "led Indian Health

Services to initiate a mass treatment program, including treatment of the students at two residential schools. The illness is ... associated with poor sanitation. As part of the treatment campaign, Dr. R. D. F. Eaton of the Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital conducted what was described as a 'survey and trial' of the effectiveness of the drug Furamide in reducing gastrointestinal parasites at the Onion Lake school ... Twenty-eight students at the school were identified as having been infected by the parasite. The infected students who were in Kindergarten and in grades 2, 4, 6, and 8 were treated with Furamide for ten days, while the infected students in the other grades were given the same drug, but for only five days. Since one student ran away during the course of the study, results were given on twenty-seven children. Eaton reported that there were two treatment failures in the 5-day group and none in the 10-day group. Despite this, he felt the sample was not large enough for any weight to be attached to the findings. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada could not find evidence to indicate that either the students or the parents were consulted about the use of two different treatment approaches. The conclusion that the study did not involve a sufficient number of students to justify reaching a conclusion raises questions as to whether the research was justified in the first place."⁶

¹ Marceau-Kozicki, S. (1993). Onion Lake Indian Residential Schools 1892-1943. Master's Thesis. University of Saskatchewan. (From an interview with Alice Carter, August 31, 1991.

² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 328-329; NCTR summary

³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 264

⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 442

⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 438

⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 228



Girls at Onion Lake, ca. 1928-193-, Musée Héritage Museum, Edmond Pratt/CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-344



Girls at 2nd residential school at Onion Lake, ca. 192-, Musée Héritage Museum, Edmond Pratt, OMI/CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-355



Children, one with violin, in front of 3rd residential school at Onion Lake, ca. 1928-93-, Musée Héritage Museum, Edmond Pratt/CA MHM 1995.49-is-mhm-304



Class portrait of male students, nuns, a priest and school personnel at St. Anthony's Indian Residential School, Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, ca. 1950, Library and Archives Canada/PA-202479

[Click to read former student stories](#)



"Joseph Dion, a graduate of the Onion Lake school, taught school for many years in Saskatchewan." "Dion recalled that at the Roman Catholic school in Onion Lake, he and his classmates, were not long in concluding that the lung sickness was fatal, hence as soon as we saw or heard of someone spitting blood, we immediately branded him for the grave. He had consumption: he had to die." (Vol. 1, p. 323 & iii). Photo: Joseph F. Dion, October 5, 1960, Photographer Hugh A. Dempsey, Glenbow Archives, NA-2815-1.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Insufficient Milk

In 1926, an inspector reported that "they keep ten milch cows [dairy cows], seven of which were giving milk at the time. The Sister in charge informed me that they were poor milkers and they should have at least four more cows to provide for their requirements."⁷

Fire Hazard

"A 1965 inspection of the ... school pointed out that the National Building Code required sprinklers in wood-frame buildings. However, since the principal indicated that the main building would be closed within five years, it was acceptable to install an automatic fire-alarm system."⁸

"In 1969, the Dominion Fire Commissioner was calling for \$55,000 worth of work to the Onion Lake school. Indian Affairs proposed that rather than making the repairs, it employ an additional night watchman at the school. The ... school did not close until 1974, almost ten years after the call for sprinkler installation. When it did close, the school was described as 'a fire hazard.'⁹

Abuse

"A teenage girl from Cold Lake was

impregnated by one of the Oblate Fathers. She was apparently sent home to have her baby."¹⁰

"In 1906, Indian Commissioner David Laird instructed the Indian agent responsible for the Onion Lake school that 'ear twisting for punishment should be dropped.'¹¹

Language

In 1897, Principal W. Comiré reported, "The Cree language is not heard in the school, not a word is spoken among the pupils; they seem to prefer English now. The little ones even speak English to their parents, who do not understand what they say."¹²

"The language policy not only disrupted the long-term transmission of Aboriginal culture, but it also had an immediate and destructive impact on the bonds of family."¹³

"Provincial governments that recognized an obligation to Métis children began buying space for them in residential schools. Starting in 1914, Alberta began sending orphans to St. Anthony's school."¹⁴

Arranged Marriages

In 1936, the principal made a list of students who had turned 16 who, he believed, should not be discharged because he would "try to marry them as soon as they leave the school." Of one 18-year-old girl, whom he wanted to keep until after fall threshing when she would be married to a former student, he wrote, "She will be exposed if she is turned loose." Several of these girls were orphans.¹⁵

Onion Lake was the site of two residential schools, St. Anthony's Roman Catholic and St. Barnabas Anglican Residential Schools. Onion Lake has hosted several events centered on healing and reconciliation such as annual health walk and reunion of all former Indian residential school students, men & women's healing circles, medicine wheel teachings, traditional parenting skills to address the intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools, and the building of a monument on each of the residential school sites.



⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 495

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 328

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 328-329

¹⁰ Marceau-Kozicki, S.(1993). Onion Lake Indian Residential Schools 1892-1943. Master's Thesis, University of Saskatchewan. (from an interview with Alice Carter, August 31, 1991.

¹¹ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 98

¹² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 622

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 622

¹⁴ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 25

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 658



St. Barnabas School at Onion Lake, ca. 193-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103-S7-103



Above: The gates of St. Barnabas IRS remain. Photo by Ann May Assailly. Saskatchewan Anglican newspaper, December 2012



Left: Cadets of St. Barnabas School, ca. 1926-1943, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, A. H. Sovereign/M2006-08

ST. BARNABAS INDIAN

St. Barnabas (Onion Lake) Indian Residential School opened in 1892 and was destroyed by fire in 1943. The school was operated by the Anglican Church of Canada at Onion Lake (Treaty 6) on what is now the Saskatchewan/Alberta border. The then lay catechist (and fluent Cree speaker) John R. Matheson started the school in a Mission house that he and his wife had paid for and constructed. It initially held 10 children but grew substantially over time.

Besides being a missionary and principal, Matheson was a rancher, farmer, and trader, often using income from his business enterprises to support the school.¹ Two of the Matheson children died at Onion Lake, Edith (1901-1904) and baby Jack (1910).² The school administration was a family affair. Rev. John Matheson was principal³ until he died in 1916.⁴ During his illness (from about 1911) and following John's death, his wife Dr. Elizabeth Matheson (first woman doctor in Saskatchewan) became principal (with 29 students) until 1917 when Rev. Henry Ellis became the third and final principal. Elizabeth's brother, James Scott became the farm instructor while she was principal.⁵ Elizabeth's daughter, Letitia, and John's niece, Anne Cunningham, were teachers at the school. Edward Ahenakew became the assistant principal in 1912. Ahenakew remained a lifelong friend of the Matheson family, eventually presiding over the funeral of Elizabeth, in 1958. A Matheson daughter, Ruth M. Buck, edited Ahenakew's memoir, *Voices of the Plains Cree*.⁶

¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 715

² <http://saskhistoryonline.ca/islandora/object/ourlegacy%3A38316>

³ John Matheson's brother Edward was principal at the Battleford school during the same time. (The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 722)

⁴ "John's salary, paid by a government grant, was three hundred dollars annually."

⁵ See Ruth M. Buck's, (2003). *The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle: The Remarkable Story of Elizabeth Matheson, Frontier Doctor and Medicine Woman*.

⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 734

The school was destroyed by fire in 1943 and students were moved to St. Alban's College in Prince Albert.

Parental Resistance to Enrolment

In 1906, Principal Matheson wrote: "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 or coax them to run away after they have been in the school for some time, and all efforts to get them back are utterly futile." He questioned government officials, who he said were "afraid to enforce the law, or there is no law for them to enforce. Which is it?"⁷

Despite resistance, parents sometimes enrolled their children in the schools out of financial desperation. "Charles Constant of the James Smith's Band applied to have his [11- and 13]-year-old daughters admitted to the ... school ... in 1929, even though there was a day school near to his home. As he explained to the Indian agent, 'I am poor, hard up and cannot feed my children properly and I think it will be better for my older girls to be in a boarding school.'⁸

Métis Students

"In the early 1890s, most of the children at the ... school ... were of mixed ancestry. Principal Matheson taught the children at his own expense, only twice seeking government support in the form of food or a per capita grant. In 1898, he persuaded the government to pay the per capita grant for two children whose mother had status but whose Euro-Canadian father had deserted them. Indian Affairs warned Matheson that this was an

⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 260

⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 281

isolated case and should not be considered as a precedent. Two years later, only 14 of the 34 students had Treaty status." (At the St. Anthony's Catholic school, also at Onion Lake, 49 of the 62 students had status.)⁹ "Into the 20th century, ... Principal Matheson continued to seek funding for 'a large number of half-breeds and non-treaty children.' He had been keeping them in the school at his own expense, and was having 'difficulty in filling up his school with Indian children.' The Indian commissioner ruled them to be non-grant-earning students, saying that most of them were 'orphans, children of Indian mothers by white or half-breed fathers, who had deserted them.'" Principal Matheson argued they had no one to care or provide for them. "They were also 'living on the reserve and brought up as Indians.'¹⁰

"In February 1928, three 'half-breed' children were admitted to the ... school after the death of their mother. This was done without the Department's permission. In December 1929, Commissioner Graham reported that the Indian agent was still trying to have the children removed from the school, into the custody of either their father or the provincial Department of Neglected and Dependent Children. Graham wrote that 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 are going to have a lot of trouble.' The following year, there were six Métis children attending the two residential schools in Onion Lake. Graham concluded that rather than remove the children, the Oblate provincial intended to let them remain there as long as Indian Affairs allowed them to stay."¹¹

⁹ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 14

¹⁰ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 22

¹¹ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 27

The construction of both a Roman Catholic boarding school (St. Anthony's) and an Anglican boarding school (St. Barnabas) at Onion Lake was a result of the interchurch competition that plagued the residential school system.

Read former student stories



Left: Eight-year-old Joseph Sanderson, ca 1925, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-376

Right: Students of Onion Lake School, ca. 1932, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, T.B.R. Westgate/M55-01



A group of girls, ca. 193-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-346



Young Scouts seated in front of Boys' House, ca. 192-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC Fonds/P7538

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Early Instruction in both Cree and English

An 1898 report from Principal Matheson indicated that the children were taught to "read and write both Cree and English."¹² This school was one of the few exceptions. (One year earlier, St. Anthony's the Roman Catholic school at Onion Lake reported "The Cree language is not heard in the school, not a word is spoken among the pupils")¹³

Inadequate Isolation Facility/Improper Health Care

In 1921, there were reports of inadequate isolation facilities at the school. A boy came down with smallpox in 1921. "He was kept in a small dormitory with a sheet hung over the door that was regularly sprayed with disinfectant until a doctor could confirm his diagnosis and put a quarantine into effect. In 1924, the Mission school put up two buildings to use as an isolation hospital after an outbreak of diphtheria and smallpox."¹⁴

In 1931, Mrs. W. F. Dreaver refused to send her daughter Mary to the boarding school "because of the poor medical treatment her son had received there." Her son had been admitted in September 1930 in good health, but became ill by December the same year. Principal Henry Ellis assured the parents the boy would recover. However, the parents paid to have their son returned home and the same local doctor who had pronounced him in good health, announced that the boy was "far gone with TB." Their son died a few months later. Mary was discharged and attended Mistawasis Day School instead.¹⁵

Nutritional Deficiencies

In 1921, "after receiving reports ... that students ... were being served poor-quality bread and only water to drink, Duncan Campbell Scott instructed the Anglican Missionary Society ... that 'the children be provided with good, substantial and well cooked food.'"¹⁶

In 1923, the parents of student Edward B. received the following letter from their son: "We are going to tell you how we are treated. I am always hungry. We only get two slice of bread and one plate porridge. Seven children ran away because there [*sic*] are hungry,.... I sold all my clothes away because I am hungry too. Try and send me some money, \$2.50, please to buy something to eat and send me pictures those I left in the wagon." The parents gave the letter to a parliamentary press gallery reporter, who sent the letter to Deputy Minister Duncan Campbell Scott. Scott "brushed off the complaint and said the student had 'no cause for complaint.' He also wrote, 'Ninety-nine per cent of the Indian children at these schools are too fat.' Indian Affairs eventually identified the boy and informed his father that 'your boy is being well fed and clothed.' In reality, there had been ongoing concerns about the quality of food at the school, and Scott knew that.... It does not appear that a news story on the issue was ever published, despite the fact that the parents, or their acquaintances, had taken the issue to the press."¹⁷

Running Away

Two boys ran away on May 17, 1941. They found work with a local farmer, but were located by the Mounted Police a few days later on May 20 and returned to school.¹⁸

Abuse

In 1919, Bishop Jervois Newnham recalled [in a letter to Duncan Campbell Scott] a dismissed court case regarding three girls who were lured away for "immoral purposes" from St. Barnabas school by a young Roman Catholic boy. The Bishop alleged that the police had mismanaged the case.¹⁹

"According to one former student, a boys' supervisor was fired from the school in about 1943 for sexually molesting a boy."²⁰

Staff Turnover

In 1926, two young women—18 and 20 years of age—were in charge of 88 students. One teacher, Kate Beanland, was described as "very energetic and is doing good work." The other, Elizabeth Turner, was described as "a strong teacher, clear and careful in presentation and maintains a good standard of work."²¹ Two years later, both women were gone, replaced by two other women in their mid-twenties.

Fire

A fire broke out in 1928 (proven deliberately set) and in 1930. Two male students who set fire to the school in 1928 "gave warning to other students, ensuring that they were able to escape safely."²² The boys were sentenced to five months in jail.²³ The school was destroyed by fire in 1943 and in 1944 students were moved to St. Alban's in Prince Albert.

¹² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 622

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 622

¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 443

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 444

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 489

¹⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 507-508

¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 339

¹⁹ nctr summary

²⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 449

²¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 322

²² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 483

²³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 486

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St. Alban's Indian Residential School in Prince Albert, ca. 1946, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103-S7-291

Lorena Fontaine's story about intergenerational effects of residential school. Her mother attended residential schools from the age of 3 until 16. Two of the schools were in Saskatchewan: St. Albans and All Saints.



St. Alban's School, Cadets, ca. 1945, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103

Young students at St. Alban's School, Prince Albert, Sask. ca. 1946, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103-S7-292



[Read former student stories](#)

ST. ALBAN'S INDIAN R

St. Alban's Indian Residential School in Prince Albert (Treaty 6), managed by the Anglican Church of Canada, was a replacement school for students from St. Barnabas Indian Residential School (Onion Lake) after it was destroyed by fire in 1943. The girls were quartered at St. Alban's and the boys at the military camp (All Saints). The church-owned building had formerly been a private college (St. Alban's Ladies College).¹ In 1951, the students were moved to All Saints in Prince Albert, which was officially named Prince Albert Indian Residential School in 1953.

Principal Strikes Student

In 1945, Principal Ellis admitted to striking "one student who would not submit to being disciplined for attempting to gain access to the girls' dormitory. Principal Ellis told Indian Affairs official J. Bryce, 'When Leslie put his dukes up and squared away to fight, I hit him, and under the circumstances I would do the same thing again. There is one thing I must have in this school, that is discipline. If I fail to maintain it, my staff and myself might as well quit.'²

¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306; <http://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/prince-albert/>

² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 374

Parental Resistance due to Ill-Treatment of Children

"In August 1945, parents from the Little Pine Reserve in Saskatchewan refused to send their children to St. Alban's school. In a letter of protest, three of the fathers wrote that children from the community had returned home 'for the holidays in ragged cloths [sic] and some with shoes not fit to wear and many sizes too large for them. One of the girls had sores all down her legs and could walk only with difficulty. Our children had told us that the food is very poor at times and not in sufficient quantity, and being compelled to eat [whether] they wanted to or not. Further, our children tell us that Rev. Ellis says some very bad things to them—one time telling all the students that they 'don't you know that I could kill you all and throw you into the ash pit—and not even bother to bury you' and that he has kicked and abused them.'³

"John Tootoosis and other First Nations leaders visited to investigate the conditions of the school." To manage parental resistance, Indian Affairs official C. A. F. Clark recommended "that parents should be restricted 'to visiting their children in a place appointed therefore, and anyone other

³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 359-360

than a departmental official who wants to do any investigating should first have the permission of the Superintendent.' The *Indian Act* of the day stated, 'The chief and council of any band that has children in a school shall have the right to inspect such school at such reasonable time as may be agreed upon by the Indian agent and the principal of the school.' However, the amended *Indian Act* adopted in 1951, three years after Clark made his recommendation, ... [had removed the] provision for school inspection by chief and council.'⁴

In response to parental complaints, Indian agent J. Bryce also visited the school. "He concluded that the students were well-fed and well-clothed, and showed no sign of 'fear or resentment.' Indian Affairs official C. S. Bell then went out to the Little Pine Reserve, where he 'warned the parents that the children were to return to school! When he was told the parents would not send their children back, he returned with the Mounted Police and 'rounded up eight absentee children.' [However,] the show of force did little to address the truancy problem at the school.'⁵

⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 360-361

⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 360-361

AMALGAMATIONS CREATE PRINCE ALBERT INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL



St. Barnabas, Onion Lake (1892-1943)
destroyed by fire
(The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada MSCC/P75-103-S7-103)



All Saints, Lac La Ronge (1907 - 1947)
destroyed by fire
(The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538)



St. Alban's, Prince Albert (1943-1951)
(The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103-S7-291)



Prince Albert (All Saints) Indian Residential School
(1947 - 1997) (Prince Albert Historical Society and PA Herald)
All Saints Lac La Ronge moved to Prince Albert in 1948. Students from
St. Alban's moved to Prince Albert (All Saints) school in 1951. The school
changed its name to Prince Albert Indian Residential school in 1953.

This chart illustrates how schools were amalgamated into the Prince Albert Indian Industrial School, the largest residence in the province. (Full photo credits on school profile pages)

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Overcrowding

In 1945, parents had also "pointed out that the school was overcrowded and that some of the students got 'only a half a day's schooling in order to make room for the rest!' Their preference was for their children to attend the day school on the reserve."⁶

In 1946, Indian Affairs official, J. P. B. Ostrander also "complained of low ceilings and cramped dormitories." He reported that "in one dormitory sixteen of the thirty-nine boys had to sleep two to a bed. Ostrander wrote: **'There seems to be no thought about the health of the children when such a large number are permitted to sleep in crowded quarters.'** A year and a half later, the school was still overcrowded."⁷

Running Away

In 1948, "Bernard Neary, the superintendent for education for Indian Affairs, asked J.P.B. Ostrander ... to investigate why so many children were running away from the Prince Albert school. A report from a local Indian Affairs official that fall stated, 'Two-thirds of the staff are old and decrepit. Organized games and sports have been lacking, which

has resulted in a steady stream of children, boys and girls, running away.' In October [that year,] Principal F. W. Fisher wrote, 'Since September 5th, my car has travelled 2400 miles, two thirds of which at least, were in connection with trying to get children back to school. I am really in despair. Many of these runaways have been off four or five times.'⁸

Fire Hazard

"Commenting on the risk of fire at the aging and dilapidated St. Alban's school ... in 1946, Indian agent J. P. B. Ostrander wrote: 'More than one disastrous Indian school fire has been started by the pupils themselves in an effort to obtain their freedom from a school which they did not like. The number of truants in this school would certainly indicate much dissatisfaction.'⁹

Ostrander also wrote that if there was a fire at the school, "there would be a great probability of considerable loss of life because of narrow corridors filled with dry inflammable material and not easy access to fire escapes or the stairway."¹⁰

Principal Dies Due to Over Work

In 1949, "G. W. Fisher, the principal of the St. Alban's school in Prince Albert and the All Saints school (which had been relocated from Lac La Ronge to Prince Albert after its destruction by fire) died. According to his physician, the cause of death was 'heart strain due to over work.' He had been principal of the [All Saints] school for twenty years."¹¹

In 1951, all the students living at the St. Alban's school moved into the military camp (Prince Albert All Saints).¹² See *amalgamations* above.



St. Alban's School Girl Guides, ca. 1946, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P75-103

⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 359
⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 186

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 360
⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 322
¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. iv

¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 517
¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306

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School site in Lac La Ronge, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Ted Wickson/P2008-02-047

Distant view of All Saints Indian Residential School, Lac La Ronge, ca. 1928, R.D. Davidson/Canada. Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys/Library and Archives Canada/PA-020295



School girls going for a boat ride in the "Bonita," Lac La Ronge, ca. 192-, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-281. Listen to [Elders Recall Boat Trips to Residential Schools](#)



The Lac La Ronge Indian Band built a replica of the canoe used to transport children to residential schools. The replica was later burned in a special ceremony in August 2012. This was done to help with the healing of survivors of Indian residential schools. Photo: Eagle Feather News, Carmen Pauls Orthner, August 2012

[Read more about Lac La Ronge School and former students](#)

LAC LA RONGE INDIAN

The [Lac La Ronge \(All Saints\) Indian Residential School \(1907 - 1947\)](#), operated by the [Anglican Church of Canada](#), opened in 1907 after the closure of a day school that had been in operation since 1889. The day school had low attendance and had difficulty securing a competent teacher. [Archdeacon John A. Mackay](#), a mixed-blood teacher fluent in Cree, secured the funding for the residential school and set up a saw mill on site to finish the lumber used in building the school. It was located on the southwest shore of Lac La Ronge on [Treaty 10](#) land. The school moved to Prince Albert in 1947 after it was destroyed by fire.

Water and Sewage

In 1925, Indian Agent W. R. Taylor wrote: "The disposal system is bad and very unhealthy. The present system, as I saw it, is overflowing and lying on the surface of the ground evaporating, and when the wind blows from the east the smell from this quarter is awful."¹ The school was authorized to purchase a septic tank. However, the issue was raised again in 1935. After much discussion, the school received notice in 1940 that there was not money available for repairs to sewage disposal. There was also discussion regarding the deepening of a well due to a shortage of

water, a shortage that also increased the risk of fire.

Student Deaths² (Tuberculosis outbreak)

Zephaniah Charles (No. 133)	May 24, 1936	TB Meningitis
Grace Sophie Eninew (No. 222)	March 12, 1937	Gradually lost her sight.*
John Bird (No. 136)	June 7, 1937	Measles made TB active**
Matthew McKenzie (No. 154)	May 30, 1937	Had rickets TB made worse by measles
Absalom Bird (No. 124)	May 29, 1937	TB made worse by measles
Daniel Cook (No. 155)	July 12, 1937	TB made worse by measles
Ellen McKenzie (No. 259)	Nov. 2, 1939	TB

A measles epidemic in 1937 caused the deaths of several children because, it was thought, the measles activated TB. In July that year arrangements were made to have a tuberculosis specialist visit Lac La Ronge in the fall to examine the children. The attending physician and Indian Agent criticized the diet, ventilation, and overcrowded conditions in the dormitory:

"Children to have better food. At present they only receive Irish Bread and lard, oatmeal in the mornings and a little peanut butter once a week. Pupils with T. B. in the same dormitory as the other pupils. A few of these are bed cases most of the time. R. S. Davis, Indian Agent."³

"This school dormitories are over crowded. Also the class rooms. No. of pupils that should attend should be reduced and better food supplied. TB is spreading in this school."⁴

"Dr.'s note: Patient should have been isolated and not put in over-crowded dormitory. Poor ventilation. T. B. patients not given proper sleeping or living quarters. Sleeping with other healthy boys. Taken to improvised sanatorium, but too late and too far gone."⁵

¹ Library and Archives Canada, Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 3, Letter from Taylor, Aug. 26, 1925.

² Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Quarterly Returns.

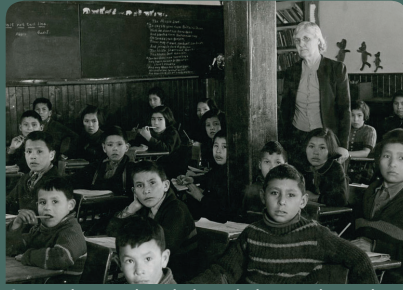
³ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of Grace Sophie Eninew), March 12, 1937

⁴ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of John Bird) June 7, 1937

⁵ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of the Physician who attended



Children at All Saints Anglican School, Lac la Ronge, ca. 1909-1919, Sask Archives Board, HPI/ R-A6928



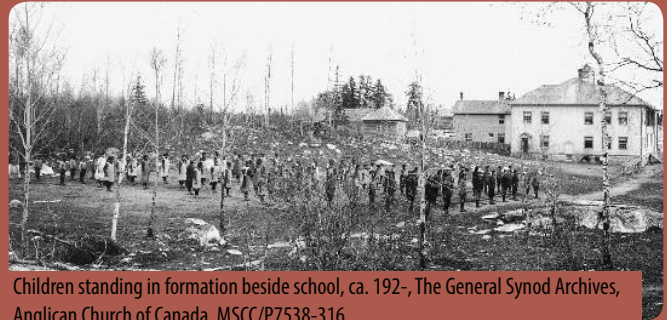
Cree students at their desks with their teacher in the classroom, ca. March 1945, Bud Glunz/National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque/PA-134110



All Saints (Lac La Ronge) Indian Residential School cemetery, ca. 192-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-187



Monument to Residential School Survivors. Photo from Eagle Feather News, July 2014



Children standing in formation beside school, ca. 192-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-316

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Indian Agent's note: "This child was in the dormitory, suffering from T. B., with sixty other children where the ventilation is not of the best and the room being terribly overcrowded. The food these children received is very poor, not the right quality for growing children..."⁶

Despite \$200 provided by the government for the construction of an infirmary in 1934, a 1938 survey by the Anglican field secretary states that there was still no infirmary for the children sick with tuberculosis. Patient's cots were on the verandah. Three children at the time had active TB out 98 in residence.⁷

Fire Hazard

In 1920, the school was destroyed by fire. The government rebuilt the school including electricity and steam heat;⁸ however, due to some of the materials used in construction (green lumber and defective chimneys from the Hudson's Bay Company) and a lack of funding for upkeep, the building soon became a fire hazard.

Both a 1923 report and a 1936 report described an unsatisfactory fire escape system.

(Matthew McKenzie), Apr 23, 1937

⁶ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of Matthew McKenzie), May 30, 1937

⁷ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part 5, Westgate to McGill, June 19, 1934 (see <http://www2.uregina.ca/education/saskindianresidentialschools/lac-la-ronge-all-saints-indian-residential-school/>)

⁸ <http://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/all-saints-school-sk/>

Indeed, in 1923, the 2-year-old, three-story building had no fire escapes. Verandahs were needed and the spruce poles needed to be replaced with metal poles. Authorization was granted for a fire escape. In 1927, bush around the building caught fire when it was struck by lightning and the buildings were narrowly saved. Funds were appropriated for clearing the land around the building.

In March 1933, an urgent request was made for the replacement of the second of two defective brick chimneys on the main building.⁹ The government had previously agreed to pay half the cost of replacing one of the defective chimneys. The following year, a second request was made for the funds for a second chimney. The government was not able to authorize the expenditure.¹⁰ On March 29, 1934 a telegram informed Indian Affairs that a fire due to a defective chimney destroyed the Principal's residence. The government sent a message that there were no funds to replace the residence,¹¹ but agreed to fund \$700 for a new chimney for the main school building.¹² In 1936, Indian Agent Davis reported that "three fires have occurred since his last visit in January 1936." One was in the kitchen, another started on the roof and attic floor, and the third

⁹ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Rev. Westgate to IA, March 3, 1934

¹⁰ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Mackenzie to Rev. Westgate, March 13, 1934

¹¹ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Telegram, Mar 29, 1934

¹² Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Rev. Westgate to Indian Affairs Dr. McGill

started in the wall between the playroom and a classroom on the girls side of the building. He criticized the fire-alarm system which consisted of an "iron bar and bolt," which could not be "heard in all parts of the building." Agent Davis described the school as "nothing less than a fire trap." He called for improvements to the fire escapes.¹³

Fire did end up destroying the school. Two 12-year-old boys (Kitchener Bird and John Roberts) deliberately set it ablaze in 1947.¹⁴ The boys were not prosecuted for their actions because the Indian Agent Ostrander was concerned that the boys would be seen as heroes, and that sentencing the boys to the Regina Industrial school would place them among "incorrigible white boys."¹⁵ When the school was destroyed by fire in 1947, Principal Douglas Wickenden wrote, "**The 'fire-trap' has ceased to exist and mercifully without loss of life.**"¹⁶ After the 1947 fire, students were transferred to Prince Albert. The Anglican Church sought to have the Lac La Ronge school rebuilt, but they were unsuccessful. Instead, students were housed in a former military basic-training complex on the outskirts of Prince Albert.

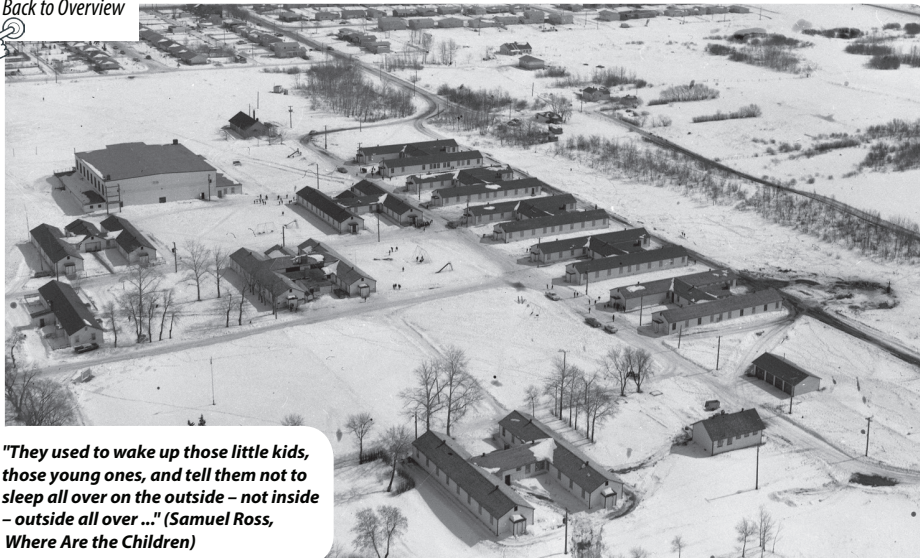
¹³ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Agent Davis Report, July 16, 1936

¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 323

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 323

¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306

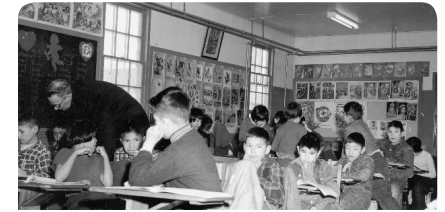
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"They used to wake up those little kids, those young ones, and tell them not to sleep all over on the outside – not inside – outside all over ..." (Samuel Ross, *Where Are the Children*)

Photo: Looking South-east over the Residential School, March 30, 1965/PADH 23346 (Photo courtesy the Prince Albert Daily Herald and the Prince Albert Historical Society)

Students were punished—often severely—for speaking their own languages. Conrad Burns, whose father attended the Prince Albert school, named this policy for what it was: "It was a cultural genocide. People were beaten for their language, people were beaten because ... they followed their own ways." (*The Legacy*, Vol. 5, p. 6)



PA classroom with Principle Bramwell, ca. 195-, The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada/P7556-46

PRINCE ALBERT INDIAN

The Prince Albert (Lac la Ronge, All Saints, St. Alban's) Indian Residential School (Treaty 6) opened in 1947 and closed in 1997. The school was operated by the Anglican Church of Canada until 1969, when the government took over operation. The school was considered "temporary" and yet, it continued to function as a residence for 50 years. First Nations from the Prince Albert area officially took over operation and control in 1985 and in 1986, the land the school was on became reserve land. When the school closed in 1997 it was called the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre.

Amalgamations and Overcrowding

In 1944, temporary accommodation was provided at St. Alban's College in Prince Albert for the pupils from the St. Barnabas School in Onion Lake after the school was destroyed by fire. By spring of 1948, the boys from St. Alban's school were quartered at the military camp and trucked to classes. The Lac La Ronge (All Saints) students were moved to Prince Albert in 1948 after fire destroyed the school. Students were housed in a former military basic-training complex on the outskirts of Prince Albert. "The students were housed in six H-shaped huts, i.e. two wings were joined by the bathroom and washroom areas. The remaining huts housed the eleven classrooms in which grades one to eight were taught. There was also a Home Economics room and a Manual Training Shop. Another hut contained the staff quarters, the office and the hospital. The drill hall, a gloomy cavernous building

was used for dances, shows, basketball and volleyball."¹ In 1950, army building no. 20 was renovated to accommodate 29 students from Gordon's IRS (due to water supply failure) as well as "a number of children in need of institutional care."² In 1951, all the St. Alban's students were moved to the military camp. These amalgamations made the PA school the largest residential school in Saskatchewan. "The student population increased with the amalgamation from approximately 165 to 485,"³ causing serious overcrowding in the facility. By the 1960s, the old army base was used mainly as a student residence, with the children attending municipal schools in Prince Albert.⁴ This school had one of the largest enrolments of any residential school (550 students in 1953, for example), yet was considered a fire hazard for most of its history.⁵

Unsanitary and Fire Hazard

A 1950 inspection reported that the garbage in the kitchen had been allowed to accumulate over several days. Several fire hazards were also reported: two heating stoves without chimneys and ashes piled where they could blow into flammable material.⁶ A fire alarm was installed in 1950. That same year, "the Prince Albert fire chief condemned the heating system at the school facilities ... [and]

the Saskatchewan fire commissioner raised concerns about the complex in 1953, when it was housing 550 children. He wrote that the wood-frame buildings were highly susceptible to fire ... A 1954 fire inspection of the school reached the following conclusion: 'It cannot be stressed too strongly that occupancy of these buildings as a residential school is contrary to all accepted standards for safety of life and property, against fire. This condition is further aggravated by the lack of sufficient water supplies to prevent the possibility of a major fire gaining headway in any of the buildings. The distances between the buildings is such that the probability of fire spreading, under favourable wind conditions, from the source of origin to adjacent buildings and developing into a conflagration of serious proportions cannot be overlooked.'⁷ Renovations were undertaken later in that year, but by 1960, the building interiors were still considered shoddy by the head of Anglican Indian school administration: 'One wonders just how much longer the so-called 'temporary buildings' are going to be considered 'permanent.' He recommended that Indian Affairs construct a new building in Prince Albert.'⁸ In 1968, the Dominion Fire Commissioner's office was once more recommending that the school ... either undergo extensive renovations or install a sprinkler system.'⁹

¹ <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a71nov08.htm>

² Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part-11. Memorandum to the Deputy Minister, Feb. 13, 1950

³ <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a71nov08.htm>

⁴ <http://nationtalk.ca/story/doug-cuthand-saskatchewan-residential-school-survivors-walk-home-for-closure-regina-leader-post>

⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 301

⁶ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part 11. Morrison to Ostrander, Feb. 2, 1950

⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 311-312

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 312

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329

"Between 1976 and 1983, George Zimmerman, the husband of a dormitory supervisor at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre, sexually assaulted nine girls living at the residence. In 1995, Zimmerman was convicted on nine counts of indecent assault, one count of attempted sexual intercourse, and two counts of sexual intercourse. He was given a five-year sentence."¹⁰ The PA Grand council developed policy in 1993 that prevented spouses of employees from living in the student residence. (The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 450)

Click to read former student stories



Samuel Ross speaks about his experience at residential school (All Saints in Prince Albert & Birtle). Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.



Group of dormitories at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (old army barracks), ca. 1949, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Bernice Logan/P2004-09-294



Tom Roberts with his granddaughter Ava Tremblay. Walking "back home." Prince Albert Daily Herald, June 2016



Harry McGillivray speaks about his experience at residential school (PA and Dauphin). Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.

N RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Indian Affairs did not want to fund costly renovations because they wanted to transfer to less costly day schools. Thus, the poor conditions continued into the 1970s. "The chiefs of 10 Saskatchewan First Nations signed a petition in May 1973, calling on the federal government to complete renovations ... Indian Affairs hoped the fire inspector would allow the buildings to remain open with limited repairs. If not, it intended to place students in 'other residences, foster homes, or in their own homes.' The fire inspector agreed that if certain repairs were carried out, the buildings could remain in use for the next year, with the expectation that 'other more suitable facilities are to be provided for housing the students for the following year.'"¹⁰

In 1975, a set of prefabricated trailer classrooms was installed "without a building permit, and did not meet Prince Albert's construction standards or the National Building Code. When it was determined that, with some repairs, the building could be brought into compliance, the Prince Albert fire chief agreed that the 'occupant life safety was adequate.' In March 1980, Sol Sanderson, the chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, warned that the classroom block at the Prince Albert residence would probably be closed by the federal fire marshal unless it had significant repair. Sanderson suggested that it was likely the building needed replacement."¹¹

Two Staff Resign over Conditions in School
 In 1952, two teachers, Victoria Ketcheson and Patricia Watson, resigned from the school claiming that the majority of their co-workers appeared to be "social misfits, unable to get jobs elsewhere. They are a quarrelsome, suspicious and gossipy lot. Their treatment of the children is worse than that of each other. Many openly consider [them] 'dirty breeds' and sub-human [sic]. They apply one set of standards to 'whites' and quite another to Indians. This is aptly expressed by the oft-used phrase—'they're only Indian'—anything goes. Nothing is done to induce the staff to fulfill their duties as either Christians or working members of this institution. The children are maltreated, cussed at, made to bear the brunt of senile sex instincts, exposed to the most brutish forms of behaviour and nothing is done to stop such proceedings."¹² The letter continued, "The staff has no conception of preventative discipline. Children are allowed to run wild until whipping is the only means of discipline possible. This was forcibly illustrated when three small boys tried to run away. They were picked up and thrown into prison for one week. The prison consists [sic] of a small space partitioned off in the hut used as a hospital. The top two feet of the walls are made of chicken wire so that the inmates are exposed to any disease current in the hospital. At one stage during their confinement they were properly switched for the benefit of the entire school."¹³
The rest of the staff responded with a letter that

described the allegations as "grossly untrue and utterly unwarranted."¹⁴ "Fifty staff members signed a petition expressing their confidence in the principal."¹⁵ "In a separate letter to his superiors, Principal A. J. Scrase suggested that the two women were acting from religious motives, since they had recently been 'speaking favorable of the Roman Catholic Church—not only in connection with schools, but in their teaching.'"¹⁶ "One unsigned letter defending the principal noted that the room described as a jail had been used in the past by teachers and even the principal as a residence. The writer did, however, acknowledge that the runaway boys had been 'spanked with a willow in front of all the children.'"¹⁷ "The Anglican Church authorized an investigation into the complaints, but Anglican [Superintendent Henry Cook] ... believed the women were 'insufficiently experienced'"¹⁸ to make these charges. It does not appear that Indian Affairs was notified about this problem.

Sexual Abuse
 "Between 1976 and 1983, George Zimmerman, the husband of a dormitory supervisor at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre, sexually assaulted nine girls living at the residence." In 1995, Zimmerman was convicted and given a five year sentence.¹⁹

¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329
¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 331

¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381

¹⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381
¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 518
¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381
¹⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 450

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"The Regina Industrial School...boasted skilled trade instruction for boys as printers...The school in Regina reported that "The daily papers are made use of and an interest fostered in present history. The books of the school library, all carefully selected, are in demand, especially in winter."¹ George Raymond is an example of someone who did become a skilled trades worker from his education at the Regina school. He worked as a printer at the *Moosomin World*.² Photo: Front view of Regina Indian Industrial School with men, horses and buggies out front, City of Regina Archives/CORA-B-0763

¹ Edwards, B.F.R. (2005). Paper Talk: A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada Before 1960. Toronto: Scarecrow Press.
² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 350



Graduating class of Regina Indian Industrial School, ca. 1898, CA SCNCRA City of Regina Archives/CORA-B-714



Group of students in training at the RIIS, ca. 1896, Dominion of Canada

RIIS Media has assembled a Regina Indian Industrial School timeline from the Saskatchewan Archives. [Click to view.](#)



Boys at printing-press, ca. 1905, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, HPI/R-A2769

REGINA INDIAN IN

Regina Indian Industrial Residential School (1891 - 1910) was operated by the Presbyterian Church of Canada through the Foreign Mission Committee. The school was built on 320 acres of farm land on Wascana Creek, four miles (6.44 kms) northwest of Regina (Treaty 4).¹ As an industrial school, the government paid all the expenses until 1893/94, when the school was put on a per capita grant of \$120.² However, correspondence regarding this transition did not make clear which institution was financially responsible for the maintenance and management of the school. A growing deficit was the cause of much debate over whom would pay. Due to public pressure, the government covered the deficits. The school closed in 1910, becoming a jail and later a home for delinquent boys. It was destroyed by fire in 1948.

Early Years

In its early years, the Regina school was reportedly thriving. Reverend Angus J. McLeod, the school's first principal, reported in the second year of operation that the students had "put up a wire fence, had planted 4 acres of potatoes and vegetables, 9 acres of wheat, 19 acres of oats, 27 acres of mixed hay, as well as some barley, rye and millet."³ Eight boys in carpentry had built a three-truss bridge over the Wascana, an ice-house, a root cellar, a laundry and a building that housed a carpentry shop, a paint shop, a shoe shop, and bedrooms for employees.⁴ In 1893, Principal McLeod requested a library, stating that although the students hadn't yet taken an interest in books, it was important that they had opportunity to develop a taste for reading, especially during

the winter months. By 1898, it was reported, "The books of the school library, all carefully selected, are in demand, especially during winter."⁵ In 1895, a printing shop was added and students turned out a monthly paper entitled *Progress*.⁶ Attendance at the school grew steadily from 32 in 1891 to 155 in 1895. McLeod also gave boys and girls time together, unlike many residential schools. The morning classes were co-educational, and meals were eaten together.

Despite what seemed to be a glowing example, in 1891, some students ran away and all were brought back. From 1891 to 1897, at least 48 students had died at the school. In November 1900, Principal McLeod died with an attack of violent hiccups at the age of 39.⁷ Two of the McLeod children are buried at the Regina Industrial School Cemetery. It is curious that the school established its own cemetery, "despite being located on the edge of an urban community that would have a municipal cemetery."⁸

Deficit Debate: Mismanagement or Insufficient Per Capita Grant System and Who was Responsible to Pay

Following the death of Principal McLeod, Rev. John A. Sinclair was hired as principal in 1901. Two years later, Sinclair was running a deficit of nearly \$6000 (June, 1903). Sinclair suggested the deficit was due to increased costs of repairs and reduced enrolment. The government called for an audit. The auditors reported that by January 1904, the deficit had increased to \$9, 201. They attempted to explain the deficit, writing that since 1900, students in attendance

had dropped from 106 to 76, which "materially affects the revenue of the Institution." Also, that the amount received per pupil from the government was "in every case less" than the per capita of \$120, due to the number of half-grant earning students. This meant that since 1900 when the school received \$12, 378.73 the funding had dropped substantially to \$5, 464.23 (7 months into the year). Though revenue had steadily decreased, expenditures had steadily increased and it did not appear to the auditors that there had been any excess in spending: the children were not "at all over-fed." The cost of heating, they speculated, must be "due to the difficulty in heating the building since they had not been 'comfortably warm' in their visit, though the weather had been moderate." Further, "the salaries had increased but not beyond the normal rate and were considerably less than the amount estimated for wages." Expenditures on repairs formed a large part of the deficit. The Principal's annual estimates for required repairs were "very considerably reduced by the Department," and so the repairs considered essential came out of the per capita grant.

The auditors concluded that the per capita system was not working: "When the Industrial Schools were established the Department regarded the ages between 6 and 14 as those the most suitable for admission, and when the schools were placed upon the per capita system there was no suggestion of any departure from that principle. In August 1900, however, the Department refused to pay more than one-half of the per capita grant for any child admitted to an Industrial School thereafter of less than 10 years of age."⁹

¹ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcleod_angus_jonas_12E.html.

² The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 219; This increased to \$130 Dec. 31, 1902

³ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcleod_angus_jonas_12E.html

⁴ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcleod_angus_jonas_12E.html

⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 357

⁶ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcleod_angus_jonas_12E.html

⁷ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcleod_angus_jonas_12E.html

⁸ Missing Children and Unmarked Graves, Vol. 4, p. 126

⁹ Indian Affairs, RG 10, Vol. 3927, file 116, 836-1A. A 1904 report made to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs by J. A. McKenna, J. A. Menzies, and R. P. Mackay



Regina Indian Industrial School ca. 1905/ Saskatchewan Archives, Lh-6236

Abuse: A 1903 letter "noted that a female student ran away but was brought back and shut in a room by herself where she attempted to commit suicide by hanging. The staff member who found the girl in time 'pulled out a revolver and giving it to the girl told her to shoot herself.' The girl took the revolver and shot twice but it was empty. The letter also mentioned that a runaway boy who was found by a staff member had his hands tied behind his back and was taken back to the IRS 'in the manner of an animal.'" Also in 1903, "a missionary reported that two girls were raped by two boys in the basement of the school. A staff member threatened the students with terrible punishment if they spoke of the incident to their parents." (NCTR school summary, p. 5)



Though Principal Sinclair was heavily criticized for fiscal mismanagement of the school, to his credit he was concerned for the health of the students. He had discovered that putting students in tents in the warmer months had decreased scrofula (a form of tuberculosis) and so he requested \$200 for tents with floors to keep the children cleaner, but was denied the funds by Indian Affairs. Sinclair put up tents anyway, and suffered more criticism from the Department for doing so without permission. (Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 3927, file 116, 836-1A, April 7, 1903) Above photo shows tents, ca. 1904, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan//R-A2501

DUSTRIAL SCHOOL

The report urged the government to reconsider its per capita model, and to "institute inquiry into the whole question of Indian education, with a view to ascertaining the relative value of education at Industrial Schools and at Boarding Schools, to making the work of the different grades of schools dove-tail, and to laying down definite lines as to the recruiting of pupils." The auditors were critical of the recruiting done by the churches: "That Principals of Schools should tramp the country, at great expense, competing with each other, and even bribing parents to secure children for their schools is humiliating and demoralizing." They reminded the government that the "per capita system was adopted as a tentative one, and it was never intended that rates fixed when prices and wages were lower than they are to-day should continue irrespective of changed conditions."¹⁰

However, Martin Benson's (Dept. of Indian Affairs) response to the report placed responsibility solely on the principal, stating, "Since the death of the late Principal the Indians appear to be averse to sending their children to the school...In less than three years, it is over head and ears in debt, discredited by whites and Indians, and fast running down. Who is to blame for all this?" Benson fixed the blame solely on Sinclair's "extravagance, mismanagement, or incompetency. ...A 50% increase in consumption of provisions in three years indicates either starvation under the late Principal's regime, or gluttony or waste under the present conditions. ...It was never the intention of the Department that a Principal of a school should assume the responsibility of purchasing material for repairs without authority, and it is beside the question whether the management was improvident in the

matter of repairs or not, as it is the well-known rule of the Department that unauthorized expenditure is not to be recognized." What followed was a debate between the Presbyterian church and the government over who was responsible for paying the deficit. The school had started out fully funded by the Department and had moved to the per capita model, but there had been no contract to clarify the responsibilities. In the end, because the public viewed the school as the Department's, and to keep faith with creditors, the government paid the deficit, and gave instruction to put the buildings in a state of repair, and increased the per capita grant to \$145. By the time this decision had been made in October 1904, however, the deficit had increased to almost \$14,000.¹¹

In December, Benson submitted more evidence of Sinclair's mismanagement, listing expense items he considered luxurious, such as cases of fruit, flowers for the grounds, and boots, shoes, uniform suits and knickerbockers--presumably for students. Clothing for students, in the eyes of the Department, should have been made not purchased. It should be noted that though Sinclair was being criticized for luxurious spending, over the months while the debate was waged over whom was financially responsible, the principal and staff were without salaries. It is hopeful, given this list of expenditures, that the students' needs were being thought of and cared for while the school administrators were debating responsibility.¹²

Illness and Death (1904)

A 1901 report indicated an inadequate isolation facility; however, three years later the issue

had not yet been resolved.¹³ In January 1904, a student, Tom Peters (No. 183), developed small pox and was quarantined. The whole school was quarantined and building, bedding and clothing fumigated.¹⁴ Though the case was called an epidemic, only one student had small pox. There was an inquiry into the complaint that the case had not been treated properly. In February 1904, a student died (No. 169) of pulmonary tuberculosis. The student had been ill for about three months with this infectious disease.¹⁵ In the report, Dr. Graham recommends that "a room be set apart for nursing and treatment of such cases as they arise." Another student (No. 108), who suffered from an abdominal tumor, died following surgery in May 1904. Principal Sinclair died suddenly in January 1905. At the time of Sinclair's death, it was discovered that the school was once again running a deficit of \$2852 and the buildings were still in a state of disrepair.

R. B. Heron from File Hills took on the role as principal in 1905. He concluded that the cost of running the school was greater than the per capita grant. In 1908 an inspector reported that the school "looked 'more like a deserted place than a government institution.' The building was old, the floors worn, and the plaster broken, and the paint worn off. Neither the children nor the dormitories appeared neat and tidy. There was no money for paint or bedspreads, or for replacing mattresses whose springs had sprung... By the following year, it was apparent that outbuildings were on the verge of collapse."¹⁶ Principal Heron also ran a deficit and the school was closed in 1910.

¹³ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 63

¹⁴ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 3927, file 116, 836-1A

¹⁵ Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 3927, file 116, 836-1A

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 456

¹⁰ Indian Affairs, RG 10, Vol. 3927, fill 116, 836-1A

¹¹ See Auditor's Report

¹² See Benson's letter

REGINA INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL CEMETERY: HERITAGE STATUS

Debate over the future of the Regina school cemetery (1891 to 1910) illustrated "the challenges jurisdictions face when dealing with the residential school cemeteries, particularly those that now lie abandoned.

The Regina residential school cemetery was established on the western edge of the school property at 701 Pinkie Road. It became privately owned in the 1980s. In light of proposed development in the area, concern was raised about how best to protect the school cemetery.

An unpublished 2014 report prepared by the Regina Planning Department indicates that the cemetery contains the bodies of First Nations and Métis students as well as the children of the school's first principal. A 2012 archaeological survey over the south part of the fenced cemetery yielded evidence of twenty-two graves. Documents dating to 1921 indicate that the original cemetery fence was destroyed in a prairie fire that might have also destroyed the wooden marker crosses of up to thirty-five or forty graves.

The planning document identified and evaluated various strategies for protection of the cemetery for the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee to consider. The first option involved the City of Regina's taking no further action. Since the cemetery is registered under the Saskatchewan Cemeteries Act, 1999, the landowner is deemed responsible for ongoing care. The cemetery is also currently registered as an archaeological site.

A second option was for the city to use its authority, under the Cemeteries Act, to compel the landowner to maintain the cemetery at a suitable standard. In this case, this was deemed to be adherence to the guidelines for "dryland vegetation management" (that is, regular cutting of grass within and around the cemetery). This option would ensure some level of maintenance of the cemetery while minimizing the landowner's financial burden, but would fall short of offering enhanced heritage protection. A third option explicitly addressed the advisability of differing levels of municipal and provincial designation, commemoration, and protection.

Each of these three options was tempered by complex considerations regarding landowner responsibilities, the cost of site documentation required to facilitate heritage designation, and the potential risk to municipalities of precedent-setting decisions with budget implications. All the options recognized the need for appropriate consultation with First Nations communities from whom the deceased students originated. These complex issues will be common to many future discussions about how best to address the maintenance of residential school cemeteries, particularly those that lie abandoned and are not maintained." (Extracted from NCTR Final Report: *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, Vol. 4, pp. 133-134)

In September 2016, the City of Regina [officially approved heritage status for the cemetery](#) at the former site of the Regina Indian Industrial School. [RIIS Media is campaigning for a commemoration stone for the site.](#)



RIIS from Amnesia is a short documentary on the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS), its descendants and legacy. Run by the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the school opened its doors in 1891, drawing students from 43 First Nation communities in the North-West Territories and Rupert's Land. The students came from across all three prairie provinces, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, to the school located on the outskirts of Regina. (Photo: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A2501)



Click to read September 26, 2016, CBC News: Regina approves heritage status for cemetery at former Indian Industrial School. (Above photo by Shuana Niessen)



Project of Heart at Luther College, University of Regina commemorated the children who attended the Regina Indian Industrial School.

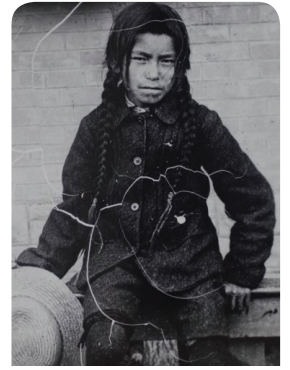
"From 1891 to 1897, 48 children died at the Regina Indian Industrial School!"

(The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 394)

FORMER STUDENTS



Two little pupils at school, ca. 1904, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan /HPI/R-A2394



Yellow Shield, ca. 1905, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, HPI/R-A2691



Boy's lacrosse team, ca. 1905, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, HPI/R-A2685



George Bear and Young Shingoose, ca 1890-1910, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan HPI/R-A2508



"A little Cree" - little girl, pupil at Regina Indian Industrial School, in garden, ca. 1903, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, HPI/R-A2505



Girls at school ca. 1905, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, HPI/R-A2686



Click to hear a podcast about efforts being made to provide a commemorative stone in remembrance of the children who died at the RIIS and who are buried in the institution's cemetery. (Photo by Shuana Niessen)



The only marker remaining at the Regina Indian Industrial School cemetery: John Meredith and Robert Duncan, both died as infants. (Photo by Shuana Niessen)

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Notre Dame students commemorated Round Lake IRS



Round Lake Indian Residential School, ca. 1940-1941, Algoma University Archives, Orval Osborne Collection /005-2012-003-001



Pictured: Eva Alex, Ella Lewison, Barbera Gaddie, Hilsa Shesheep, Rosa Ponahee, Gracie Alexson, Jean Bunny, Marion Bear, Bella McKay, and Jean Shesheep, ca. 1945, Algoma University Archives, Lily Stevenson Fonds/006-2010-035-001



Round Lake girls on playground, ca. 1940, UCCA, 93.049P/1160

ROUND LAKE INDIAN

The Round Lake Indian Residential School (1888 - 1950) was operated by the Presbyterian Church (Foreign Mission Society and later Board of Home Missions) until 1925. The United Church of Canada operated the school from 1926 until its closure in 1950. Enrollment went from 10 students in 1884 to its peak 77 students in 1942. The school was located at the east end of Round Lake, on the north side of the Qu'Appelle River, across from Ochapowace Indian Reserve (Treaty 4). Reverend Hugh McKay was principal from 1884 to 1922. The school started out as a one-room log cabin on the Qu'Appelle River in 1884 and had closed due temporarily to the North-West Resistance of 1885. In 1887, the school received its first Government grant, "which allowed \$1500 in that year, being at the rate of \$30 per annum for each of 50 pupils, but as there were only 15 pupils drawing this grant it was doubled to \$60 per capita the next year."¹ By 1888, McKay had expanded the original one-room log cabin school to accommodate a capacity for 50 students. By 1891 average attendance had not exceeded 25 and in 1892 the number of pupils decreased to 20 and the rate was \$72. In 1899, the enrollment increased to 40 pupils with an average attendance of 30.² With their Indigenous teacher F. Ataphew, a 1916 inspection reports that "the children read well and understand what they are reading about. They are particularly well advanced in arithmetic and their writing is splendid."³ A number of Métis and white children were admitted to this school.⁴ In 1950, Fire Commissioner E. E. Tiffin condemned the school and it was closed.

¹ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 1. Martin Benson to Mr. McKenna, March 7, 1899

² Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 1. Martin Benson to Mr. McKenna, March 7, 1899

³ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 1. Inspector of Indian Agencies to Duncan C. Scott March 3, 1916.

⁴ <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/round-lake/>

Inferior Education and Management

"During his 1925 inspection of the Round Lake school, W. S. Murison commented that he had never seen 'such patched and ragged looking clothing as worn by the boys. The girls had better clothing but appeared listless, indifferent and had a frowsy look.'"⁵ In 1928, an inspector reported, "The junior classroom work should be under a qualified teacher instead of that it is under a mere lad and I understand that this is the first school he has taught in."⁶

An Atmosphere of Suspicion, Sordidness, and Slackness

In September 1929, shortly after coming on staff at the school as Junior Teacher Lucy Affleck (who had 18 years of teaching experience) wrote to the Department to ask several revealing and insightful questions about Indian boarding schools: "1. Is the grant made to Indian Schools by the Gov't supposed to be expended for the "board" of the children or are the children supposed to work for this board. 2. What is the per capita grant & does the "head" of the school have to give an account of the money received & spent. 3. Is this account available to the public as a "financial statement" which any of the staff may see. 4. Does the regulations permit of all pupils above grade III being detained from school for half of each day to work in the institution? 5. Is the grant proportionate to the number of days in which the pupil is in the school? 6. Is the agent or the principal of the school allowed to bring into the school against (or with) the wishes of the parents, children who are under school age in order to increase the grant? 7. Can agent or principal forbid pupils going to visit their parents at

⁵ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 514

⁶ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 313

holiday time? 8. Is a teacher in an Indian School bound to teach children of five or under? 9. Is the local agent for the reserve the inspector of the teacher's work, or is that the office of the P.S. inspector appointed by the Dept. of Education."⁷ Affleck also wrote to Dr. Barner, Superintendent of Indian Missions with the United Church, regarding the conditions that she felt "ought not to exist."

Consequently, "because of [her] 'disloyalty' in writing to Dr. Barner," Lucy was dismissed by Principal Ross. On November 15, Lucy persisted, writing Indian Commissioner Graham about her concerns. She was deeply critical of Principal Ross's administration, which she wrote was "such that an atmosphere of suspicion, sordidness, and slackness exists throughout, due, I believe, to the indifference and inefficiency of the principal." Affleck believed that the children suffered from the "lack of a qualified and efficient matron, and farm-instructor... The children need a 'house-mother' who would be intimately in touch with their needs, both physical and otherwise." Mrs. Ross, the senior teacher, controlled all of the work, but Affleck believed she neither had the time nor did she understand the children's needs. "***In all my 18 years experience as a teacher, I never had in my school a dirtier, more ill-clad - or more like-able - class of little folk.***" After further descriptions of the problem, Lucy wrote, "Knowing how very loath Mr. and Mrs. Ross are to spend money on clothing, fuel, supplies, repairs, etc. and how keen they are to increase the number of pupils attending (although ten girls are already sleeping double in the single beds of the girls dormitory) and how little is raise on the farm, one cannot but

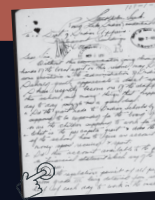
⁷ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 2. Affleck to Indian Affairs, Sept. 7, 1929



During his 1925 inspection of the Round Lake Indian Residential School, W. S. Murison commented that he had never seen "such patched and ragged looking clothing as worn by the boys," ca. 1940, UCCA,/93.049P/1162

"Breakfast always means porridge, bread, lard and tea— nothing else. When I asked the cook why so little porridge for each child (about 3 tbsps.) she said, 'The children don't like it and besides the pot isn't big enough to make more.' I do not wonder they do not like it. It is always cold when they get it and badly made." —Lucy Affleck, a teacher at Round Lake IRS in 1929

Click to read more about Lucy Affleck's questions about administration and her complaints about Round Lake Indian Residential School.



Click to read more about Round Lake IRS

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

suspect that there is a reason why the principal wishes to keep the control of all departments absolutely in his own hands." She goes on to describe unsanitary conditions such as two "closets in the bathroom" that no longer flushed, and "an open pail" that had "been in use for a year." There was a problem keeping staff due to the "unpleasant conditions." Teacher turnover, meant that education was substandard. "The children are in low grades for their years owing to the frequent change of teachers and the hiring of unqualified teachers in the junior room," and due to the half-day spent working in senior grades. "I believe that the school education that a child gets who leaves school is Grade 3 or 4..." Duncan Scott, in a letter to Graham, discredited Lucy's concerns, writing that she was probably "disgruntled because she was discharged" and that "the Department had a letter from her, asking for considerable information, and, at that time, it was thought she might be a bit of a trouble maker." Even so, he stated that "the fact remains that conditions are not what they should be."⁸

Lack of Supervision

In 1930, Inspector Ostrander's report echoed Affleck's letters. He wrote "the Agent again points out that a suitable matron is required" and that "there is now a good farming instructor...but the Principal uses them as labourers and does the farm instructing to a great extent himself."⁹ In December, 1930, Ostrander reported that he had "several times pointed out the necessity for some organized games at this school, to teach the boys self-reliance, manliness, fair-play and all the other

qualities which prepare a boy for manhood, but only a feeble effort has been made in this connection and I think a real effort is needed."¹⁰ In February 1931, he again reported that "there is not sufficient attention given to the recreation of the children. Organized games, with someone in charge to see that every child takes exercise in some form would be beneficial."¹¹

Neglect proved fatal on May 30, 1934 when, the children had been "let out for recess at 3:00 p.m. three of them went down to the lake, unknown by any of the school staff. They commenced playing with the boat [that had drifted there from the south the day before due to a high wind] and [Joseph Louison, the boy who drowned] was in the boat. There was a high wind from the north, which carried the boat away from shore with the boy in it. The other two boys tried to catch the boat, but it drifted out into deep water and they were unable to read it. It continued to drift out and when it was about 200 feet from shore the boy became very frightened and jumped out of it into about eight feed of water. The boy could swim a little, but as the waves were high, he soon sank." The other two boys went to inform the Principal. Two hours later Joseph's body was located.¹²

In 1940, R. A. Hoey said this school was "one of the most dilapidated and insanitary [sic] schools we have at present..."¹³ Hoey recommended the closure of this school.¹⁴

¹⁰ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 2. Extract from Report of J.P.B. Ostrander, Indian Agent, for month of Dec. 1930

¹¹ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 2, Extract from Report of Mr. Indian Agent Ostrander for the Month of February, 1931.

¹² Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6334, file 661-10, part 1. Agent Ostrander to Indian Affairs, June 6, 1934

¹³ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 463

¹⁴ The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 464

Abuse

In 1943, a student's mother complained that a staff member had strapped her son twice in the last year, one time cutting the child's arm. The first strapping was for going into the girls dorm, the second for neglecting his chores.¹⁵ In 1949, "a petition was signed by many of the parents from two bands in protest against a school teacher for abusing the children too much."¹⁶ The parents reported that "the children's report cards are very unsatisfactory, worst ever received, and she abuses the children too much." Indian Affairs official J. P. B. Ostrander did not want to replace the teacher, but he did report that the teacher "kept a strap on display in her class, saying, 'If she does not use it for punishment, at least she keeps it on display as a threat of punishment, which does not promote harmony in the classroom.'"¹⁷

Running Away and Student Death

On January 13, 1935, three boys, Percy Ochapowace, Glen Gaddie, and Alec Wasacase (ages 13 - 15) ran away the school. It was -32 degrees Celsius. The boys were separated when Wasacase and Gaddie headed west and Ochapowace headed south. Wasacase and Gaddie found their way home, but Ochapowace did not make it home. He was found frozen to death on January 17, two and a half kilometers from where the boys had parted, wearing a sweater, overalls, socks and rubber boots. (*Read more*). On September 10, 1936, two more boys ran away from the school: John Kakakaway and Lawrence Still. They were located on the Cowessess Reserve and returned to the school.¹⁸

¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 373

¹⁶ NCTR school summary, p. 3

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 144

¹⁸ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6334, file 661-10, part 1. RCMP Report

⁸ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 2. Scott to Graham, Nov. 27, 1929

⁹ Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6332, file 661-1, part 2. Extract from Report of Mr. Indian Agent Ostrander, for the month of June, 1930.

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Photo: St. Michael's Indian Residential School at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, ca. 1935, Les Oeuvres Oblates de l'Ontario (Archive Deschâtelets). In 1937, Dr. Ferguson noted, "It is only fair to tell you that one of the worst conditions [is] maintain[ed] at the Duck Lake school near Prince Albert in [Prime Minister] Mr. King's own constituency." This was in response to the Director of Indian Affairs Dr. H. W. McGill's direction to "drastically reduce medical care. Agents were ordered to remove from hospitals all Native people with chronic conditions, and ...hospital care was to be restricted to those who absolutely needed it, ...there was to be a 'drastic reduction' in the use of drugs for Native people." (Maureen Lux, 1998)



From Mission to Partnership Collection, "Indian boys of the Duck Lake Boarding School working on the new addition," ca. 1900s. United Church of Canada - Digital Collections 93.049 P2021 N



Sewing room at Duck Lake, ca. Sept. 1934, Glenbow Archives/NA-4938-40

ST. MICHAEL'S INDIAN

The St. Michael's (Duck Lake) Indian Industrial Residential School opened in 1894 and closed in 1996. It was operated by the Roman Catholic Church (Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, and Oblate Indian-Eskimo Council) until 1982 when the Duck Lake residence came under the control of the Saskatoon District Chiefs.¹ The school was located a half a mile (.8 kms) from the Town of Duck Lake, facing the lake (Treaty 6).

In 1895, members of the Arrow Band were induced to place their children in the Duck Lake Boarding school by the Indian Agent R. S. McKenzie. Because the parents refused to send their children, McKenzie reported that he told them, "if they would not let them go willingly in all probability the Department would take them by force and send them to whatever school was thought best." Consequently, when the Government was paying treaty, the parents offered their children to the Agent, who in fact couldn't take them because the school had a full complement of pupils.²

Student Deaths

In 1898, Gabriel Poundmaker, the son of Chief Poundmaker died of tuberculosis. "This boy was a general favourite in the school, being of a gentle and amiable disposition. He

¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 97

² Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6035, file 652-1, part 1. Letter from Agent McKenzie to Indian Commissioner, Regina

was particularly kind to the small boys, who often went to him for comfort in their childish troubles. Though never strong, nor possessed of much talent, he showed great taste for music, and his cornet-playing was admired by all who heard him."³

In 1910, Indian agent J. MacArthur reported "that the death rate at the Duck Lake school was returning to its 'high mark.' Two students had died and two others were dying." He estimated that 50% of the children sent to the school had died. MacArthur understood that children were getting sick at the school, rather than home as some believed, pointing out that children "spent only one month a year at home. During that month, they spent 'their time on the open prairie and sleep in tents.' The rest of the year, they were in the school. 'No one responsible can get beyond the sad fact that those children catch the disease while at school.'"⁴

Illness

After diphtheria broke out in 1909, all the students at the school were vaccinated and "the nine students who became ill were placed in a 'large isolated house.'"⁵

In 1966 and 1967 there were outbreaks of hepatitis. In 1989, "an outbreak of salmonella (bacteria-based food poisoning)... affected

³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 394

⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 418

⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 443

44 people" with 24 hospitalized. "An investigation into the residence kitchen concluded that the outbreak was likely the result of a combination of poor food handling, a lack of dependable equipment (the refrigerators did not keep food cool enough), and understaffing (untrained staff often pressed served in the kitchen)."⁶

Fire

Several fires were deliberately set in 1917. "One of the students who attempted to burn down the Duck Lake school in 1917 was sent to a reformatory school."⁷ In 1926, fire destroyed the former school building.

In April 1948, a provincial inspector reported that the "school lacked sufficient fire escapes." Funds were not provided for new escapes until June 1949.⁸

Running Away

On October 31, 1967, three girls ran away from school. "Two of them were quickly found," but the third, who had not been found a week later, was suspended from school even though her location was still unknown.⁹ The other two girls stated the reason for leaving was that "they were being mistreated by some other students."¹⁰ On November 29, 1968, a boy had run away ...

⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 209

⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 486

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 313

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 364

¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 456



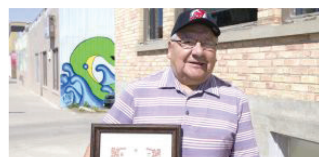
St. Michael's Residential School former student Deanna Ledoux talks about recognizing and dealing with residential school trauma in the classroom. Think Indigenous Education Conference, Indian Teacher Education Program.



Eugene Arcand speaks of his experiences at St. Michael's Indian Residential School



Fred Sasakamoose speaks of his experiences at St. Michael's Indian Residential School and as a hockey player in the NHL



Roy Sanderson, former student of St. Michael's residential school, reflects on the TRC. June 2015, Jason Kerr/Prince Albert Daily Herald.



Nazaire Azarie Bird tells of his experiences at St. Michael's Indian Residential School and Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School. Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope

"Depart pour Mistawasis," June 1947, Sisters of the Presentation of Mary

Former student stories

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

and by December 4, he had not returned" to the school. "Although he was listed on the December 1968 quarterly return, he was omitted from the March 1969 return."¹¹

In 1973, a parent was informed "that his daughter had run away once more." The school official explained that "he suspected the girl was 'having difficulty in having the other girls accept her.' She was subsequently located and brought back ... but it was recommended that ... she be allowed to return to her home community" because of her loneliness at the school.¹²

Former student and hockey legend, Fred Sasakamoose of Ahtahkakoop First Nation, "remembers escaping from the residential school with his friend, Charlie." On their way home, a roadblock at the North Saskatchewan River caused them to head downstream. "A ferry operator alerted the residential school's officials as to their whereabouts" and the school administration found them. Sasakamoose said, "They stopped us just outside of Duck Lake - the town." The school officials said, "give us your shoes and socks. Now, walk to the school in bare feet." By that time, "their feet were already blistered from the long walk." Sasakamoose remembers "his feet bleeding by the time they got to the school." As further punishment, "they were whipped and had coal oil poured on

their heads, burning their eyes." "I want my childhood back that I didn't have in the residential school," Sasakamoose said through his tears.¹³

Sexual Abuse

A former staff member who worked as a chaplain, child care worker and guidance counsellor at St. Michael's from September 1973 to approximately 1992, was convicted of committing acts of gross indecency between September 1986 and December 1987.¹⁴ In 1993, "a female student reported that she had been sexually abused" since the age of 5. She also stated that she had slept with two male students.¹⁵

Hockey Successes

In 1946, the Duck Lake school hockey team, called the "St. Michael's Indians," (known as the "Ducks") "won the championship of an eight-team league ... In 1948, the same team ... won the northern Saskatchewan midget hockey championship. The following year, it won the provincial championship. According to the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, "While the Duck Lake boys were outweighed in their midget series they made it up in hockey know-how, skating ability and shooting accuracy. Their drives, from any angle, had the Regina players scared and baffled at the same time."¹⁶

¹³ <http://www.pa Herald.sk.ca/Local/News/2012-02-03/article-2885301/Aboriginal-spirit-proves-unbreakable/>

¹⁴ <http://www.theinquiry.ca/wordpress/accused/charged/doucette-gilles/>

¹⁵ NCTR school summary, p. 11

¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 470

Fred Sasakamoose was one of the Duck Lake hockey team in 1949. He became the "first status Indian to play in the National Hockey League." Sasakamoose explained that "the priests who ran the school were from Québec and loved hockey. During the winters, the boys had the opportunity to skate every day." But the athletes experienced the same sort of discipline in sports as they did in every other aspect of school life. Sasakamoose said, "The priests never talked twice. The second time, you got the strap. But Father Roussell had a dream. He told me, 'Freddie, I'm going to work you hard, but if you work hard, you're going to be successful.'"¹⁷ Though Sasakamoose was the star player on a championship team, he had also been abused at school. At 15 years of age he decided to leave school and go home. Sasakamoose recalls, "My gosh, I felt good. I felt that the world had changed, had opened a gate for me..." Later, "when a priest brought a hockey scout to his family's home, Sasakamoose hid," because he thought he was going to be taken back to school. He was finally persuaded to play junior hockey in Moose Jaw, and though he was a good player, he never felt that he fit into the world of professional sports; all he wanted was to be home with his parents.¹⁸

¹⁷ Survivors Speak, p. 193

¹⁸ Survivors Speak, p. 193

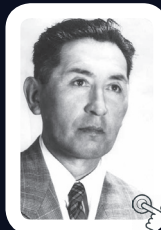
¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 365

¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 456

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Delmas Indian Residential School, ca. 1939, Pensionnat Indien Delmas, Les Oeuvres Oblates de la Ontario (Deschatelets Archive)



When the Thunderchild school burned down in 1948, John Tootoosis, a former student and well-known Cree leader, persuaded his community that "this was the best chance that they would ever have to press for the long-desired day school on their reserve."¹(197). He was hopeful that a day school would provide an "education for the Indian children, geared to their special needs, designed to enable them to become whole, function and contributing Indian Canadians."¹ The local priest accused him of doing the "devils work," threatening to excommunicate him for his criticism of residential schools.² Indian Affairs official J. P. B. Ostrander noted, "The Indians of the Poundmaker, Meadow Lake, and Sweetgrass Reserves have all been asking for day schools," and he could see no reason why they should continue to be denied such schools. Despite Oblate requests to replace Thunderchild school, by the spring of 1949, the government decided not to rebuild at Delmas.³ According to Ray McCallum, "Many of the people that attended Delmas were my relatives from Meadow Lake and after the fire they were sent to Beauval Indian Residential School."⁴ (Photo: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A7662) Click to read more about John Tootoosis

Scott, J. S. (2004). *Residential Schools and Native Canadian Writers*. In P. H. Marsden & G. V. Davis (Eds.), *Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Human Rights in a Post-Colonial World* (p. 237). New York, NY: Rodopi

² They Came For the Children, p. 50

³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306

⁴ Online Message Board

THUNDERCHILD INDIAN

The Thunderchild (Delmas/St. Henri) Indian Residential School operated from 1901 to 1948 at Delmas, outside Thunderchild Reserve in Treaty 6. The Roman Catholic Church Oblate missionaries (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) operated the school, which was founded by Fr. Henri Delmas. In January 1901, Chief Thunderchild wrote on behalf of his people to protest the building of a Roman Catholic school on his reserve. "We feel that as a majority of the Indians on the Reserve are Protestant there is no reason why it should be placed here ...The Roman Catholic Mission is situated immediately outside of the Reserve and we see no reason why the school should not be there..."¹ The Roman Catholic church agreed to build the school at their mission property instead.

Fire Hazards

In 1936 new fire escapes were installed.² However, in 1937 Inspector Robinson reported "a recent addition containing a dormitory on the second and staff quarters on the third floor," was without a fire escape.³ These fire escapes were installed. In 1939, the electrical wiring was reported as defective and was repaired.⁴ In 1940, R. A. Hoey recommended that the government close [the] school because it was "in poor state of repair."⁵ In 1948, the school was destroyed by fire⁶ and was not

¹Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-1, part 1, Chief Thunderchild's letter, Jan, 19, 1901(Read about Thunderchild's Day School: Read letter)

² Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-5, part 1, Minister of Mines and Resources to the Governor General in Council, Jan. 13, 1936

³ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-5, part 3, Inspector Thos. Robertson Report, Oct. 27, 1937

⁴ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-5, part 1, Report of the Saskatchewan Power Commission, May 1, 1939

⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 463-464

⁶ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-5, part 3, Telegram to Indian Affairs, Jan. 14, 1948 (all pupils safely evacuated)

rebuilt. Several boys were investigated, and two were suspected of setting the fire though there wasn't enough evidence to convict them. Several boys had previously made threats to burn down the school.⁷ According to a 1993 account of a former student, "the fire was set by four boys who warned the rest of the boys in advance. The girls were not told, because the 'girls' dormitories were on the other side and so they had lots of time to get out."⁸

Enrolment

The school struggled with enrollment for its first few years, due to being limited to 15 students, though it felt it had been promised 25. Frequent requests for an increase in students was flatly denied. In 1904, in response to the school's request for more money to help pay for the buildings the church built for the operation of the school, Martin Benson wrote "there was never any good reason for establishing this school in the first place, which was started contrary to the express wish of the Department." By 1911 20 students were allowed and the school requested an increase to 30 students. However, Deputy Minister Mclean wrote, "there were 42 children in attendance at this school, 20 Indian and 22 other." To have an increase of 10 students, the administration was instructed to discharge ten of the non-grant earning children (Métis).⁹ Mclean wrote in 1912, "there are now only Indian Children in the Class Rooms." In 1923, an addition made it possible to house 100 students. In 1924, a report from the Indian

⁷ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol 6337, File 663-5, part 3, RCMP report, February 16, 1948

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 323

⁹Indian Affairs. School Files. RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-1, part 1. Mclean to Indian Agent Day, June 7, 1911

Agent Macdonald states that the school had been a mix of White and Indigenous students (some of whom were Métis). The White students had been housed in the South wing but the newly appointed Principal Portier had discharged the White students, to make room for First Nations students.¹⁰

Lack of Farming Instruction

Starting in 1923, the government (D.C. Scott and W. Graham in particular) placed a great deal of pressure on the school to teach the older boys farming. However, the school did not have farming implements, nor did it have enough land. The Sisters were against teaching farming for several reasons outlined in this letter.

Student Deaths

The school had a troubled history. It was overcrowded and students suffered and often died from a wide range of illnesses including typhoid, peritonitis, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, jaundice and pneumonia. Investigations into deaths at Thunderchild school began in 1990 when a former superintendent with the Department of Indian Affairs wrote a paper on Thunderchild IRS that alleged incidents of severe punishments and physical abuse (including an incident of a boy, Robert Lonesinger, beaten to death by IRS staff). An inquiry into Robert's death concluded the boy had died of pneumonia. However, many believed the investigation was not handled properly. Father Gaston Mointmigny, an oblate archivist, said that an RCMP officer told him

¹⁰Indian Affairs. School Files. RG10, Vol. 6337, File 663-1, part 1. Indian Agent Macdonald Report, Dec. 17, 1924



Photo: Thunderchild, ca. 1939, Les Oeuvres Oblates de l'Ontario (Deschatelets Archive). At the Delmas School, students were taught: "English by Sisters who came from Quebec and spoke only French. [...] They were punished for speaking Cree and punished if they made mistakes in English. To overcome these situations the children adopted two lines of defence. They would cast their eyes down and say nothing or they learned to use the Indian sing language so they would communicate among themselves." Source: Jaine, L. (Ed.). (1993). *Residential Schools: The Stolen Years*, pp. 75-76, Saskatoon, SK: Extension University Press, University of Saskatchewan.



Delmas, ca. 1939, Les Oeuvres Oblates de l'Ontario (Deschatelets Archive)

Theresa (Bear) Sapp, 77, a survivor of Thunderchild Indian residential school at Delmas, ... also experienced problems after leaving residential school, "I drank a lot," she said. "They cut our hair off, when we talked Cree they could put something in our mouths to burn us, slap us, trying to kill the cultural spirit... It was a difficult life, a horrible life." Source: [CBC News Indigenous, Crystal Green, March 19, 2014](#)

Bishop Smith Catholic School students in Pembroke, Ontario commemorated the children who died at Thunderchild IRS



St. Luke's Elementary students in Saskatoon commemorated the children who attended Thunderchild IRS

Read more stories from Thunderchild

N RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

that the allegations were ridiculous.¹¹

Death rates at this school were high: 10% of students died in 1908; 15% in 1928; and 7% in 1931. "Death rates were up to five times higher than for non-native students attending provincial schools. Deaths were not discussed; most often the child simply disappeared, and other children were forbidden to ask questions. It could be months before parents were notified, often only finding out when a child did not return home at the expected time."¹² The accounts of some survivors...point to the practice of burying some of the dead children in a common grave on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River and the bones of others being discovered during excavation in the town itself.¹³

Financial Inducement and Coercion as Solution for Truancy

In 1930, Principal N. C. D. Dubois "objected to the directive that principals 'should not allow annual leaves to children who have had to be brought in under escort upon the expiration of former vacations.' Dubois responded, that 'to keep such a bunch of sad delinquents at school like prisoners during vacations would necessitate special and continual watching from the part of the staff because they would run away upon the very first occasion. Imagine what trouble it would be for the principal and teachers of having such a disagreeable task to perform.'" When fall arrived, 19 students had not returned from their vacations. Dubois'

discussions with the parents were unsuccessful in convincing them of the school's value; he wrote it was "impossible to convince them of the necessity and great advantages of having their children at the school." Still he "did not think it 'fair or practicable' to force those students to stay at the school over the next summer if he was ever able to persuade them to return to school."¹⁴

"In 1931, Mrs. John Chakita (alternately Tchakta) ... removed her daughter, Mary, [from the school because she believed] she was suffering from poor health." Indian agent, S. L. Macdonald, ordered the principal to have the girl returned. "When the principal's efforts failed, the Indian agent obtained a court summons ordering the mother to return the girl to school." In 1932, the Indian agent sent a letter to a member of the Moosomin Band for the return of a male student. "The father was told, 'Please see that this boy is taken back to the school at once, as if it is found necessary to use the Police, you will be liable as well as have to pay the expenses of the action.'"¹⁵

In February 1935, Principal J. H. O. Allard, "offered parents between \$1 and \$3 to offset the expense of bringing their children to school. By August, he reported, 'Our savages did not need coaxing to come for the promised three dollars. Last year at the same time, we had 12 entries; this year, we have 60, including five new recruits.' The degree of success in recruiting students through financial inducements "is a sign of the widespread poverty among Aboriginal people,

a condition that was largely the result of the federal government's failure to live up to what were supposed to be legally binding Treaty promises."¹⁶

In October 1937, the police visited the Poundmaker Reserve on behalf of the school, and told the parents of seven children ... to send their children back to school. Within five days, all the children were back in school."¹⁷ Also in 1937, a father removed two of his children "following an incident in which he alleged that the Sister Superior slapped both children across the face in front of him."¹⁸

Positive Reports on Education

"In 1924, Inspector W. M. Veazey gave the ... school a very positive assessment. The three teachers were 'energetic and untiring in their efforts,' the children were 'good at word recognition,' the school was 'splendidly equipped,' and, while there was 'some difficulty in teaching the English perfectly [sic],' he felt that 'practical education was excellent.'" In 1926, "a different inspector said, 'I do not see how the work could be done much, if any, better and the entire staff deserves commendation.'" A 1936 inspection "gave a similarly positive assessment: the rooms were well lit and airy, the teachers showed excellent leadership, and the pupils were orderly, anxious to do well, and thoughtful."¹⁹

¹¹ Kruzenga, L. (2007, April 12). Media Clips: "An unfinished business: Records and accounts of deaths must be made, say survivors"

¹² Needs and Expectations for Redress of Victims of Abuse, Sage Research Redress, p. 40

¹³ Kruzenga, L. (2007, April 12) Media Clips: "An unfinished business: Records and accounts of deaths must be made, say survivors"

¹⁴ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 608-609

¹⁵ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 286

¹⁶ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 283

¹⁷ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 286

¹⁸ NCTR school summary, p. 8

¹⁹ The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 321-322



Statement of Apology – to former students

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

June 11, 2008



Students of Indian Residential Schools

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

On behalf of the Government of Canada
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,
Prime Minister of Canada

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever again prevail. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.

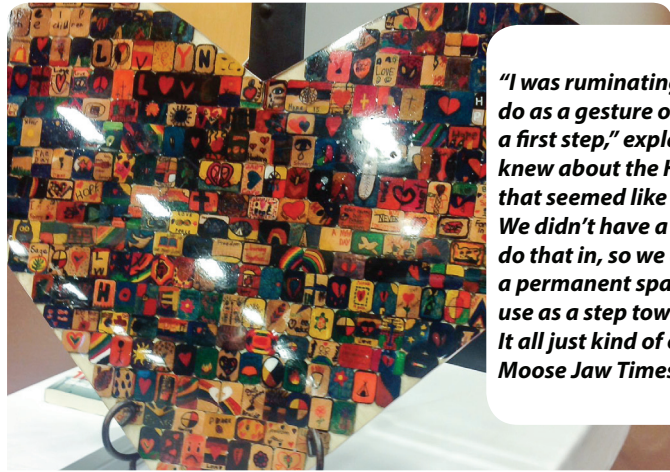
The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership. A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

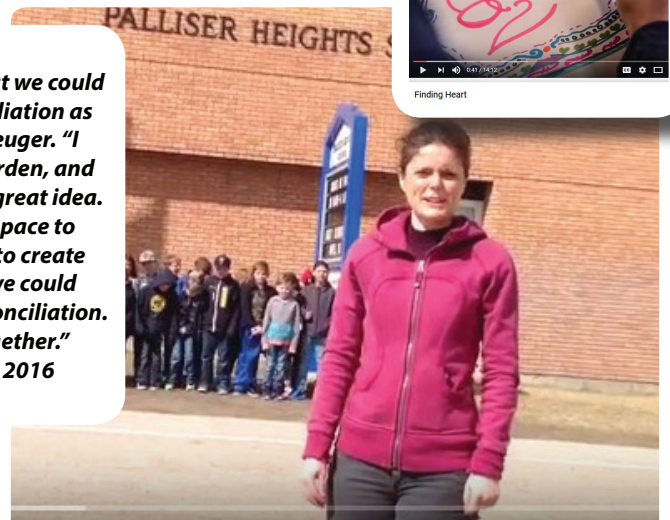


COMMEMORATIVE PROJECTS IN SASKATCHEWAN

"Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms." (Principles of Truth and Reconciliation)



"I was ruminating on what we could do as a gesture of reconciliation as a first step," explained Kreuger. "I knew about the Heart Garden, and that seemed like a really great idea. We didn't have a garden space to do that in, so we decided to create a permanent space that we could use as a step towards reconciliation. It all just kind of came together." Moose Jaw Times, June 9, 2016



Claire Kreuger's Heart Garden project at Palliser Heights School in Moose Jaw



"I just wanted to share with them that we don't look for pity as residential school survivors, we look for understanding. ~Eugene Arcand

Eugene (Bird) Arcand, IRS Survivor Committee, is a Cree from Muskeg Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, who spent 10 years at St. Michael Indian Residential school in Duck Lake and one year at Lebret. Click to view Video: The Child Taken--Indian Residential School Art Commemoration Project, Saskatoon Tribal Council, University of Saskatchewan, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.)



In June 2016, Moose Jaw students celebrated National Aboriginal Day. Photo: Project of Heart tiles are being added to a canoe as a commemoration piece. Students released balloons to honour residential school students. Photo credit Claire Kreuger, June 21, 2016



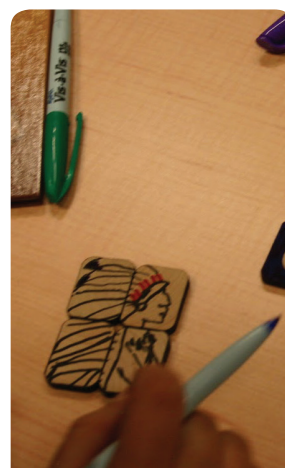
Prairie South students present "Voices of Youth"



In a partnership between Prairie South School Division (Vivian Gauvin) and MJ Museum and Art Gallery, Moose Jaw hosted the "100 Years of Loss" exhibit. Student-made Project of Heart tiles were placed on the drum, which was built by Jeff Cappo . Photo: (l to r) Vivian Gauvin, Alia Baigent, McKayla MacQuarrie, Desire Meriam, Seth Schmaltz with tiled drum. Photo: Moose Jaw Express, July 18, 2013



Walker Elementary School (Regina, SK) students of Christina Johns decorated tiles in 2014 as their gestures of reconciliation. These were made into jewelry by Teachers for Justice, and are being sold to support the Justice for Indigenous Women campaign.



In 2013, University of Regina preservice teachers help to remember students of Pangnirtung Federal Hostel through a Project of Heart



In 2014, SIAST (Saskpolytech) participated in a Project of Heart to honour residential school survivors. Each tile represents a child who attended a residential schools. Those outlined in red represent survivors; those outlined in black represent a child who did not survive.



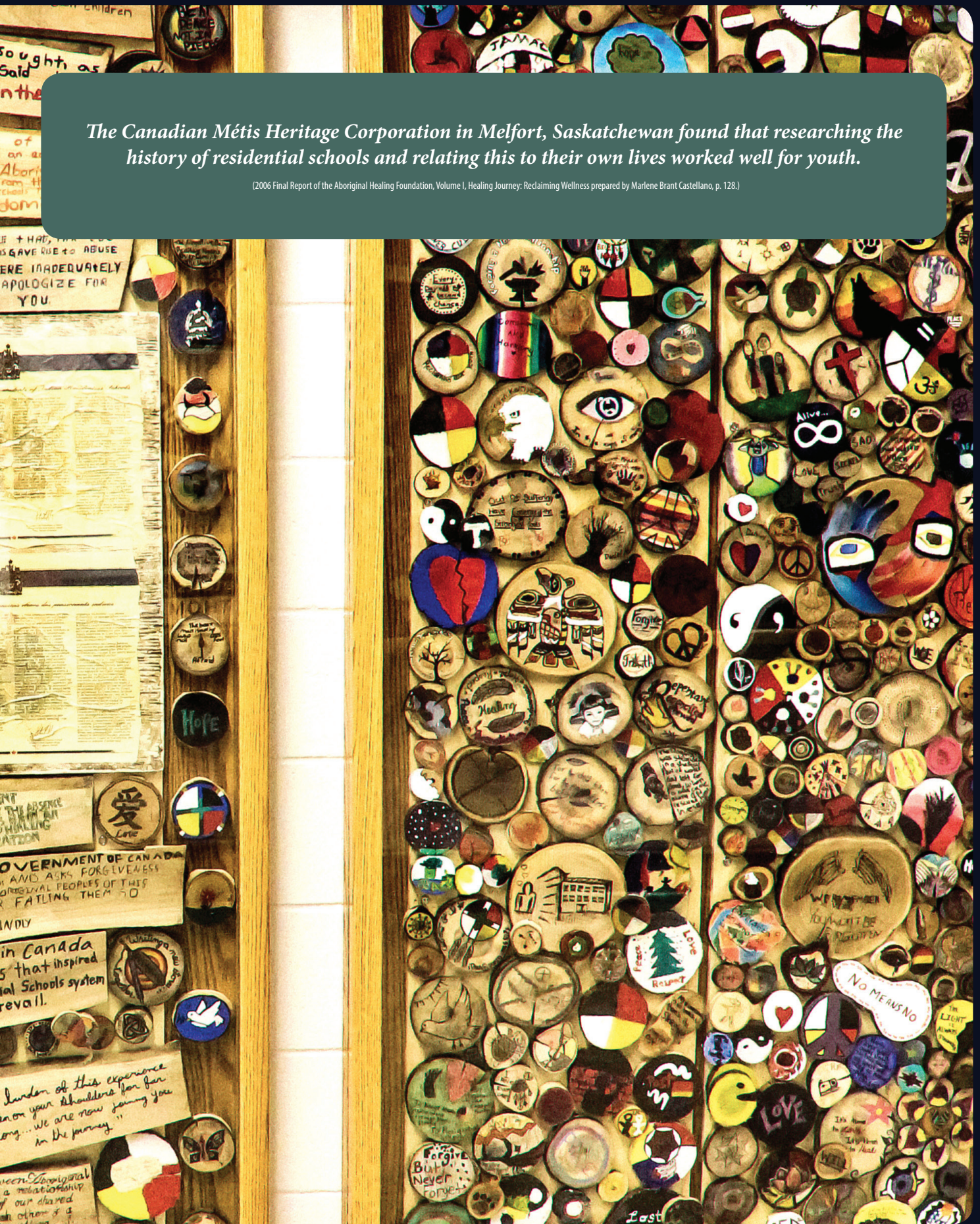
In November 2016, First Nations University of Canada participated in a Project of Heart led by Sylvia Smith. The tiles were then made into jewelry, which will support Justice for Indigenous Women.



As part of the Building Our Home Fire project, Thom Collegiate Regina students created commemorative tokens, which are exhibited in the hallway of the school. [Click to read the story.](#)

The Canadian Métis Heritage Corporation in Melfort, Saskatchewan found that researching the history of residential schools and relating this to their own lives worked well for youth.

(2006 Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Volume I, Healing Journey: Reclaiming Wellness prepared by Marlene Brant Castellano, p. 128.)



WALKING TOGETHER: A DAY OF EDUCATION FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

On April 14, 2016, the Faculty of Education, University of Regina in partnership with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) hosted "Walking Together": A Day of Education for Reconciliation for 1447 students (Grades 5 - 12) and 103 teachers from approximately 50 schools across Saskatchewan. Dean Jennifer Tupper says, "The numbers far exceeded our expectations and are indicative of our larger commitment to indigenization and the history and legacy of residential schools in our province." Participants learned about the history of residential schools, their impact, and about how to move forward, "Walking Together," the theme chosen for the event.

Committee members brought together a meaningful schedule of activities in which students and teachers participated. The day began in a good way with a smudging ceremony for committee members and volunteers led by Life Speaker Noel Starblanket.

The opening included greetings from Dean Jennifer Tupper, Life Speaker Noel Starblanket, U of R Indigenization Lead Shauneen Pete, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Education Lead Charlene Bearhead, and U of R President Vianne Timmons who engaged the students with calls for a responsive "I will" regarding their commitment to participation. Eugene Arcand, a residential school survivor who served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Survivor Committee, asked survivors to stand and come forward so they could be recognized and honoured. Indigenous drumming and singing reminded participants to remember those who have gone before them. Elder Alma Poirtras explains that "drums are more than the heartbeat of mother earth. They are our ancestors reminding of where we come from. Each tribe has their own identity, but for me when I hear the drums I am reminded by our ancestors and by Nature to respect what has been provided."

An interesting and inspirational day of workshops and presentations included education student- and faculty-led Kairos blanket exercises, in English and French. The Blanket Exercise is an interactive learning experience that teaches the history of colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples, physically and visually demonstrating the losses endured by Indigenous peoples: land, language, and loved ones due to epidemics and illness, and children lost to residential schools; all of which highlights the effects of broken treaty promises. Other workshops for the day included: "Truth and Reconciliation Through Music" with Brad Bellegarde; "Playback Theatre" with Dustin Brass, Ben Ironside, and Erin Goodpiper; "Le Fil de Reconciliation" with Anne Brochu Lambert; the Prairie South School Division brought their student presentation "Voices of Youth" with Vivian Gauvin; "Métis Experience" with Russell Fayant and Brenna Pacholko; a "Conversation for Reconciliation" with Lee Prosper; "Inuit Reflection and Vision" with Elder Millie Anderson; "Project of Heart" with Sylvia Smith; "If These Hills Could Talk" with Daya Madhur and Noel Starblanket, and "This is Not Sacred" with Eagleclaw Thom (in which students created hide paintings using silk-screen materials and modern digital technology.)

The day closed with presentations from the NCTR Imagine Canada winner, Christopher Sanford Beck, and representatives from All Nations Healing and the RIIS Media Project. Dr. James Daschuk challenged the group to action: In accordance with Call to Action #75, which calls upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, organizations, and landowners to develop and implement strategies for ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites where residential school children were buried. Participants were challenged to send a postcard to the House of Commons and the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS) cemetery is given heritage status, and the site commemorated and memorialized. Resulting from these actions, alongside the important work of organizations such as the RIIS Commemorative Association and the Luther College's recent Project of Heart, on September 26, the Regina City Council approved heritage status for the RIIS cemetery. More photos at <http://www2.uregina.ca/education/news/day-of-education-for-reconciliation/>

Top: Survivors came forward and be honoured. President Vianne Timmons prepared students for their Day of Education. Bottom Right: Ceremonial drumming and singing encouraged everyone to reconnect with themselves and their loved ones as they went on to learn about our shared history in the workshops and presentations.



Top Left: Over 100 student volunteers participated. Centre: Dean Jennifer Tupper co-lead of the planning committee for Day of Education. Bottom Left: Charlene Bearhead co-lead the planning committee.

Life Speaker Noel Starblanket and (Left) Indigenization Lead Shauneen Pete

(L-R) Gary Edwards, All Nations Hope Network, was on hand to support survivors; Eugene Arcand worked with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the Survivor Committee.



KAIROS BLANKET EXERCISE



Faculty and staff of the Faculty of Education, University of Regina participate in a Kairos Blanket Exercise, a powerful teaching tool to explore the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. UR Stars, a U of R student organization promoting social justice took part in leading the Kairos Blanket Exercise at the Day of Education, Treaty 4 Gathering, and for #TreatyEdCamp. (Photo credit: Shuana Niessen)



“Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.” *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*



UR S.T.A.R.S., a University of Regina student group focused on anti-racism and anti-oppression, organizes an annual #TreatEdCamp, professional development by teachers for teachers on Treaty Education. Photo: Student-led Blanket Exercise, November 2015





Orange Shirt Day
September 30
Wear an orange shirt
to honour and remember
the children
who attended
Indian Residential Schools

“Orange Shirt Day is an opportunity to gather together in our schools and our communities to recognize residential school survivors and their experiences,” said Regina Rochdale MLA Laura Ross on behalf of Deputy Premier and Education Minister Don Morgan. “Saskatchewan students learn about the history of residential schools in a variety of classes starting in elementary and continuing through high school. Ensuring that our citizens understand this part of our history is essential as we move forward with First Nations and Métis people on a path of reconciliation.”





Photo: University of Regina Arts Education Students at the Lebret/Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School site, Sept. 2016. Photo credit: Shuana Niessen

SASKATCHEWAN CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Supports for Shattering the Silence are being maintained on the Ministry of Education's site "Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools."

Follow this [link](#) to view the curricular connections.

Follow this [link](#) to view inquiry starters.

About the site "Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools"

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, an online new resource to support educators in learning and teaching about the legacy of residential schools and reconciliation called "Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools" has been developed.

The site was developed using feedback from Elders, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and other educational stakeholders and will evolve over time through ongoing collaboration with these partners.

The purpose of this website is to:

- coordinate existing public resources into one easy-to-use location for teachers;
- promote online and in-person professional development opportunities;
- offer tools and learning resources that will help facilitate truth and reconciliation conversations among school staff, parents and students;
- provide a collaborative platform for educational professionals to engage in province-wide discussions and to work on joint-initiatives that support reconciliation; and,
- highlight Saskatchewan-made resources and projects to inspire others to act.

This website can be accessed through the link on the [Saskatchewan curriculum website](#) or directly at www.reconciliation.edonline.sk.ca



SHATTERING THE SILENCE: The Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan

This ebook was prepared by Shuana Niessen for the Faculty of Education, University of Regina, 2017, Regina, Saskatchewan.

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The website for this ebook is <http://www2.uregina.ca/education/saskindianresidentialschools/>

Cover Photo Copyright: Lana Slezić © 2015, Title: The back door of Muscowequan Indian Residential School Lestock, Saskatchewan. www.lanaslezic.com

Cover poem is extracted from Rita Joe's "Hated Structure," which was first published in 1988 in [Song of Eskasoni: More Poems of Rita Joe](#). Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press. Used with permission by Rita's Literary Executor, Ann Joe.

This resource is supported by the Government of Saskatchewan through the preparation of curriculum links and inquiry starters.