

This narrative history of a Residential School was researched and produced by the Government of Canada as part of its response to litigation and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has not verified the content of this document. It is provided here for reference purposes only. Documented incidents of sexual and physical abuse are based on the documentary record and do not take into account survivor testimony.



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## Chapleau (St. John's) IRS School Narrative

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**This School Narrative summarizes documents that provide an over-view of the history and administration of the school.**

### NAME OF SCHOOL and VARIANTS

- Chapleau (St. John's) Boarding School [CRS-000820; CRS-001281]
- Chapleau (St. John's) Indian Residential School [CRS-001179; CRS-001918]
- St. John's (Indian) School, Chapleau [CRS-000821-0000; CRS-002141]
- Chapleau Industrial School [CRS-001178]

### CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

- 1907 Chapleau IRS began operating in January 1907 under the auspices of the Anglican Bishop of Moosonee. [CRS-000802; CRS-002147, p. 3]
- 1911 An operational agreement was signed between the Federal Government and the Bishop of Moosonee for the future management of the Chapleau IRS. [CRS-002070]
- 1920 A new school building, with a small barn and outbuildings, was constructed by the Federal Government at a new school site. [CRS-001286, p. 2; CRS-002147, p. 4]
- 1923 Administration of the Chapleau IRS was transferred from the Diocese of Moosonee to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (M.S.C.C.). [CRS-001165; CRS-002147, p. 4; CRS-002139]
- 1926 The old school building burned down. [CRS-001190-0000; CRS-001192]
- 1944 A small chimney fire occurred at the school. [CRS-001610, CRS-001887]
- 1947 A small fire occurred in the basement of the school. [CRS-001947]
- 1948 The school ceased operation as of July 1. [CRS-001998]
- 1949 It was recommended that the land associated with the Chapleau IRS, with the exception of the land on which the buildings stood should be joined to the Chapleau Indian reserves. [CRS-002020; CRS-002027-0002; CRS-002035]
- 1950 The Chapleau IRS buildings and the land on which they stood were sold. [CRS-002066-0000; CRS-002067]

### MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

- 1907-1923 The Chapleau IRS was managed by the Anglican Church under the auspices of the Diocese of Moosonee. [CRS-000811; CRS-000814; CRS-000889; CRS-000906] An operational agreement was signed in 1911 between the Bishop of Moosonee and the Federal Government. [CRS-002070]
- 1923-1948 The management of the Chapleau IRS was transferred from the Diocese of Moosonee to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (M.S.C.C.) on April 1, 1923. The Society continued to manage the school until its closure on July 1, 1948. [CRS-001165; CRS-002147, p. 4; CRS-002139, pp. 7 & 14]

## **SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

- 1907 The documents in the possession of IRSR suggest that the original Chapleau Indian Boarding School was a two storey building owned by the Anglican Church. It was constructed with funds raised by the Bishop of Moosonee and with labour and money contributed by the Indians. [CRS-001123-0003; CRS-002147, p. 3] In the 1907-08 year, the Federal Government gave a grant to assist with building costs and a stable, a wood shed and a back kitchen for the main school building were added. [CRS-000814, p. 6; CRS-001132; CRS-001137; CRS-000820, p.5]
- 1909 A school house for teaching, drilling and recreation was added the Fall of 1909. It was about 100 yards from the main building. [CRS-001278, p. 7; CRS-001280, p. 4]
- 1911 The first statement in the documents in the possession of IRSR that the Chapleau IRS buildings were owned by the Federal Government appears in the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 1911. [CRS-001279]
- 1912 It was reported that there was a boat house associated with the school. [CRS-001280, p. 4]
- 1916 The Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 1916 shows a Principal's cottage added to the school. [CRS-001284, p. 7]
- 1920 In the 1920-21 year, a new school building, with a small barn and outbuildings was constructed on a new school site. [CRS-001286, p. 2; CRS-002147, p. 4, CRS-002076-0002]
- 1926 The old school building burned down on June 27. [CRS-001190-0000; CRS-001192]
- 1949 The Chapleau IRS buildings were transferred to the Lands and Development Services Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources for disposal in April 1949. [CRS-002029-0000; CRS-002029-0001] They included the school residence, an icehouse, a one car garage, a chicken house, a barn, a pig pen, an implement shed and a teacher's cottage. [CRS-002026; CRS-002063-0001]
- 1950 The sale of the buildings associated with the Chapleau IRS was concluded in January. [CRS-002066-0000; CRS-002067]

## **LAND**

### Location

Between 1907 and 1920, the Chapleau IRS was located on Lot 2, Section 6, in the township of Chapleau, on the north side of the Kegebesquashing River, about half a mile west of the Chapleau town limits and separated from the town by the river. [CRS-000803; CRS-001280, p. 11; CRS-001056]

Between 1920 and 1948, the Chapleau IRS was located on Parcel A, Concession 4, and Part of Block B, Concessions 4 and 5 of the Township of Chapleau, bounded on the east by the right of way of the Canadian Pacific Railway and on the west and north by the Kegebesquashing River. It was situated two miles south of the town of Chapleau. [CRS-000916; CRS-000925-0002; CRS-000967; CRS-000979; CRS-002147, p.3] In 1921, the school acquired an additional 685 acres on the north halves of Lots 3 and 4, Concession 3 and part of broken Lots 3 and 4, Concession 4, in the township of Chapleau. [CRS-000985; CRS-000986] In 1930, the north part of broken Lot 2, Concession 3, Township of Chapleau, was

purchased for the school. [CRS-002044]

#### Dates owned by Church

- 1907-1910 The Church operated the Chapleau IRS on land owned by the Province of Ontario. [CRS-000806; CRS-001127; CRS-001129]
- 1910-1911 The Diocese of Moosonee purchased the land associated with the Chapleau IRS in 1910. In 1911, the Bishop of Moosonee was asked to transfer the school land to the Federal Government. Through an oversight, the transaction was not completed and the Bishop remained the registered owner of the old school site on Lot 2, Concession 6, until the Federal Government finally purchased it in 1924. [CRS-000830-0000; CRS-000830-0001; CRS-000832-0001; CRS-001281, p. 9; CRS-001036; CRS-001048-0002; CRS-001056]

#### Dates owned by Government

- 1920-1948 In the 1920-21 year, a new school was opened on part of Parcel A, Concession 4 of the Township of Chapleau. [CRS-000925-0000; CRS-000963; CRS-000967; CRS-000981; CRS-001026; CRS-002029-0000] A further 685 acres was added to the school in 1921 [CRS-000985; CRS-000986] In 1930, the North part of broken Lot 2, Concession 3 was purchased for the school. [CRS-002044]

#### **PHOTOS, PLANS and OTHER MEDIA**

- 1907 Drawing and floor plan of Chapleau Indian School. [CRS-001123-0002]
- Photograph of exterior of Chapleau Indian School. [CRS-001123-0003]
- 1919 Architectural drawings for new Chapleau Indian Boarding School. Includes front elevation, right side elevation, rear elevation, basement floor plan, ground floor plan, first floor plan and second floor plan. [CRS-001422-0000, CRS-001422-0001, 0002, 0003, 0004, 0005, 0006]
- Plan of parts of Block A and B, Concessions 4 and 5, Township of Chapleau. [CRS-000925-0002]
- 1927 Sketch of location of school and school lands. [CRS-001784-0001]
- Survey plan showing Chapleau Indian School and surrounding lands. [CRS-001794-0001; CRS-001791-0002]
- 1928 Sketches of the north balconies at the school to be provided with glass and screens. [CRS-001230-0001; CRS-001230-0002]
- 1933 Rough sketch showing Dam and water main at the school. [CRS-001527-0001]
- Photographs showing diver at work repairing intake of water supply system at Chapleau School. [CRS-001530]
- 1936 Plan of laundry at Chapleau Boarding School. [CRS-001433-0002]
- 1937 Photographs of diver preparing to repair water supply intake pipe at the school. [CRS-001448-0001]
- 1939 Photographs of exterior and interior of Chapleau IRS buildings and of staff,

students and various activities. [CRS-002147, pp. 1-12]

Sketch plan of water supply system at the Chapleau School. [CRS-001701-0002]

1941 Sketch of shape and size of bed springs at the St. John's IRS. [CRS-001844-0001]

### **GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME**

1907-1920	Average attendance varied between 13 and 46
1921-1930	Average attendance varied between 55 and 110
1931-1947	Average attendance varied between 80 and 104
1948	The Quarterly Return for the quarter ending March 31, 1948 showed a total of 69 pupils in residence at the school.

### **STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES**

In the first years of operation, the majority of students in the Chapleau IRS were from New Brunswick House, with the rest coming from along the line of the Canadian Pacific railway between Chapleau and Missanabie [CRS-001278, p. 3]

In 1914-15, the majority of students were drawn from the Chapleau and Brunswick Bands. Children from Cochrane were also enrolled. [CRS-000839; CRS-000841-0001; CRS-000874]

In 1925, children from Gibson, Parry Island and Shawanaga Reserves attended the school. [CRS-001178]

In the 1930s, pupils were drawn from Missanabie, Chochrane, Chapleau Christian Island, Shawanaa, Gibson, the Cape Croker Band, the Rama Reserve, Rupert House, Senneterre, Island Falls, Bala and the Watha Reserve. [CRS-001237-0001; CRS-001249; CRS-001293-0001; CRS-001296] In 1939, it was noted that pupils were drawn from an area extending from Fort Albany on James Bay, to the Fort Francis Reserve, the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford and to Nipigon. Children were also sent from the Muncey Area. [CRS-002147, p. 10; CRS-001312]

In January 1947, it was reported that the majority of the children at the school were from Mistissini on the east side of James Bay. The others were from the Chapleau Agency or from South and East of Chapleau. [CRS-002128, p. 1; CRS-000577]

### **RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

The Chapleau IRS was at all times operated by the Anglican Church.

### **WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

1911 Operational agreement for the future management of the Chapleau IRS signed between the Bishop of Moosonee and the Federal Government. [CRS-002070]

### **DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS**

#### Incidents (Sexual)

To date, we are unaware of any incidents of sexual abuse at the Chapleau IRS.

#### Incidents (Physical)

1922 A series of affidavits alleging cruelty toward the children at the school produced an

official investigation. The investigation concluded that discipline was severe, but it found that the statements made in connection with these affidavits could not be corroborated. Nevertheless, the Department issued instructions that any corporal punishment that might appear pitiless to outsiders should be avoided at the school. [CRS-001009, p. 2; CRS-001014-0001]

- 1936 A staff member informed the Government that severe whipping had been a part of efforts to discipline a pupil. [CRS-001254; CRS-001255]
- 1937 Truant students were to be given a sound whipping to discourage further escape attempts. [CRS-001293-0000; CRS-001293-0001; CRS-001294-0000, 0001, 0002]
- 1939 Truant students had their hair cut off close to their heads. They were warned that if they ran away again, their heads would be shaved. [CRS-001315-0000; CRS-001316; CRS-001321] When three of these student did run away again, the Department was informed that they had been severely strapped for their earlier attempt and would be again when they were returned to the school. [CRS-001325-0001] Another student was severely whipped for threatening a staff member with a knife and for running away. [CRS-001330-0001]

**CONVICTIONS**

To date, we are unaware of any convictions for abuse at the Chapleau IRS or of any convicted abusers present at the school.

**PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS**

Rev. Ernest O. Duke	Principal	1908
Rev. P.R. Soanes	Principal	1909-1912*
Miss G.M. Sutherland	Principal	1912-Feb 1913
Rev. George E. Prewer	Principal	Oct 1913-1923
Rev. J.H. Gibson	Principal	Apr 1923-May 1927**
Rev. G.T. Snowden	Vice-Principal/ Acting Principal	July 1925-Oct 1927
Rev. Alf J. Vale	Principal	Nov 1927-Oct 1946
Rev. G.A. Crawley	Principal	Oct 1946-July 1948

\*The Indian Agent's report in the Indian Affairs Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 1912 states that P.R. Soanes was acting as Principal. However, the Statement of Indian Boarding Schools shows Miss G.M. Sutherland as Principal.

\*\*From July 1925 to May 1927, Rev. Gibson retained the title of Principal, but was relieved of actual duty because of poor health. A Vice-Principal (G.T. Snowden) was appointed to take charge of the school.

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The original school narrative document produced by Canada also contains a number of records that have been separated pending review.



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