

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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Great Whale River Hostels General History Report

NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS

Great Whale River Hostels	[GWR-000149, GWR-000235]
Great Whale River Small Hostels	[RCN-003459, GWR-000119-0001]
Poste-de-la-Baleine Hostels	[GWR-000240, p. 8, GWR-00237-0000]

Opening Date(s):

1960	The first hostel opened on December 14, 1960. [GWR-000108, GWR-000109]
1961	The second hostel opened in April 1961. [GWR-000127, GWR-000133]
1962	Two hostels opened in September 1962. The third hostel continued to be occupied by a construction crew. [GWR-000149, GWR-000158, GWR-000159, GWR-000168, GWR-000180, GWR-000189, GWR-000205]
1965	The opening date of the third hostel has not been clearly determined, but the documents suggest that all three pupil residences were operating in the 1965-66 school year and again in the 1967-68 school year. [GWR-000261, GWR-000233-0002, p. 13, GWR-000238]

Closing Date(s):

1961-1962	The first and second hostels closed in July 1961 and did not reopen until September 1962, while the third hostel remained closed until 1965. [GWR-000133, GWR-000149, GWR-000158, GWR-000159, GWR-000160, GWR-000167, GWR-000170, GWR-000221-0001]
1970	The hostels likely ceased operating in June 1970. There is no definitive document in the department's collection that states when the Great Whale River hostels closed. With the transfer of responsibility for education in the Northwest Territories to the Territorial Government, as of April 1, 1970, documents suggest that the Belcher Islands students who were enrolled in the hostels may have remained in the Northwest Territories for school in 1970-1971, rather than return to Great Whale River. [BES-000196, BES-000198, BES-000203, GWR-000272]
1971-1972	Hostel buildings 18 and 19 were converted into bachelor apartments. [GWR-000251, GWR-000252, GWR-000253, GWR-000254, GWR-000255, GWR-000256, GWR-000257, GWR-000258, GWR-000260, PHQ-005956-0001]

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL: 1960-1970

The Great Whale River hostels were operated by the Northern Administration Branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources until 1966, and thereafter by the Northern Administration Branch of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. [GWR-000288-0001, GWR-000234-0000, GWR-000250-0001]

SUGGESTIONS OF ABUSE

No information found

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Dates Owned by Government: 1960-1970

The Northern Administration Branch had originally planned a hostel that could accommodate up to 150 students with the capability of expansion to accommodate up to 300 students. [GWR-000028-0002, GWR-000110-0001, p. 15]

The three 8-pupil hostels at Great Whale River were established in 1960 using converted General Purpose (G.P.) huts that had been transferred from the Department of National Defence to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. The hostels were D.N.A. buildings # 18, 19 and 20. [GWR-000043-0000, GWR-000043-0002, GWR-000044-0003, GWR-000045, GWR-000046, GWR-000052-0001, GWR-000068, GWR-000136, GWR-000202-0001, p. 62, GWR-000211, GWR-000232, GWR-000250-0001, GWR-000250-0002]

Each 8-pupil hostel consisted of a master bedroom for the supervisor/hostel parent, girls' and boys' dormitories, living room/dining room, kitchen and bathroom. They measured 56 feet by 20 feet. [GWR-000051-0002, GWR-000055, GWR-000125-0002, GWR-000125-0003, GWR-000184, GWR-000211]

CONDITIONS:

1961-1962 Complications and deficiencies with the plumbing services made occupation of the hostels untenable. [GWR-000164]

1962 In December 1962, the heating system at Great Whale River broke down, leaving the hostels without heat for a period. [GWR-000188]

1967 The Administrator of the Arctic noted that the hostels at Great Whale River were immaculately kept. However, the Northern Administrator, Great Whale River, informed the Regional Administrator for Arctic Quebec that the Belcher Islands people did not want their children going to Great Whale for schooling. There had been complaints about the hostel mothers and general conditions in the hostels. The Department suggested that efforts be made to reassure the parents and to invite them to see the hostels for themselves when they visited Great Whale. [GWR-000235, GWR-000236, GWR-000237-0001]

1968 All of the hostels suffered damage in a wind storm, including "the loosening of roofs and some wall distortion." [GWR-000241-0002]

1969 Cockroaches were noticed in hostel building number 20 after the departure of the students. [GWR-000245, GWR-000246, GWR-000248]

LAND

Location:

The three hostels were located in the settlement of Great Whale River, Quebec, on the eastern shore of Hudson Bay, in the area allocated to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. This area was situated alongside the Royal Canadian Air Force base. [GWR-000033, GWR-000043-0002, GWR-000055, GWR-000166]

Dates Owned by Government:

Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources buildings at Great Whale River occupied part of an area of land reserved for the Department of National Defence by

the Provincial Government for defence purposes. Title was given to the Department of Northern Affairs by the Department of National Defence. [GWR-000076, p. 5, GWR-000165, GWR-000198]

ADMINISTRATION

Dates Administered by Church:

Not Applicable

Dates Administered by Government: 1960-1970

The three family type hostels at Great Whale River were administered by the Northern Administration Branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, later of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The Principal of the Great Whale River Federal Day School was responsible to the Area Superintendent of Schools for all aspects of the operation of the hostels. [RCN-003460, GWR-000097-0000, GWR-000180, GWR-000240, p. 8]

Dates Administered by Band:

Not Applicable

PERSONNEL

Administrators / Principals:

Basil McMaster	February 1958 to June 1961 [GWR-000110-0001, BES-000330]
Robert Swim	September 1961 to June 1962 [GWR-000139]
John A. Bacon	September 1962 to 1964 [GWR-000001-0001, GWR-000218-0001]
Fred Ellis	September 1965 to June 1967 [GWR-000220, GWR-000016]
Graham Rees	September 1967 to June 1968 [GWR-000017-0001, BES-000173]
William (Bill) Enns	September 1968 to 1970 [GWR-000021, GWR-000249-0001]

Administration of Personnel:

No information found

Staff Qualifications:

1960 On-site training in child care, housekeeping routines and food service was given to the hostel staff at Great Whale River just prior to the opening of the first hostel. Supplementary training was to be provided throughout the year by a hostel supervisor who would report regularly to the Principal. [GWR-000058, GWR-000060, GWR-000061, GWR-000063, GWR-000079, GWR-000081-0000, GWR-000084, GWR-000086, RCN-003460, GWR-000095-0000, GWR-000108, GWR-000120, GWR-000120-0001]

The husband and wife selected to supervise the hostel that accommodated Indian children had been voted to the position by the local Indian community. The wife was thought to be one of the best housekeepers in the community. The Eskimo woman chosen to supervise the second hostel was selected by Eskimo parents who deemed her best qualified to look after their children. She had practical housekeeping experience and a sixteen year-old son who could help around the hostel. Although not a good housekeeper, the third candidate selected to supervise one of the hostels was a widow chosen by the parents. Without this job, she would also be a welfare case. The Branch

Director had suggested that older couples or widows who might otherwise require welfare assistance should be chosen as hostel parents, as they would receive room and board and would not therefore require a large salary. [GWR-000051-0001, GWR-000078]

1961 The Principal of the Great Whale River Federal Day School was said to be "one of the best school principals in the Arctic District." [GWR-000139]

1962 During the 1961-1962 school year, a qualified hostel supervisor could not be found to staff the position. If a suitable married woman could not be hired, the Administrator of the Arctic proposed that a sophisticated Eskimo woman might be found who could receive help from the Day School teachers. [GWR-000164]

One of the teachers recruited for the Great Whale River Federal Day School was also to assume responsibility for hostel supervision. She had one year's experience on the Belcher Islands. [GWR-000174]

1966 The Principal of the Great Whale River Federal Day School was described as capable, kind, experienced and with the best interests of his students in mind. [GWR-000224, GWR-000230]

Hiring Procedures:

1960 The hostels at Great Whale River were to be supervised by a local Eskimo or Eskimo couple recruited by the school Principal and approved by the Department. Details of the individuals selected would be sent through the Area Administrator, Great Whale River, to the office of the Administrator of the Arctic. Service contracts would be drawn up for the positions of hostel mothers or hostel parents and hostel supervisors. These contracts would be approved by the Department. [GWR-000063, GWR-000074, RCN-003459, GWR-000085, RCN-003460, GWR-000133]

In October 1960, The A/Area Administrator, Great Whale River, submitted details of the hostels supervisors selected for Great Whale River to the Administrator of the Arctic. [GWR-000078]

1961 The Department does not appear to have been informed regarding of the choice of house mother prior to the opening of the second Great Whale River hostel in April 1961. The Administrator of the Arctic reminded the Area Administrator at Great Whale that Departmental approval was necessary and requested that details concerning the hostel staff be provided. [GWR-000127, GWR-000128, GWR-000130]

1969 Hostel Mothers continued to work under the jurisdiction of the school Principal. [GWR-000243-0002]

OTHER ISSUES

Truancy:

No information found.

Health / Deaths:

No information found.

Religious Denomination of Children:

A memorandum of December 15, 1959 concerning the possibility of Indian pupils being accommodated in the Northern Affairs hostels at Great Whale River states that the hostels were to be “operated under Anglican auspices.” [GWR-000037-0001]

Student Origins:

From September 1962 until the closure of the hostels in 1970, the pupils residing in the Great Whale River hostels were Eskimo children, primarily from the Belcher Islands. [GWR-000180, GWR-000186, NCA-001597-0005, GWR-000274]

Compulsory Attendance:

In 1962, the Department asked the Administrator of the Arctic to ensure that parental permission was indicated on the hostel admission forms. [GWR-000175-0001]

Language / Culture:

1961, 1968 Local food, including fish, seal meat, whale, walrus and ptarmigan, were purchased locally and provided to the hostel pupils. [GWR-000115, GWR-000204, GWR-000239]

1962-1970 The hostels at Great Whale River accommodated only Eskimo children. [NCA-001597-0005, GWR-000240, p. 8, GWR-000242, p. 21]

Additional Information:

1963 The hostel children were given Christmas presents by the H.B.C. and Dominion Helicopters. [GWR-000208]

1965-66 The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources received complaints from Eskimos in Great Whale River that the Principal of the Great Whale River day school was no good and that he did not feed the children at lunch time. A Department investigation found that school lunches had been discontinued because they were taking too much time away from classes, since the children also went home for lunch. It was also found that the children were given soup or cocoa and vitaminized biscuits at other times of the day. [GWR-000222, GWR-000223-0001 to 0004, GWR-000224, GWR-000225, GWR-000226, GWR-000227, GWR-000229, GWR-000230, GWR-000231]

1968-1969 The Principal of the Great Whale River day school visited the Belcher Islands and met with the parents of students attending school in Great Whale River and enrolled in the hostels. [BES-000173, BES-000190]

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Chronology of School:

- 1960 The first of the Great Whale River small hostels opened
- 1961 The second small hostel at Great Whale opened
- 1961-1962 The first and second hostels closed in July 1961 and did not reopen until September 1962
- 1965 The third small hostel at Great Whale River opened. All three hostels were in operation
- 1970 The Great Whale River hostels ceased operation at the end of the 1969-1970 school year

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



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