

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.



You are welcome to contact the NCTR if you wish to add, comment on, or challenge any versions of the history presented herein.

- 1910** A doctor informs the Government that the children at the Mission are sick and that one child has died. The school should be inspected by a doctor at least once a month. [Item No. 05140]
- 1911** Note signed with illegible initials reads “Contract for this school forwarded to Rt. Rev. Emile Grouard, O.M.I., on March 4th, 1911 for signature. [Item No. 05141]
- 1914** Fire destroys the school, church, and convent on March 16; but the new building is supposed to be ready in the spring. The sisters, the infirm and the students move into the priests’ house. The priests move to the laundry. Two weeks after the fire, students return to school. [Item Nos. 00004, 00012, ██████████]
- 1915** The government decides to supply school desks, beds and other items to furnish the new school. [Item No. 00005].
- 1917** The church rebuilds the school. [Item No. 00136.]
- 1925** The Fort Vermilion School Board reports that the principal of Fort Vermilion IRS is allowing white protestant children to attend his school although there is a school in Fort Vermilion for that purpose. [Item Nos. 05114 and 05117]. A letter from the Indian agent explains that the children attending the school did so because until the previous year no school was available in Fort Vermilion. The principal, Father Habay reports that the only white children now attending are one child whose father is 50 miles away, and outside the district and another child who returns to Grande Prairie each spring. [Item No. 05113]
- 1932** ██████████
██████████ Another document states that the girls’ building was destroyed by fire on October 7, 1932. In a 1933 memorandum the bishop requests a contribution of \$3500 from the government to help cover rebuilding costs. [Item No. 00145]
- 1933** A new school is under construction. [Item No. 00132] and is completed in the summer. [Item No 00136]
- 1934** ██████████
██████████
██████████ In September the Bishop asks the government for \$1500.0 to cover repair costs.[Item No. 00146]
- 1940** A doctor writes that students are coming to the residential school because some parents will lose pension rights if they do not send their children to school and the dormitory is overcrowded – there were eighty-eight children present on December 31 and the quota is 65. A letter from the government Inspector of Indian agencies outlines some possible solutions. [Item Nos. 05478, 05479]

Floor space in the school previously occupied by a small hospital is turned over to housing Indian children. [Item No. 05482]

- 1948** The “Whites” and “Métis” have two rooms in a separate building and are administered by the Separate School District and supervised by the provincial government. [Item No. 05095]
- 1949** A new lighting plant is installed. [Item No. 00809A]
- 1955** A four classroom block is constructed – a Recreation Room, a Domestic Science Room, and a Manual Training room in the basement. There are plans to convert the classrooms in the old school building into improved dining room, recreation, and dormitory facilities. [Item No. 05052]
- 1956** Effective April 1, 1956 the Government acquires the Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School from the Episcopal Corporation of Grouard. [Item No. 05053]
- 1964** The Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School is to be operated, not as a school, but as a Hostel. [Item No. 05143] Separate School District # 26 is to provide integrated education for Indian children in the schools under its administration. [Item Nos. 05306, 05145]
- 1965** After September 1964, the Government continues to administer the Hostel for students in attendance at the Separate School who live in the Hostel. [Item 04802]
- 1967** While it bears the name of a Residential School, it operates as a Hostel and there is complete integration between the Indian and non-Indian pupils who attend the Roman Catholic Separate School. [Item No.04977]
- 1968** Hostel closes August 28, 1968. [Item No. 00728] Talks to erect cottage style residences supervised by Indian house parents do not materialize. [Item No. 06720]
- Residential accommodation is to be limited to regular residents of the Fort Vermilion agency due to “obsolescence” of the residence. Item No. 00672]
- 1969** In July, the Sisters of Providence leave the building they in which they reside. [Item No. 00725]

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

- 1939** A letter from the Superintendent of Welfare and Training mentions that Fort Vermilion IRS is a church owned school. [Item No 00950]
- 1948** Bishop Routhier is responsible for hiring teachers. [Item No. 05095]

- 1940** Floor space in the school previously occupied by a small hospital is turned over to housing Indian children. [Item No. 05482]
- 1948** There are two classrooms in the residential school and the “Whites and Métis” have two classrooms in a separate building and are administered by the Separate School Board and supervised by the Government of Education of Alberta. [Item No. 05095]
- 1949** The dimensions of the boys’ dormitory are 100’ x 28’ x 9’ but because the ceilings on the sides are low there is a loss of space. There are 22, 625 cubic feet. The girls’ dormitory is 75’ x 33’ x 9’, or 22,275 cubic feet. [Item No. 05091]
- 1955** A four classroom block is constructed – a Recreation Room, a Domestic Science Room, and a Manual Training Shop in the basement. Classrooms in the old building are to be converted into an improved dining room, recreation and dormitory facilities. [Item No. 05052]
- A letter dated April 6, 1960 states that with regard to Lot 2, Plan 3279KS, the Government an agreement was reached in 1955 whereby the Episcopal Corporation of Grouard would transfer the lot to them with the agreement that they would construct a four classroom block on it. The building was completed and the land under Government administration for some time. [Item No. 06374]
- 1961** According to the fire inspector, the building has highly combustible interior and open stairways and is in a generally hazardous condition. The number of students in the residence must be reduced from seventy to fifty. [Item No. 00543] However, it appears that the decision is later revoked and enrolment is allowed to remain at seventy. [Item No. 06240]
- 1972** For some time, the boys’ residence building has been deemed beyond repair and has been slated for demolition. [Item No. 06694]

LAND

Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School was located in the area of Treaty 8. Description of Land: Lot 2, in Lot 7, Range 2, Fort Vermilion Settlement in the Province of Alberta.

Reserves surrounding the Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School included Bands of the Tallcree First Nation, Fort Vermilion Beaver Ranch, Boyer River, Upper Hay, Fox Lake [Item No.04579]; from the Eleskie (Child Lake) and Bulldog Reserves [Item No. 06993A]; Boyer River Reserve, Hay Lake [Item No. 06034]



Item #	Date	Description
00483	Undated	Diagram of Residence
00484	Undated	Diagram of Girls' Residence
00520	Undated	Diagram showing Residence in Relation to the Peace River
00586	Undated	Sketch of Classrooms
00915	02/09/1939	Diagram showing Fort Vermilion Mission
06005, B to G	02/18/1939	Photographs of Fort Vermilion IRS
06370A	04/13/1956	Diagram of proposed Fort Vermilion IRS
06194	03/18/1957	Subdivision Plan
00474D	01/03/1958	Diagram showing Fort Vermilion Mission
00825	04/13/1959	Diagrams of the Mission and water system
06180A	05/05/1960	Diagram of Sewage Disposal Field showing the layout of the Mission
06930	05/05/1960	As above
06933	05/05/1960	As above
00619A	08/08/1962	Diagram of Girls' Dormitory
00641 and 00641A	07/08/1963	Written description of the boys dormitory to accompany the Basement Floor Plan
06781A	04/15/1964	Diagram of 2 nd Floor – Boys' Dormitory
06781B	04/15/1964	Diagram of Girls' Dormitory
06781C	04/15/1964	Diagram of 2 nd Floor
06958G	05/03/1972	Diagram of Fort Vermilion Mission
06694A	10/24/1972	Diagram of Fort Vermilion Mission
06415A	04/12/1973	Diagram of Fort Vermilion Mission

GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

Year	Number of Students
ca. 1901	23 internal, 11 external
July 1902 to July 1903	17 internal, 15 external
July 1904 to July 1905	19 internal, 13 external
July 1905 to July 1906	25 internal, 11 external
July 1906 to July 1907	41 internal, 15 external
July 1907 to July 1908	50 internal, 18 external
July 1908 to July 1909	54 internal, 15 external
July 1909 to July 1910	76 internal, 6 external
July 1912 to July 1913	39 Métis students in residence, 20

	Indian students, 6 orphans, 6 external
July 1913 to July 1914	60 students in residence, 49 students at the end of classes; 20 external students, 17 at the end of classes
July 1914 to July 1915	37 Indian students admitted to residence; 44 students at the end of classes; 14 external students; 17 at the end of classes
July 1916 to July 1917	46 Indian students; 41 admitted to residence; 38 present at the end of the year; 10 external students
July 1917 to July 1918	55 students in residence; 45 present at the end of classes
July 1919 to July 1920	32 students admitted to the residence during the year; 67 students at the end of classes; 17 external students
July 1920 to July 1921	5 Indian students admitted to the residence during the year; 45 students present at the end of classes;
1922	52 students admitted during the year; 48 present December 31; 6 external students
1923	73 students admitted during the year; 12 external students
1924	68 students admitted during the year; 54 present December 31; 7 external students
1925	37 Indian students; 12 external students
1926	65 students admitted to the residential school; 64 present December 31; 4 external students
December 31 1927	65 students admitted to the residence during the year; 64 present at the end of the year; 4 external students
December 31, 1928	44 students admitted to the residence during the year; 43 present December 31; 5 external students
1929	39 students admitted to the residence; 89 present December 31; 4 external students
June 1930	84 students present December 31
December 31, 1931	47 Indian students present

1932	103 students admitted to the residential school; 88 present December 31; 10 external students
1933	113 students admitted to the residence during the year; 91 present December 31; 11 external students
1934	67 Indian students
1935	96 students in residence; 21 external students
1936	90 students in residence, 14 external students
1937	101 Indian students; 18 external students
1938	101 Indian students; 18 external students
1939	109 Indian students; 31 external students
1940	91 Indian students; 44 external students
1941	89 Indian students; 48 students in the Separate School
June 30, 1942	Average attendance of students – 68
June 30, 1943	Average attendance of students – 68.32
June 30, 1944	Average attendance of students – 59.64
June 30, 1945	Average attendance of students – 61.00
June 30, 1946	Average attendance of students – 74.00
June 30, 1947	Average attendance of students – 79.86
June 30, 1948	Average attendance of students – 80.64
1949	87 Indian students; 37 Separate School students
1950	78 students; 39 Separate School students
1951	91 Indian students; 24 external students
1952	103 students and 45 external students
1953	103.5 resident and day pupils

1954	107 resident and day pupils
June 30, 1955	110.35 students
June 30, 1956	112 students
December 31, 1957	Average attendance – 108.35 students
June 30, 1958	130 students
June 30, 1959	68 students
June 30, 1960	69 students
June 30, 1961	70 students
June 30, 1962	70 students
June 30, 1963	70 students
June 30, 1964	70 students
June 30, 1965	45 students
July 11, 1966	54 students
June 30, 1967	51 students
August 6, 1968	45 students

STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES

Students from, at least the following bands, attended Fort Vermilion IRS:

Reserves surrounding the Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School included Bands of the Tallcree First Nation, Fort Vermilion Beaver Ranch, Boyer River, Upper Hay, Fox Lake [Item No.04579]; from the Eleskie (Child Lake) and Bulldog Reserves [Item No. 06993A]; Boyer River Reserve, Hay Lake [Item No. 06034]

1951 Thirty-two students are brought to the school from “Big Slough”, a distance of 130 miles. [Item No. 05537]

There may be alternate ways of spelling these band names.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

1899 – 1968 Correspondence from 1899 is signed by representatives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. [Item No. 00689]

1911 An undated, initialed, note [illegible]: “contract for this school forward to Rt. Rev. Emile Grouard, O.M.I. on March 4th, 1911 for signature” [Item No. 05141]. The Oblates continue their involvement with Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School until the closure of the Fort Vermilion Student Residence (the Hostel) September, 1968. [Item No. 00730]



WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

1911 Agreement

Church management of the school provided teaching staff and non-teaching personnel, including administrative staff. The Government approved the hiring and transfer of principals chosen by the Church. [Item No. 05141]

- 1955** A letter dated April 6, 1960 states that with regard to Lot 2, Plan 3279KS, the Government an agreement was reached in 1955 whereby the Episcopal Corporation of Grouard would transfer the lot to them with the agreement that they would construct a four classroom block on it. The building was completed and the land under Government administration for some time. [Item No. 06374]
- 1962** Memorandum of Agreement, regarding the management of certain Indian Residential Schools, between Government of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Affairs Branch and INDIANESCOM (the Management). In it, the Management agrees to manage and operate Fort Vermilion IRS for children of Indian status in accordance with the terms of the agreement. [Item No. 04706A]
- 1963** Memorandum of Agreement which states that the Government constructed a water supply system which also serves St. Theresa's hospital, and the Mission building operated by the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Grouard and the Roman Catholic Separate School District No.26. The Episcopal Corporation is to pay \$18,250.57 and the Separate School Board is to pay \$5, 436.34 as their shares of the capital cost of the water supply system. [Item Nos. 00216 and 00216A]
- 1964** Memorandum to Education Division Staff: Administration of Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School #766 is transferred to the Fort Vermilion Separate School District No. 26 effective September 1, 1964. The Fort Vermilion Indian Residential School will no longer be operated effective September 1, 1964. Please note that an unsigned Treasury board request dated February 5, 1964 indicates that on September 1, 1963 the Government entered into an agreement with the "Fort Vermilion Separate School District No. 26, in the Province of Alberta, which provides for the integrated education of Indian children in the schools under the administration of the Fort Vermilion Separate School District throughout Northern Alberta." The agreement itself has not been located. There is a request to the Treasury Board to grant authority for leasing the Residential School building to the Fort Vermilion Separate School District. The change of administration was requested to go into effect on July 1, 1964. [Item No. 05306]
- 1974** Agreement between the Government and Fort Vermilion General Hospital District No. 102 (St. Theresa General Hospital) in which the hospital is granted a permit to use the Girls' Dormitory in order to expand and improve health and social services to the settlement. [Item No. 06397]

1958 - 1960 A Physical Education teacher from the Separate School teaches part time at the Indian Residential School as well. [Item No. 05193]

1960 111 pupils attend the Separate School in 1960 and the school requires more space. A Memorandum for File by the Deputy Minister indicates that a reciprocal agreement has been made between the Government of Indian Affairs and the Fort Vermilion Separate School District No 26 whereby the two schools are to be integrated. Each school is to cover its own operating costs. [Item No. 00508]

1961 Government of Indian affairs to pay a tuition fee for those children who receive children educated at the IRS, through a separate agreement in the same manner. [Item No 05167]

1961 Due to the reversal of the reciprocal agreement Fort Vermilion IRS reduces its teaching staff and operates only three classrooms, a fourth classroom is rented by the Separate School Board and it appears the Board provides its own teacher. [Item No 05165]

Questions again about connections between the various institutions at Fort Vermilion. Auditors claim it is difficult to determine whether the janitor is drawing a salary from the Separate School to supplement that earned the Government of Indian Affairs. [Item No. 04880] [Item No. 04885]

1964 - 1965 Government of Indian Affairs enters into an agreement with the Fort Vermilion Separate School District No. 26 which provides for the integrated education of Indian children in the schools under the administration of the Fort Vermilion School District throughout Northern Alberta. Provision concerning the lease and maintenance of the Residential School building to the Separate School District is included as is the provision that the Government pay tuition fees based on the costs of operation. This agreement has not been located, however, an unsigned Treasury Board request [Item No. 05306] lists details of this agreement.

1964 The Fort Vermilion Indian Residential school to be operated not as a school but as a Hostel. [Item No. 05143]

1965 After September 1964, the Government continues to administer the Hostel for students in attendance at the Separate School who live in the Hostel. [Item 04802]

1967 While it bears the name of a Residential School, operates as a Hostel and there is complete integration between the Indian and non-Indian pupils who attend the Roman Catholic Separate School. [Item No.04977]

1968 Hostel closes August 28, 1968. [Item No. 00728] Talks to erect cottage style residences supervised by Indian house parents do not materialize. [Item No. 06720]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 1938** Discussion regarding the attendance of students from distant reserves. [Item Nos. 05462A and 05462B, 05465, 05466]
- 1939** Report on truant students. [Item Nos. 05475, 05503]
- 1940** More students are coming to the residential school because some parents will lose pension rights if they do not send their children to school. [Item No. 05478]
- 1942** Details of an ongoing discussion regarding the transportation of children from distant reserves. [Item Nos.05504]

Fire

Fort Vermilion IRS had two major fires in its history. Attendance at school was interrupted only briefly.

- 1914** Fire destroys the school, church, and convent on March 16; but the new building is supposed to be ready in the spring. The sisters, the infirm and the students move into the priests' house. The priests move to the laundry. Two weeks after the fire, students return to school. [Item Nos. 00004, 00012, ██████████]
- 1932** ██████████
██████████ Another document states that the girls' building was destroyed by fire on October 7, 1932. In a 1933 memorandum the bishop requests a contribution of \$3500 from the government to help cover rebuilding costs. [Item No. 00145]
- 1933** A new school is under construction. [Item No. 00132] and is completed in the summer. [Item No 00136]

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Name	Position	Tenure Dates
Father Celestin Henri Jousard	Superior of the Mission	1900 to July 1902
Father Lecorre	Director of the Mission	July 1902 to June 1903
Father Celestin Henri Jousard	Director of the Mission	June 1903 to June 1909
Father LeTreste	Superior of the Mission	August 1909 to?
Father Rault	Superior of the Mission	May 1914 to July 1914
Father Bourquene	Superior of the Mission	July 1914 to June 1915
Father J. V. LeTreste	Superior of the Mission	November 1916 to July 1917

Father J. Habay	Superior of the Mission	August 1917 to July 1926
Father LeTreste	Superior of the Mission	July 1926 to July 1927
Father J. Habay	Superior of the Mission	July 1927 to 1938
Father J. Huguerre	Principal	1938 to 1942 [absent for six months in 1938]
Father Joseph Angin	Principal	1938
Father J. Quemeneur	Reverend Father Superior	1938 to 1939
Father Bernard Rainville	Principal	1942 to 1949
Father Paul Serrand	Principal	1949 to 1957
Sister Denise Helene	Signs as Principal or Senior Teacher	1958 to 1961
Father G. Tessier	Principal	1957 to 1964
Father Benoit Guimont	Principal	1963/64 to 1968

Narrative Completed: April 19, 2006

Narrative Updated: mmmm dd, yyyy

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



National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA