

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.

St. Joseph's (Fort William) IRS
School Narrative

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

NAME OF SCHOOL and VARIANTS

Immaculate Conception Orphan Asylum	[SJS-000012; SJS-000017]
St. Joseph Convent Orphanage School	[SJS-000838; SJS-000839]
St. Joseph's Indian Home	[SJS-000146; SJS-000857]
Fort William Orphanage Boarding School	[SJS-000153]
St. Joseph's Home	[SJS-000153]
St. Joseph's Orphanage	[SJS-000189; SJS-000189a; SJS-000844]
St. Joseph's Indian Industrial School	[SJS-000859]
Fort William Orphanage	[SJS-000262; SJS-000844]
Fort William Indian Boarding School	[SJS-000212]
St. Joseph's Residential School	[SJS-000300; SJS-000477]
Fort William Indian Residential School	[SJS-000390; SJS-000458]
St. Joseph's Boarding School	[SJS-000859; SJS-000484; SJS-000437; SJS-000477]

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

- 1870 Immaculate Conception Orphan Asylum was established by nuns affiliated with the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary to educate young Native girls. Not long after the school's opening, it was compelled to enrol destitute non-Native children. [SJS-000012; SJS-000017; SJS-000023; SJS-000153]
- 1885 St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School came under the charge of the Sisters of St. Joseph. [SJS-000835; SJS-000153]
- 1895 On April 10, the orphanage building and Roman Catholic Church were destroyed by fire . [SJS-000078; SJS-000078a; SJS-000080; SJS-000153] The rebuilding of the school and church were financed by the Fort William Band. [SJS-000081; SJS-000094; SJS-000091a] The new orphanage was completed in the fall. [SJS-000846]
- 1909 St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School relocated to the city of Fort William on January 8. [SJS-000859; SJS-000447a] Relocation was required after the school and land were expropriated by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. [SJS-000232; SJS-000213]
- 1968 As of September, St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School was used only as a hostel. [SJS-000546; SJS-000734]

CLOSING DATE(S):

- 1970 St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School closed on June 30. [SJS-000567]

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

- St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School was operated under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. It was managed between **1870** and **1884** by nuns affiliated with the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary and from **1885** to **1970** by the Sisters of St. Joseph. [SJS-000835; SJS-000012; SJS-000016; SJS-000017; SJS-000153; SJS-000158a; SJS-000390; SJS-000567]

Dates managed by Government

- St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School was never managed by the Federal Government. In 1959, the Government officially declared it a private institution to which the Crown would pay fees for the maintenance and education of Indian children. [SJS-000444; SJS-000460; SJS-000577]

Dates taken over by province

- Not applicable

Dates managed by Band or other aboriginal group

- Not applicable

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School buildings were at all times owned by the Catholic Church.

- In **1882**, Immaculate Conception Orphan Asylum was a two-storey, 40' X 50' frame building. It also had two small lots attached to it used to grow vegetables. [SJS-000012; SJS-000153]
- Two principal buildings: one 45' X 60' at a cost of \$7000 (Built during the height of the railway construction with funds collected mainly from men working on the line.); the other 40' X 60'. [SJS-000059a]
- In **1898**, the school buildings consisted of the orphanage, a two-storey frame building 70' X 45', and a school, an older frame building 44' X 20'. [SJS-000848; SJS-000153]
- In **1903**, an addition 40' X 25' was added to the Orphanage to accommodate the increasing number of students. [SJS-000853]
- When St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School relocated to the city of Fort William in **1909**, the new school consisted of a 3 story brick building 78' X 40' with an addition at the back 35' X 22'. The school purchased 3 1/2 acres of land at the cost of \$3500. [SJS-000859]
- In **1913-1914**, two new wings were added to the school. [SJS-000275; SJS-000864]
- By 1916, a stable 28' X 24', store room 23' X 14' and chicken house had been added. [SJS-000866]

Day Schools

- A boys', a girls' day school and St. Joseph's Convent Orphanage were located on the Fort William Reserve. [SJS-000153; SJS-000836; SJS-000839; SJS-000840; SJS-000841; SJS-000848]

LAND

Location

Dates Owned By Government:

1870-1909

- St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School was originally located on the Fort William Indian Reserve on the banks of the Kaministiquia River near the town of Fort William. There was 1 acre of land connected to the school. [SJS-000848; SJS-000153; SJS-000857]

Dates Owned By Church:

1909-1970

- On **January 8, 1909**, St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School moved to the town of Fort William. The school was situated on 3 1/2 acres of land on the northwest corner of Franklin and Arthur Streets. [SJS-000859; SJS-000447a; SJS-000866] The school was required to relocate after the school and land were purchased by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. [SJS-000232; SJS-000213]

PHOTOS, PLANS and OTHER MEDIA

SJS-000093a	Unknown	Diagram of building plans for Fort William Reserve Indian Orphanage
SJS-000143a	1897	Sketch of boys' playground, girls' playground, day school and orphanage

GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

1870: 7
1880: 26
1890: 38
1898: 22
1910: 20
1920: 17
1930: 92
1939: 97
1940: 105
1951:135
1962: 86
1968: 64

STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES

- A letter to Parliament, dated **April 29, 1898**, stated that all the children attending St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School were from the Fort William Band. [SJS-000148]
- In **May 1905**, it was noted in correspondence that St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School had been serving 7 different bands in the area: Fort William, Savanne, Nepigon, Pays-Plat, Pic River, White River and Long Lake. [SJS-000198; SJS-000199]

- A **1962** report indicated that the majority of students attending St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School were from the Gull Bay Reserve. [SJS-000904]

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

- St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School was a Roman Catholic institution. [SJS-000086; SJS-000153] It was originally managed by nuns associated with the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary. In 1885, the Sisters of St. Joseph assumed control of the school. [SJS-000835; SJS-000033; SJS-000059a; SJS-000567]

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

1911 Agreement between the Bishop of the Diocese of Sault St. Marie and the Federal Government for the operation and management of St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School. [SJS-000262]

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Incidents (Physical):

1961 The parents of two students told the police that their children had returned from school with black eyes. [SJS-000480]

CONVICTIONS

To date, we are unaware of any convictions for abuse at St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School or of any convicted abusers present at the school.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- In addition to funding from the Government, St. Joseph's (Fort William) Indian Residential School also relied on assistance from the Government of Ontario, the city of Fort William, parents, guardians and charitable donations. [SJS-000059a; SJS-000146; SJS-000060; SJS-000147; SJS-000205; SJS-000390; SJS-000479]

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Josephine Martin	Directress	1870-1885
Sister M. Dorithea		1886-1887
Sister U. Annunciation		1888
Sister M. Vincent		1889-1890
Rev. Mother Claudia		1891
Sister M Aldegondes		1892
Sister M. Ambrose		1893-1894
Sister St. Helen of the Cross		1895
Sister N. Dionysia	Teacher/Principal	1896-1898
Sister M. Ignatia	Principal	1899-1900
Sister M. Aldegondes	Principal	1901
Sister M. Ignatia	Principal	1902-1906
Rev. Sister M. F. Clare	Principal	1907-1923
Rev. Sister Veronica	Principal	1924-1927
Rev. Sister M. St. George	Principal	1927-1932
Rev. Sister M. F. Claire	Principal	1933-1934
Rev. Sister M. Helena	Principal	1935-1936
Rev. Sister M. Rita	Principal	1936-1938
Rev. Sister M. Basilla	Principal	1938

Rev. Sister M. Eugenie	Principal	1939
Mother Dympna	Principal	1940-1943
Rev. Sister Carmen	Principal/Sister Superior	1943-1949
Rev. Sister Thomasina	Superintendent/Principal	1949-1952
Rev. Sister M. Paula	Sister Superior/Principal	1952-1954
Rev. Sister St. Andrew	Superintendent/Principal	1954-1958
Sister M. Carmen	Principal	1958-1959
Rev. Sister Thomasina	Principal	1959
Rev. Sister St. Alban	Superintendent/Principal	1959-1963
Rev. Sister St. Vincent	Principal	1963-1965
Rev. Sister Immaculata	Sister Superior	1966-1967
Mary E. Duggen	Principal	1967-1970

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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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