

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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**St. Bernard's (Grouard) Indian Residential School (IRS)**  
**School Narrative**  
May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005

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

**NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS**

- 1894 to 1937 St. Bernard's Indian Residential School [002950]  
St. Bernard's Mission [002764]  
R.C. Boarding School (at St. Bernard's Mission) [002774].
- 1937 to 1958 Grouard IRS [002758]  
Roman Catholic School at Lesser Slave Lake [002711]  
Lesser Slave Lake School [002786]  
Old school at Lesser Slave Lake [002716].

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY**

- 1894 According to the history of the school, written by the Provincial Supervisor of the Sisters of Providence, the Grouard Mission was first established by the Oblate Fathers in 1872. The Sisters of Charity are reported to have arrived 22 years later to take care of 30 orphans and establish a school. This would suggest that the St. Bernard's school was established around 1894 [002815]. By 1895, and possibly earlier, the school had received some financial support from the government [002764, pg.2; 002763, pg. 2].
- 1909 The Sisters of Providence also appear to have administered an eighteen-bed hospital, by the name of St. Joseph's Hospital, on the school grounds. The hospital was open from 1909 until a fire at the school in 1933 claimed the building. The hospital was never rebuilt [002815].
- 1940 The Bishop was interested in turning the focus of the school toward Manual training and domestic sciences. As part of this program, sewing machines were purchased for the girls [002563].
- 1941 The thirteen pupils enrolled in the "Domestic School of Grouard" were described as being "picked from Jousard, Sturgeon Lake, Wabasca, Fort Vermilion, and Grouard Residential Schools". It was suggested that the focus on vocational studies also be applied to the boys at Grouard [002564].
- The Manual Training program was officially instituted as part of the regular curriculum at the school [002566].
- 1942 The Vocational curriculum was expanded to include weaving, beading and leatherwork [002595], as well as a printing shop for the "Grouard Echoes" newsletter [002579] and a dark room for photography [003164].
- 1943 A Manual Training building, or "factory", was being built [002999] and the vocational courses at the school expanded to include more "Indian Handicrafts". The "Grouard Indian Residential School Craft Project", comprising of both student and adult workers, manufactured moccasins, slippers, mitts and gloves. The school administrators also

hoped to start a small sawmill and tannery [002610, 002614, 002622].

The school may also have produced its own pottery [002615].

- 1944 The school purchased goats as part of the vocational program. The animals arrived in March of 1944 [003284] and appear to have been returned sometime after November of the same year [003299].
- 1944 The manual training building, which would also included a store and warehouse for the Grouard Indian Residential School Handicraft Project, was near completion. While awaiting the completion of the building the store functioned out of the basement of the school [003003]. The Handicraft project, which started as part of the school's vocational program, developed into a small business [002610]. By 1945 the small co-operative business, ran out of the Grouard school, was known as the "General Merchants: Manufacturers of Indian Slippers" [002649]. Documentation indicates that some of the money funding the project, also called "Reserve Industries", appears to have come from the Indians of the Lesser Slave Lake Agency [002635, 002636].
- 1945 Rabbits were purchased as part of the vocational program at the school [002652].
- 1949 The Sisters of Providence started a nursery at the school [002815]. By 1953, this nursery or kindergarten was described as follows: "The Grouard School kindergarten usually has an enrollment of 26 children of ages ranging from 2 to 5 years. The children are housed and cared for in a separate building on the school site and are under the care of a special sister. The children are orphans B white, half-breed, and Indians. Inasmuch as they are in a separate building and live together as one big family, these children are not part of the residential school" [002814]
- 1951 Day schools in the Lesser Slave Lake Superintendency were listed as: Atikameg (or St. Andrew's) and Sovereign [002832].
- 1953 Junior high school, for the female pupils, was introduced at Grouard. The girls attending high school were to be sent to convents at either McLennan or Grand Prairie [002519].
- 1954 A survey of educational facilities in Northern Alberta, proposed a five year plan which would include the construction of 2 two-classroom day schools, on the Driftpile and Sucker Creek Reserves, and the phasing out of the Grouard IRS [003013, 003315].
- 1955 A Day school opened on the Driftpile Reserve [003311].
- 1955 - 1956  
The phasing out the Grouard IRS began. These plans were described in a letter dated July 27, 1955, by the Bishop of Grouard, "it has been agreed that next September the Grouard school will keep, of Indian pupils, only the 12 from the Yukon territory, the Indian girls who are in grades 9 and 10, and the 7 or 8 small children of pre-school age in the nursery. In 1956, the remainder of the children from the Yukon will be transferred to Jousard. This year the Grouard school will transfer to Jousard the 30 other treaty children, while [the Principal] of Jousard will transfer to the Grouard school the 20 welfare department children whom he as presently" [004009].

1957 St. Bernard's was no longer an Indian boarding school by 1958; however, one document suggests that the IRS may have closed as early as 1957 [004348].

Following the closure of the IRS, the school appears to have continued to function as a Indian day school, until at least 1959, and as a residence to Metis welfare wards until 1961 [002762, 002815].

1958 A national survey by the Treasury Board indicates that Grouard Indian Residential School was closed by 1958, and as of 1977 the school had been demolished [175522A].

1959 Although closed as an IRS in 1957 or 1958, the school continued to function as a day school and to provide residence for welfare wards. In an inspection report of the St. Bernard Mission (Grouard) dated March 20 and April 15 to 20, 1959, the inspector indicated that at the time of the inspection the purpose of the school was to provide day school facilities to local Indian and Metis populations as well as welfare wards resident at the Mission [002762]. A handwritten note, appearing at the top of the report, indicated "closed".

1960 Construction began on the Grouard Public School. The previous year the Government entered into a joint agreement with the Grouard School District No. 3722. The contract indicated that the school was to have an enrolment of 300 non-Indians and 15 to 20 Indians, serving members of the Atikameg Band currently attending either the Grouard or Atikameg schools [002886].

1961 The welfare ward boarding facilities and the nursery at the former Grouard IRS closed in December when the welfare wards in residence were assigned to foster homes throughout the Province [000260, pg. 2].

The Sisters are reported to have stayed until the following June, to run the day school [002815].

1962 The Northland School Division No.61 built a vocational school at Grouard (this school appears as the "Grouard Vocational School", the "Grouard School", the "Northland School Division Vocational School", and the "Alberta Vocational Centre at Grouard"). This vocational school, targeted to open in September of 1963, was located immediately adjacent to the old St. Bernard's Mission school [000260, pg. 2]. The aim of the Vocational School was largely geared toward providing vocational training to Metis children who would otherwise not attend high school [000260], though the enrolment included some Treaty Indians as well [000282].

The Grouard Public School (of the Grouard School District No. 3722), constructed two years prior, may have become part of this new Vocational School. When the Northland School Division No. 61 was established in 1961 it brought small northern schools and school jurisdictions, such as the Grouard School District, under one umbrella [002871].

1962 It was proposed that with the closing of the Fort Vermilion Residence, students should be sent to live in the old Grouard student residence to attend the adjacent school ran by the Northland School Division [000278]. This proposal was met with some objections and to date there is no documentation to determine whether this proposal was ever carried out [0004046].

Later that year the Provincial government proposed purchasing a student residence, located near the Northland Vocational School on the old Indian Residential School site. The residence had been constructed by the Roman Catholic Church in 1957 to house welfare wards [000260]. It is unclear whether this purchase was ever made [000259], however, it is clear that by the 1963 school year the Northland Vocational School was providing residential facilities to its pupils. The residence was called “Moosehorn Lodge” [000286].

- 1964 The Principal of the Grouard Vocational School, of the Northland School Division #61, wanted the school to move more toward Alberta curriculum [003733A]. High school grades ten and eleven were introduced to the school curriculum [000267].

### **MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL**

- 1894 - 1900 St. Bernard’s Indian Residential school was under the day to day management of the Sisters of Providence from Montreal [002764, pg. 2; 002791]. The last mention of the school being run by the Sisters is in a letter dated October 1, 1900 [002801].
- 1900 - 1919 Although the Roman Catholic Church continued to operate the school under the direction of the Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska [002741], it is unclear at this time if the school was managed by the Sisters of Providence or the Oblate Order.
- 1923 - 1961 The school was Church-owned and conducted under the auspices of the Oblate Order [002976, 000092].  
The first mention of a “Principal” at the school is in 1919 [002741], however, the first indication that an Oblate Principal was in charge of the school is in a document dated September 10, 1923 [002962].

### **SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

- 1890 Documents concerning the proposal of a new boys building in 1929 indicate that the old building, one of the school’s first constructions, was built 36 years ago. This would suggest that the original Church-owned boys building was erected around 1890 [002913; 002901, pg. 2].
- 1909 The St. Joseph’s Hospital, which was owned and operated by the Sisters of Providence [000002, pg.1] and located on the school grounds, opened in 1909 [002815]. The hospital remained in operation until a fire at the school in 1933 claimed the building [000009]. The hospital was never rebuilt.
- 1925 New classrooms opened at the school [002947].  
Concern was expressed over the water supply system at the school; water was being hauled from a river over 1600 ft away [002938]. A pressure pump, piping, and gas engine were approved to draw water from the lake [002939].
- 1929 Approval was issued to provide the school with electrical lighting [002910].  
The proposal for a new boys dormitory was denied due to lack of funds [002907].

1931 A general description of the school, including how each buildings was provided with heat and lighting, appears in a March inspection report. This document also mentions outdoor toilets and how water was pumped from the lake in summer and hauled manually in the winter [002901].

1932 Various requests for a new boys building (beginning in 1929) were granted in 1932. Documentation discussing the fire at the school in 1933 and problems identified with the heating system in the boys dormitory in 1952 , indicate that a boys residence building was constructed in 1932 [002697].

Documents also suggest that the intention was to eventually use this new building as a gymnasium or workshop if and when a whole new school was built [002898].

1933 A fire on November 26, 1933 destroyed the following five buildings on the school grounds: the St. Joseph's hospital, two other buildings containing three classrooms, the milk house and the laundry [000011]. The boys building, constructed the previous year, was saved from the fire [000011, pg. 1], as was the convent and the Father's Residence [006023, pg. 2].

Documentation concerning the fire mentions reimbursement for the construction of an annex to the girls building. Though this documentation does not specify when this construction took place, there is some indication that this annex may have been built in 1932 [000002, pg. 2, 000057].

1935 The following work appears to have been undertaken at the school [000069, 000137]:

- a new building with four classrooms, laundry, dormitory, living quarters, and sewing room for the older girls
- ice house and pantry
- cow barn

1937 The following work appears to have been undertaken at the school [003123]:

- sidewalks around the boys building
- concrete floor in the school house basement
- root cellar

1938 The following work appears to have been undertaken at the school [003066, pg. 2; 003074]:

- sidewalks around the boys building
- repairs to foundation of the convent and Principal's residence
- work on sewers and water pipes
- digging of well at cow barn

Plans were made to convert the basement of the classroom block into a Manual Training shop [002561].

1939 After concern was expressed over the water supply at the school (beginning in 1938) an inspector was sent to investigate the situation [000342, 000321A]. Shortly after, work began on digging a new water well [000350A].

As part of the water supply inspections, a map of the buildings on the school grounds was made [see the "Photos, Plans and Other Media" section of this narrative].

1940 The well was successfully dug, and a small wooden pump house equipped with a pump and piping was constructed [000307].

1943 A Manual Training building, or “factory”, was being built on school grounds [002999, 002637].

1944 Steam bath was erected at the school [004502].

A new lighting system was installed in the vocational building and an additional small building was acquired to house the lighting plant [002649].

1947 The following work appears to have been undertaken at the school [003182]:

- laying pitch on roof
- installing septic tank and plumbing
- painting and insulating the school

Electrical plant was destroyed by fire [003229].

Additional well was dug for the school water supply [003225].

1948 A new lighting plant was installed to replace the one lost in the fire on December 31, 1947 [003243].

1949 The school was painted [003252].

1953 Proposal was made to convert the refectory into a Junior High School unit, containing a dormitory for 19 girls, one classroom and a recreation room [002681]. Despite initial objections [002677], the Junior High School unit was constructed and was running by December of 1953 [002519, 003007].

1957 In 1962, the Northland School Division expressed the desire to buy, from the Roman Catholic Church, a student residence located at the old St. Bernard’s school. It is noted that this residence was constructed five years previous, suggesting that in 1957 a new student residence for welfare wards was erected [000260].

### **School Buildings Dates for Grouard Public School (operated by Grouard School District No. 3722)**

1960 Government assisted the Grouard School district in the construction of a new elementary wing at the Grouard Public school (located at the site of the old IRS) [003752].

### **School Buildings Dates for Grouard Joint Vocational School (operated by Northland School Division #61):**

1963 Following the opening of the Grouard Vocational School by the Northland School Division in 1963, the residence itself (but not the land) appears to have been sold to accommodate students enrolled in the new vocational school [000260, pg.2]. The residence, purchased from the Church, was renovated and sewer and water systems were extended. Also, the vocational wing at the school was completed, seven teacherages

were constructed and one was purchased [003432B]. The Vocational school residence was entitled the “Moosehorn Lodge” [000286].

1964 New classroom wing and shop were being built at the Grouard Vocational School [004701A].

1965 An addition to the existing residence was constructed to accommodate more female residents [003690B].

### **Final disposition of Buildings**

1977 In a national survey, reporting on the “status of closed student residences as of June 1977,” the Grouard IRS is referred to as demolished [175522A].

### **LAND**

Grouard IRS, located within Treaty Area 8 [Source - “Alberta Indian Residential Schools,” Resource Data Division, Alberta Environmental Protection, 1996], was on the west end of Lesser Slave Lake [003211]. Located “35 miles across Lesser Slave Lake from Grouard, in the federal district of Peace River” [002898], the school is reported to have been 7-9 miles from the Oblate Mission farm [003085; 002901, pg. 3]. One document describes the school as 13 miles from the village of Grouard [000342A], another indicates that it was some 3 miles from the town of Grouard [003195].

1935 Flooding in the Grouard Region causes difficulties with communication and lack of road faculties [000085].

1938 Drought conditions are reported to be failing crops and creating food shortages at the schools in the Region [003086, 003088].

### **Farm Operations**

1900 In a meeting concerning the schools in this region, the prospect of farm operations are discussed [002797, pg. 4].

1925 In a sketch of the school, dated September of 1925, it is clear that there was a garden [002946, pg. 2].

1931 An Inspection report from March of 1931, describes the Mission farm which supplied food to the school [002901, pg. 3]. It also indicates that some cows were kept at the school for milking purposes.

1938 The yield of the school’s garden is reported to be affected by the drought. It is also reported that due to administrative changes, the Grouard IRS no longer received benefits from the Oblate Mission Farm, which had been leased out [003085].

1946 The boys at the school tended a garden as part of their vocational training [002657, pg. 2; 004089].

1950 Audit report outlines the yield of the school farm [002818].



## **Final disposition of Land**

Throughout its history as a residential school, St. Bernard's was acknowledged to be a Church-owned institution [002747], and it appears that this was also referring to the land upon which the school was built. Sometime between 1920 and 1950, ownership of the acres of land cultivated by the Mission farm, were transferred from the Apostolic Vicariate to the Oblate Fathers [002818]. The land appears to have been granted to the Church by the government for use as a residential school [002797, pg. 4, 5]. By 1977 the land where the school had been located belonged to the government [175522A].

1977 In a national survey, reporting on the "status of closed student residences as of June 1977," the Grouard IRS is noted to as being on Government land [175522A].

## **PHOTOS, PLANS AND OTHER MEDIA**

| Item #           | Date       | Description   |
|------------------|------------|---|
| 002916           | 00/00/000  | Floor plan sketch of the dormitory building first floor, including the refectory, recreation room, cloak room, classrooms, and cupboard.  |
| 002915           | 00/00/0000 | Floor plan sketch of the dormitory building second floor, including two rooms, the dormitory, and what appears to be an infirmary (this appears to be part of the same floor plan sketch as above).   |
| 002946,<br>pg. 2 | 09/29/1925 | This sketch shows the various buildings on the school site and the proposed water intake system.  |
| 000349           | 01/31/1939 | Layout of school buildings and proposed new well site.  |
| 003015           | 06/00/1999 | These three photographs show the Church and an adjacent school building. On the reverse side of the pictures, it is noted that these are "circa 1931 or 1937". Based on other site plans and maps, it would seem that the school building featured in these photos is the boys dormitory. |

## **GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME**

| Year | Number of Students             |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 1896 | 20 grant earning pupils        |
| 1900 | 40 grant earning pupils        |
| 1913 | number of grant earning pupils |

|      |  |
|------|--|
|      | reduced to 25 (when St. Bruno's IRS is opened)   |
| 1914 | number of grant earning pupils further reduced to 15   |
| 1919 | actual enrollment 26 pupils<br>(due to flu and small pox epidemic),<br>per capita grant of 15 increased to 25                                      |
| 1922 | per capita grant raised to 30 (to accommodate<br>children orphaned from the above epidemic)  |
| 1925 | 40 grant earning pupils, with an actual enrollment of 50   |
| 1927 | 50 grant earning pupils  |
| 1931 | 71 pupils enrolled   |
| 1934 | 75 grant earning pupils  |
| 1938 | 119 pupils on roll   |
| 1941 | 134 pupils on quarterly return, grant allowed for 90   |
| 1942 | 122 pupils on quarterly return, grant allowed for 90   |
| 1943 | 107 pupils on quarterly return, grant allowed for 90   |
| 1944 | 95 pupils on quarterly return  |
| 1945 | 93 pupils on quarterly return  |
| 1946 | 106 pupils on quarterly return   |
| 1947 | actual enrollment of 200 pupils;<br>104 pupils on quarterly return   |
| 1948 | 91 pupils on quarterly return  |
| 1949 | 188 pupils enrolled, of which 100 are Metis;<br>74 pupils listed on quarterly return,<br>enrollment at the new Kindergarten/Pre-school was 15 - 20 |
| 1950 | 152 pupils enrolled: 3 day pupil, 68 Indian,<br>66 non-Indian Government wards, 15 non-Indian Others   |
| 1951 | 175 pupils enrolled: 50 Indian,<br>67 "Child Welfare", and 34 "Metis"  |
| 1952 | Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment as 190 pupils,<br>56 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians  |

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1953 | Kindergarten/Pre-school enrollment was 25;<br>Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment as 227 pupils,<br>64 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians   |
| 1954 | 92 pupils in residence: 64 Indian, 6 nursery,<br>15 Yukon, and 7 grade nine girls;<br>Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment as 252 pupils,<br>74 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians   |
| 1955 | Proposed transfers: approximately 30 Indian pupils<br>to be transferred to another school, keeping 12 pupils from<br>Yukon territory, in exchange for accepting about 20<br>non-Indian pupils; December Quarterly return lists 14 pupils;<br>Half-Yearly return for December lists the total enrollment as<br>237 pupils, 21 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians |
| 1956 | Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment<br>as 240 pupils, 15 of whom are listed as<br>Treaty Indians; Quarterly return lists 12 pupils.   |
| 1957 | Quarterly return lists 9 pupils.  |
| 1958 | Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment as 239 pupils,<br>10 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians   |
| 1959 | Half-Yearly return lists the total enrollment as 211 pupils,<br>8 of whom are listed as Treaty Indians  |

**Enrolment Statistics for Grouard Joint Vocational School  
(operated by Northland School Division #61):**

1963            18 girls and 35 boys in residence, and 80 enrolled in vocational school  
1965            100 students in residence, 35 of whom are registered Indians  
1968            95 Indian pupils attended grades 9 through 12 in the 1967/68 school year.  
1971            15 Indian pupils in attendance

**STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES**

The following captures general changes in the catchment area of the school over time.  
It is possible that children from these bands/reserves attended Grouard IRS before and or after  
the dates recorded here.

Students from, at least, the following bands attended St. Bernard's IRS:

1913    It appears that the school was designed to serve the Reserves of the Lesser Slave Lake  
area, namely the Grouard, Driftpile and Sucker Creek Reserves.

- 1930 Indians from the Tustawits Reserve, and the following Beaver reserves: Hay Lakes, Clear Hills, and Horse lake, are reported to have refused to send their children to the Grouard school.
- 1936 Children from the Whitefish Lake area are reported to be in attendance at Grouard.
- 1940 Children from the Sawridge Band, the Swan River Band, Trout Lake Band and the Duncan's band are reported to be in attendance at Grouard.
- 1941 Quarterly Return forms were in use at the school by 1941. Returns in this year list the following bands/reserves, in addition to those listed above:
- Slave Lake, Wabasca, Hudson Hope, Fort Vermilion, Big Foot, Sturgeon Lake, Pipestone Creek, Horse Lake, Bigstone, Kinuso (Kinosow, Kinnosayo), Prairie Lake Dunvegan, Moberly Lake, Lubicon (Lubican, Lubicane, Laboucane) Lake
- 1942 Quarterly returns from this year also contain Beaver among the list of reserves and bands sending children to the school.
- 1943 Quarterly returns from this year indicate that Clear Hills, Hay Lake, and Hay Bay are among the reserves and bands sending children to the school.
- 1944 The Boyer River Band was added to the list of names.
- 1945 Quarterly returns from this year also list the following bands/reserves:
- Red River, Fort St. John, Janvier, Lower Post, Teslin Lake (Yukon Territory)
- 1946 Quarterly returns from this year also list the following bands/reserves:
- Lousing Creek (Yukon Territory), Atlin (Yukon Territory), Pitcher Creek Liard (Stikine Agency, possibly the Yukon Territory), Carmack (Ross River, Yukon Territory)
- 1948 The La jus Band was added to the list of names.
- 1950 Children from the Mayo Band (Yukon territory) and the Cree-Chipewyan Band are reported to be in attendance at the school.
- 1951 Children from the Waterways Band are reported to be in attendance at the school.
- 1955 Half-Yearly returns from this year also list the following bands/reserves:
- Lencing Creek, Tallcree

There may be alternate ways of spelling these band names.

## **RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

### **The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Grouard & The Oblates of Mary Immaculate:**

The St. Bernard's school was never a government-owned institution. From 1923 to 1961 The school was owned and conducted under the auspices of the Oblate Order [002976, 000092]. As such, the appointment of teaching and domestic staff at the school was left to the church authorities. The position of Principal at the school was based on a nomination from the Vicar Apostolic, pending approval from the Director [002749].

The Diocesan Vicar Apostolic was actively involved in the affairs of Grouard IRS. The Grouard Mission, where the St. Bernard's school was located, "was for many years the residence of the Vicar Apostolic until 1943" [003297]. The Vicar Apostolic appears to have been the primary correspondent with the government regarding the operation of the school, including matters such as: maintenance, construction, and repairs to the school [000092]; the nomination of principals [002749]; and changing the name of the school [002758]. In addition, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Grouard appears to be the entity through which funds were routed up until 1956 both for per capita payments as well as for larger capital expenditures [002987].

During the years in which the school functioned as an IRS, "The usual practice in the case of Northern schools was to have the church authorities undertake the construction of inexpensive buildings and to present accounts for materials and labour up to the amount the Department's grant" [002898]. From 1938 to 1956, such transactions appear to have been completed through the Bishop directly, as well as through the Administrator of La Corporation Episcopal C.R. de Grouard [003231]. During this period schools in the Grouard Diocese were often dealt with financially as a unit [002973]. In 1956, per capita grants were sent directly to the school, no longer distributed through the Episcopal Corp. in McLennan [003005, 003006].

### **The Sisters of Charity of Providence:**

St. Bernard's Indian Residential school was under the day to day management of the Sisters of Providence from Montreal from 1894 to 1900 [002764, pg. 2; 002791]. The last mention of the school being run by the Sisters is in a letter dated October 1, 1900 [002801].

During the administration of the school by the Oblate fathers, the Sisters appear to have worked as both teachers and as domestic staff. There were fifteen Sisters of Charity belonging to the Order of Providence on the staff at Grouard in 1950 [002818].

Besides working in the school as teachers and domestic staff, the Sisters also operated a hospital and a nursery at the school. The St. Joseph's Hospital was open from 1909 until 1933. The pre-school nursery/kindergarten opened in 1949, and appears to have ran until at least 1961 [002815].

The appointment of Sisters at the school, at least as of 1944, appears to have been coordinated by the Mother Superior General for the Sisters of Charity of Providence [002999, 003001].

## **WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

The 1911 Standard Agreement for the Operation of Grouard IRS has not been located.

A 1960 contract wherein Her Majesty the Queen, represented by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration [“Minister”], entered into an agreement with the Board of Trustees of the Grouard School District No. 3722 [referred to as “Board” in contract] to share between them the cost of a school for Indian and non-Indian children, to be known as the Grouard Public School [002877].

Joint School Submission for the contribution of the Government to a new joint school, the “Grouard Vocational School”, in 1965. The contracting party, the Northland School Division #61, was submitting to build a new addition to the existing school dormitory [003690B].

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

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

The following school incidents, listed chronologically, comprise all known identifiable complaints and/or allegations received by government officials and all available information regarding the follow-up and outcome.

#### **Incidents (Sexual)**

No information found.

#### **Incidents (Physical)**

No information found.

#### **Incidents (Student on Student)**

No information found.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Fires:**

In the history of the school written by the Sisters of Providence, it was reported that the school experienced fires in 1910, 1933, 1937, and 1941 [002815].

1932 It appears that there may have been a fire at the school in 1932 [000059].

1933 On November 26, 1933 a fire at the school destroyed the hospital, two classroom buildings, the milk house and the laundry [000011]. Plans were made to accommodate classroom instruction in the boys and girls wings of the school [000011, pg. 2]. Laundry was to be done daily in the Bishop’s residence and every other week at the Jousard IRS [000019, pg. 2]. The cause of the fire was reported to be sparks from the chimney starting the roof of the hospital on fire [006023, pg. 2]. An inventory of all items lost in the fire was submitted to the government [000019, pg 3-5]. The Bishop indicated that none of the Indian Schools, including Grouard, were insured for fire damage [000019, pg. 2].

1947 Electrical plant was destroyed by fire on December 31, 1946 [003229].

#### **Truancy and Complaints:**

- 1913 The Indians of the Sucker Creek and Driftpile Reserves preferred to have their children at Joussard IRS as they were nearer home than when at Grouard IRS [002709].
- 1914 Ten children were transferred to Grouard IRS from the Joussard IRS due to lack of dormitory space. Children were returned to Joussard after parents complained [002717].
- 1930 Indians from the Tustawits Reserve, and the following Beaver reserves: Hay Lakes, Clear Hills, and Horse lake, are reported to have refused to send their children to the Grouard school [006026].
- 1933 Agent reported going to Faust concerning truant children not attending St. Bernard's school [006024A].

Agent reported about an individual who refused to send her child to school and about another individual who was described as hanging around St. Bernard's IRS and disturbing order [006023A, pg. 2].

- 1940 A student at Youville IRS, described as "a great deal of trouble" and a "bad influence", was to be transferred to another institution better suited for those in need of "strict supervision". It was suggested that the child be sent to Grouard IRS [000262, 000276].
- 1941 Children transferred from Youville to Grouard were to be escorted by the R.C.M.P. from one school to the other [000275]. This may be the same individual described above.

Circa

- 1945 A statement taken from a former student of Grouard IRS is contained in a research project report conducted at the University of Calgary in 1976 [004004]. The student, who alleges attendance at the IRS in 1945, comments on various aspects of student life at the school, including:
- being punished for speaking Cree (pg. 5)
  - the children drinking water from a source different to the staff (pg. 6)
  - being taken to the school by the RCMP (pg. 7- 8)
  - never seeing her parents again, despite their efforts to take her home from the school (pg. 8- 9)
  - the "terrible food" they were given (pg. 9 - 10)
- 1947 Indian agent reported that the Residential Schools of Grouard, Joussard, and Sturgeon Lake were very much understaffed [003185A].
- 1948 Parent indicated that she wanted her children to attend Grouard on a day school basis and that attempts to make such arrangements through Father Tessier had not proved successful. Her request was granted, however the government indicated that any similar application during the 1948-1949 school year would be refused [000018, 000019, 000023].

## **Complaints relating to the Grouard Joint Vocational School (operated by Northland School Division #61):**

1965 Parent objected to her daughter attending the Grouard Vocational School, due to the “lack of supervision and constant mix-up with the boys” [003698, 003699, 003699A].

In a meeting of the Northland School Division Advisory Committee, several questions are posed to address rumors concerning the dormitory, the school, parents and local relationships [003729A].

1966 Bishop complained about the Principal of the Grouard Vocational School [004508]. It appears that dropouts were a problem at the school [004003].

1970 Indians of the Grouard, Salt Prairie and Sucker Creek reserves complained about High school grades having been moved out of the Grouard Vocational school and their children being bussed to High Prairie for High School courses [000304A]. Over the years it appears that the school had introduced more of an academic focus and when it tried to revert back to its original vocational objectives, by organizing an interchange of pupils with the High Prairie School Division, it was met with parental resistance [000250].

### **Health Concerns:**

1918 A breakout of Spanish influenza in Northern Alberta left many children in the Region orphaned [002725]. Over the next couple of years efforts were made to accommodate these children in the Residential school. The government indicated that in recruiting pupils for the schools preference should be given to orphan and destitute children [002740].

1922 Pupilage continued to increase due to the number of children left orphaned after the flu epidemic of 1918 and the small pox epidemic of 1921 [002746].

1933 The hospital was lost in a major fire at the school. The Agent reported that the school had requested medical supplies [000009].

1951 An x-ray survey done at the school, beginning in 1947, revealed what was described as a near epidemic of tuberculosis at the school [006017, 006017A, 006017B]. It was recommended that all Indian children be kept out of the school until proper medical provisions could be made [002503].

### **Student Deaths:**

1936 A child was found dead in his bed at the school [003302, 003303]. The RCMP reported that there were “no marks of violence” on the child’s body.

### **School Policies:**

1900 A meeting was held between representatives of the Diocese of Athabaska and a Commissioner from the Government to discuss the education of Indian children in the region [002797].



- it was agreed that the Government would provide per capita grants and the Church would undertake to assume all duties and responsibilities towards pupils (page 2).
- children under the age of 4 years of age unless orphans, would not be taken into schools (page 2)
- The Administrator [of the Diocese] asked whether parents could be prevented from taking their children from school if placed there with a stipulation to remain until they reached a certain age. He was told that if the schools were given the status of “industrial” schools, as had been done elsewhere, parents could be prevented (page 3), as outlined under Section 11, Cap 38, 37-38 (page 6)
- it was also “considered preferable that children stay at the missions when that is possible” during vacations (page 3).

“It was the policy of the Government to provide in every part of the country, as far as circumstances would permit, for the education of Indian children” [002796, pg.2].

- 1950 A large number of Metis children were reported to be attending Grouard IRS. The government indicated that, “Children who are not recognised as Indian should only be permitted to attend Church-owned residential schools” [001908].
- 1953 In response to a proposal to introduce a Junior High to the Grouard school, the Superintendent of Education asked that the Inspector of Schools, “should keep in mind the government’s policy of endeavoring to secure the education of Indian children in association with non-Indians whenever possible” [002677].
- 1953 Regulation No. 7 from the Indian School Bulletin stated that, “The textbooks shall, subject to any authorized by the Superintendent, be those prescribed for the Province or territory in which the school is situated” [002702, 002703].

**Other:**

Routine inspections of the school, domestic staff, and classroom inspections of teachers, were conducted throughout the history of the school. Inspections done by the Indian Agent, or someone acting in this capacity, started as early as 1913 [002716]. Inspections were conducted by Federal Government Inspectors at least as early as 1919 [002727]. Inspections conducted by the Provincial Inspector of Public Schools for the Department of Indian Affairs, began as early as 1925 [002950].

**PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS**

| Name                               | Position            | Tenure Dates                        | Comments  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Rev. Father <b>Y.M. Floch</b>      | Principal           | September 1923 to October 1935      | <p>Documentation suggests that Father Floch came to Grouard IRS from Joussard IRS sometime between 1919 and 1923.</p> <p>There is a single reference to <b>Father Falher</b> as the Principal of St. Bernard's dated November 29, 1927. Other documentation suggests that he was living at the Grouard Mission, acting in the capacity of a Diocesan Administrator, at this time and that the Principal of the school was Father Floch. It is possible that this reference to Father Falher as Principal of the school was a mistake, or that he was temporarily acting Principal in the absence of Father Floch.</p> |
| Rev. Father <b>C. Falher</b>       | Principal           | October 1935 to at least March 1939 | <p>Transferred to the Principalship from Joussard IRS, to succeed Father Floch. During this time period there is one reference, dated March 31, 1936, to Rev. Father <b>A. Charest</b> as principal of the school. As above, this appears to be either an error or Father Charest was acting Principal in the absence of Father Falher.</p>   |
| Rev. Father <b>F. Joseph Habay</b> | Principal           | May 1939 to April 1944              |   |
| Rev. Father <b>Gerard Forcade</b>  | Assistant Principal | January 1941 to November 1945       |   |

|                                      |  |                                |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Rev. Father F. Gerard Tessier</b> | Principal                                | May 1945 to September 1951     |  |
| <b>Rev. Father A. Brucket</b>        | Assistant Principal                      | The year ending March 31, 1950 | From 1947 to 1953 Father Brucket appears on documentation referring to the Grouard Mission, though it is unclear if he held any position at the school other than that noted here. |
| <b>Rev. Father Benoit Guimont</b>    | Principal                                | August 1951 to July 1959       |  |
| <b>Rev. Father L.P. Lachance</b>     | Principal of Grouard School (Dist.3722)  | December 1959 to August 1960   |  |
| <b>Gaetan Cormier</b>                | Principal of Grouard School (Dist. 3722) | August 1960 to 1963            |  |
| <b>W.C. Thomas</b>                   | Principal, Grouard Vocational School     | January 1963 to February 1965  | <b>Father Montmigny</b> is referred to as the Director of the Grouard Mission during this time.  |

**Narrative Completed: December 13, 2004**

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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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