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.

Immaculate Conception RS School Narrative

November 7, 2005

This School Narrative summarizes documents that provide an overview of the history and administration of the school.

NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS

Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School [ICU-000107]
Aklavik R.C. Boarding School [AEDC-010038]
Immaculate Conception Residential School [ICU-000296]
Mary Immaculate Conception Residential School [NWTG-001626]
Mary Immaculate RC Residential School [NWTG-000115[001-001]]

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

1920s A letter from the Supervisor of the Training Division (Mines and Resources) advises Colonel Neary (Supt. of Education, Indian Affairs Branch, Mines and Resources) that the government is not quite sure when the residential school was opened:

"For several years the Department refused to recognize the Aklavik R.C. Residential School. Our files, therefore, show no record of its construction. Right Reverend Bishop Breynat, O.M.I., in a letter dated October 6, 1923, offered to build a residential school to accommodate up to thirty pupils for a grant of \$30,000. He stated that with the help that was available such as carpenters ... he was able to construct the school for the above amount. This is the only reference to the cost of either of these schools (Aklavik R.C. & Anglican)..." [ICU-000216].

- A report indicates that Roman Catholic Church established a mission and school at Aklavik in 1926 and that a small hospital was added to the school in 1927 [NWTG-000077].
 - An undated list of Schools in the N.W.T. notes that the Aklavik R.C. Residential School known as Mary Immaculate was opened in 1926 [NWTG-001626]
- The Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs notes that "A[t]he Roman Catholic Church, at its own expense, erected a boarding school for Indian Children at Aklavik, in the Mackenzie Delta, N.W.T." [AEDC-010038, pg. 14].
- An undated document titled "Mission Residential Schools at Aklavik" notes that the Aklavik R.C. Residential School was built in 1931 [NWT-003348]. Another undated document notes "since 1931 the Roman Catholic Church had been operating a residential school in Aklavik" [NWT -003344].
- Policy documents indicate that the former administrative and supervisory staff from Immaculate Conception were 'transplanted' into similar positions in the new Inuvik residence (Grollier Hall) [NWT-000023].

An undated document titled "Mission Residential Schools at Aklavik" notes that the Aklavik R.C. Residential School closed on June 30, 1959 [NWT-003348].

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

- The Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs notes that "[t]he Roman Catholic Church, at its own expense, erected a boarding school for Indian Children at Aklavik, in the Mackenzie Delta, N.W.T. The department has agreed to provide a per capita grant" [AEDC-010038].
 - Aklavik R.C. School appears on a list of N.W.T. schools which states the last return was dated June 30, 1927 [NWTG-000056].
- A series of correspondence between Crown representatives and Roman Catholic Church representatives involve discussions of per capita rates for students in R.C. schools in the N.W.T. The rates paid to Aklavik R.C. RS are slightly higher than other schools in the North because of the higher expenses and particularly the higher freight costs incurred in this community [NWTG-001590[000-001][001-001]; NWTG-001591; NWTG-00076; NWTG-001598[000-008][004-008][008-008]].
- 1930 Mary Immaculate RC Aklavik Day School appears on a list of grants paid for the March, June and September quarters in 1930 [NWTG-000094].
- 1931 Letter, March 3, 1931, to Rev. Sister McQuillan, Principal of the residential school, stating that the department will arrange to forward 40 desks to the school in the summer of 1931 [ICU-000008].
 - Letter, May 5, 1931, from the department to Rev. Sister McQuillan, Principal of the residential school, indicating that O.M.I. Bishop Breynat was personally involved in requesting the department to obtain an electric generator for the school [ICU-000010]. Related correspondence indicate the requested equipment would be shipped to the school from Blood R.C. Residential School [ICU-000011; ICU-000014].
- 1933 Memorandum notes that Federal government grants were paid to the R.C. Mission's day school at Aklavik for the period ending September 1933 and for the maintenance of destitute children at the residential school [NWTG-001633].
- 1934 A series of correspondence indicates a discussion regarding responsibility for paying for laundry equipment at Immaculate Conception. A letter from the Departmental Secretary indicates this was a church owned school and indicates that there is some question as to whether the Department would pay for the purchase of laundry equipment [ICU-000042]. Subsequent correspondence notes that O.M.I. Father Lefebvre had obtained permission from Mr. Sutherland, Acting Supt. of Indian Education, to purchase and then bill the department for a washing machine [ICU-000045] which is confirmed by Supt. Sutherland [ICU-000046].

- A letter from the Auditor General notes the grant paid to Aklavik R.C. Residential School [NWTG-001630[001-001].
- 1935 Memorandum, March 18, 1935, identifies O.M.I. Bishop Breynat as the Vicar Apostolic of the Mackenzie, and advises the Bishop that the Department would make allowance for the payment of a night watchman at the residential school [ICU-000048].

Several other similar pieces of correspondence, show O.M.I. Bishop Breynat signing as the Vicar Apostolic of the Mackenzie during the 1930s and 1940s, and O.M.I. Bishop Trocellier signing as the Vicar Apostolic in the late 1940s and 1950s [ICU-000104; ICU-000108; ICU-000186; ICU-000194].

Memorandum, April 1, 1935, indicates that the residential and day schools of the N.W.T. are owned and operated by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Missions. The document notes that Bishop Breynat would be willing to sell or rent his school buildings [NWTG-001641[001-001]].

Letter, October 23, 1935, to Rev. Father J. C. Lefebvre, O.M.I. notes that grants have been paid for the Aklavik R.C. Residential School for the periods ending June, July and August 1935 [NWTG-000104].

Letter, February 27, 1936, from Father J. Serrurot, O.M.I. notes that the payment for the "Destitutes at the Aklavik Residential R.C. School" in the September quarter [1935] has not been received [NWTG-000112].

- 1936 Letter, February 25, 1936, indicates that the R.C. Mission operates a residential school at Aklavik and that changes have been made to the 1936-1937 NWT estimates to reflect the additional funds required due to increased enrolment [NWTG-000113].
 - Letter, July 11, 1936, lists Mary Immaculate RS at Aklavik as operated by the R.C. Church [NWTG-000115[001-001]].
- 1937 Several letters from the Bursar of the R.C. Missions of the Mackenzie, state that he hopes the Department will "refund the Diocese of Mackenzie for" amounts spent by the Diocese in purchasing equipment for the residential school [ICU-000082; ICU-000085; ICU-000089].

Letter, March 26, 1937, from Sister Aubertin, Superior, thanks the Inspector of Indian Agencies for his assistance in supplying the Roman Catholic Residential School at Aklavik with desks, reading tablets, and a primary arithmetic chart [ICU-000072].

Vouchers from 1936 and 1937 to reimburse the R.C. Episcopal Corporation of the Mackenzie for supplies purchased by the corporations for the residential school. It appears that the funds are being deposited directly into the corporation's Banque Canadienne Nationale bank account in Edmonton [ICU-000070; ICU-000088].

A letter on Diocese letterhead is signed by Bishop Breynat as the 'Bishop of Adramyte, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie' acknowledges the government's allocation of \$500 for classroom and other equipment at the residential school [ICU-000104].

- Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School appears on a list of church-owned residential schools to whom funding is being given by the Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources for new works, repairs, and purchase of equipment [ICU-000107].
- Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School appears on a list of Church-owned residential schools to which funding is being given by the Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources for the services of a night watchman [AEDC-010803].
 - Several pieces of correspondence from the 1940s show payments for reimbursement of supplies and payments for salaries of the night watchman, being paid directly into the Episcopal Corp's bank account [ICU-000177; ICU-000146; ICU-000166; ICU-000171].
- Document notes that Sister J. Dussault has requested a number of desks for the Aklavik RS [ICU-000158].
- Aklavik RS, operated by the R.C. Mission appears on a list of residential schools open in the N.W.T. in 1943-44. The N.W.T. Administration pays \$200 per annum for each destitute or orphan child maintained at the residential school [NWTG-001745[001-001]].
- There are a number of letters requesting reimbursement from the Department for purchases made by the Commission (for furniture, laundry and kitchen equipment) for the R.C. residential school at Aklavik [ICU-000205; ICU-000209; ICU-000228; ICU-000239]. In addition a number of documents provide evidence of federal payments for a share of sporting equipment and materials for shop training purchased by Immaculate Conception RS [ICU-000206; NWTG-000153[003-005]; NWTG-000152[009-014]; NWTG-000155].
- 1948 Grant received by the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie for Aklavik R.C. residential school [NWTG-000177].
- 1952 Memorandum, May 13, 1952, recommends that the matter of having R.C. Residential Schools in the N.W.T. submit reports of non-Indian pupils attending the facilities be taken up with Bishop Trocellier [NWTG-001971].
 - Memorandum, May 20, 1952, notes that cooperation is being sought to have the churches operate residences for children from outside of Aklavik attending the federal day school in this community. It notes that Bishop Trocellier advised that it was his preference to see the Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School continue to operate as a separate entity [NWTG-001973].
- Aklavik R.C. appears on a Statement of Per Capita Grants paid to schools under the jurisdiction of Rev. G. Laviolette, O.M.I. [NWTG-000482[000-001][001-001]].
 - A memorandum indicates that the four residential schools operating in the N.W.T. [including Aklavik R.C.] are staffed by personnel whose employment is controlled by church authorities [NWTG-000506[000-002].

A series of correspondence notes that the Indian Affairs Branch distinguishes schools in the N.W.T. according to government and church-owned. In relation to church-owned residential schools the payment of educational grants will be changed to cover the costs of classroom operations in addition to the per capita allowance [NWTG-000483[001-002]. A subsequent letter indicates the Indian Affairs Branch has accepted administrative responsibility for the Roman Catholic Residential School at Aklavik and that commencing the fiscal year 1954-55 all teachers in the Mission school will become federal civil servants. The branch will continue to provide textbooks and other school supplies to the school and the present tuition grants will be replaced by an annual classroom grant to cover the costs of operating the classrooms including fuel, light, janitor service and maintenance [NWTG-000483[002-002]].

- A memorandum and attached statement outlining federal government assistance to church-owned schools in the N.W.T. note that Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School receives annual operational grants for the school and per capita grants for residential students for from both the Indian Affairs Branch and the Department of Northern Administration. Monies for supplies and equipment are the responsibility of the Department of Northern Administration only, and the employment of teachers is the Church's responsibility [NWTG-000510[000-001]; NWTG-000510[001-001]].
- C A 1955 An undated article details the plans for the 1955 student residence construction program in the N.W.T. In reference to the planned construction of hostels in communities it states:

"These hostels will be built and owned by the Federal Government; those intended primarily for Indian and Eskimo children will be operated by the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, as, virtually all Indians and Eskimos in the Northwest Territories are either of these faiths. All schools operated in conjuncture with the hostels will be operated by the Government through the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, which, on April 1st, became responsible for Indian as well as other education in the Northwest Territories." [NWT-000539].

All the new schools and hostels will be financed by the Federal Government which will pay all costs with respect to the education and training of Indian and Eskimos since they are a federal responsibility. The Government of the Northwest Territories will be asked to finance a share of the cost of construction and operation of the hostels and schools in proportion to the attendance of children who are other than Indian and Eskimo [NWT-000539].

An undated document titled "Mission Residential Schools at Aklavik" notes that "The Department ... provided the necessary school supplies and equipment" for the "Aklavik R.C. Residential School" and that on April 1, 1956, the Department began employing teachers in mission owned residential schools [NWT-003348].

A letter from the Director to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie notes that payment is being sent for adjusted per capita rate for Aklavik Roman Catholic RS covering the period April 1955 to March 31, 1956 [NWTG-000545].

- An "Appropriation Ordinance" indicates a grant of \$875 was provided to Aklavik Residential (R.C.) to cover the operational costs of the school [NWT-000528].
- A Press Release provides some brief, early history of schools in the N.W.T., and states prior to 1947 when the government built its first school in the western Arctic village of Tuktoyaktuk teaching had been carried on by the [R.C. & Anglican] churches [NWT-000614].

Dates managed by Federal Government

The role of the Federal Government for the early (pre-1955) residential schools in the N.W.T. appears to have been largely financial, although a review of some supplies files from the 1930s and 1940s indicates that there was ongoing correspondence between the school administration, the Church and the various officials of the Indian Affairs Branch. As noted in the above section, "Dates managed by the Church," this correspondence indicates that while the government did not automatically assume the responsibility over costs and supplies, it would nonetheless reimburse the Church for these items when presented with prior requests and formal requisitions. It appears that the government also assisted with arranging (and possibly with the payment of) the transport of these supplies, including food, desks, beds, electrical generators, lumber, etc.

- Undated The Federal government provided necessary school supplies and equipment for the Mission Residential Schools at Aklavik [NWT-003344].
- 1931 A memorandum notes that Medical Health Officers are responsible for the sanitary conditions of their districts (including Aklavik) and that no complaints have been received regarding conditions at any of the schools [NWTG-001610].
- The Federal government began employing teachers in mission-owned residential schools including those at Aklavik [NWT-003344, NWT-003348].

Dates taken over by the NWT

Until 1969, when the Territorial Government assumed responsibility for education in the NWT, the Territorial Government's role in federal education programs in the NWT was almost exclusively financial. In the broadest terms, the Territorial Government was responsible for funding aspects of the federal education programs in proportion to the number of 'other' (non-aboriginal and Métis) students enrolled in school or residence. This ethnic distinction was based on the Federal Government's constitutional responsibility for aboriginal peoples (and so the Federal Government funded all expenses related to the education of Indian and Inuit students).

- Pre-1955 The Territorial Government financially contributes proportionately for 'other' education in all of the different schools in operation at this time in the NWT (i.e., all mission residential schools, mission day schools, federal day schools, etc.) [NWT-000701].
- As of 1955, with the implementation of the construction program for the new residence and day school education program, the initial expenditure for the construction ('capital costs') and operation of the federal schools and hostels in the NWT is made by the Federal

- Government, with the Territorial Government paying its share based on the proportion of 'territorial' (or 'other' [non-aboriginal and Métis]) pupils [NWT-000539].
- A list of appropriation ordinances for 1957-58 refers to the proportion of costs on northern education shared by the federal and territorial governments [NWT-000528].

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- An undated document titled "Mission Residential Schools at Aklavik" notes that the Aklavik R.C. Residential School was built in 1931 and closed on June 30, 1959 [NWT-003348].
- A series of Treasury Board submissions, lists and approvals indicating that the government allotted regular annual funds for new works, repairs, maintenance and the purchase of equipment at the Aklavik R.C. RS [ICU-000101; ICU-000107; ICU-0000117].
- 1958 Memorandum, March 5, 1958 notes that Aklavik R.C. Hospital has no additional space available for school purposes; at present the desk area is described as the connecting hallway between the hospital and the sisters' residence [NWTG-000594].

Dates owned by Church

- Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School appears on a list of Church-owned residential schools [ICU-000107].
- 1940 Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School appears on a list of Church-owned residential schools [AEDC-010803].

LAND

There are no documents that specifically address the issue of ownership of the land on which Aklavik R.C. was built. In conjecture, because the Church owned and built the school, it seems likely that they also owned the land.

PHOTOS, PLANS AND OTHER MEDIA

Item #	Date	Description
NPC-622988a	Undated	Photos of the Roman Catholic Residential School at Aklavik, and the boy's toilet at the R.C. Mission School

GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

Year	Number of Students
1927	16 students in residence

Year	Number of Students
1928	27 students in residence
1929	36 students in residence
1930	42 children in residence
1931	40 children in residence
1932	35 children in residence
1933	33 children in residence
1934	22 children in residence
1935	22 children in residence
1936	38 children in residence
1937	26 children in residence
1938	36 children in residence
1939	27 children in residence
1940	29 children in residence
1941	27 children in residence
1942	25 children in residence
1943	34 children in residence
1944	35 children in residence
1945	54 children in residence
1946	44 children in residence
1947	48 children in residence
1948	46 children in residence
1949	47 children in residence
1950	40 children in residence
1951	46 children in residence
1952	31 children in residence
1953	76 children in residence
1954	84 children in residence
1955	154 children in residence
1956	161 children in residence
1957	161 children in residence
1958	172 children in residence
1959	87 children in residence

STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES

NOTE: Attendance in the post-55 hostel / day school program was not reserve-based, as enrolment was not ethnically segregated (both aboriginal and non-aboriginal children lived in residence and attended the associated schools). Attendance was based on geographic proximity to the residence and the associated schools were attended both by students in residence, and by children living in the local community.

Documents indicate that students might have been transported and/or recruited for attendance at the residence and associated schools from the following locations, communities and regions:

Spence Bay; Fort Norman; Cambridge Bay; Holman Island; Coppermine, Fort McPherson, Reindeer Camp, Banks Island, Tuktoyaktuk, Herschel Island, Perry River, Aklavik and Delta.

There may be alternate ways of spelling these band names.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Roman Catholic Church

- 1957 A letter to R.C. Bishop Trocellier, O.M.I., December 1957, discusses negotiations with the R.C. Church regarding the evolution of the post-1955 day school/contract residence program [NWT-000500].
- 1959 A memorandum from Chief, Territorial Division, Northern Administration and Lands Branch, W.G. Brown notes that in June 1959 the R.C. Mission at Aklavik employs "a considerable number of local girls to as domestic help in their school and students' residence" [NWT-004073].
- CA 1955 An undated article details the plans for the 1955 student residence construction program in the N.W.T. In reference to the planned construction of hostels in communities it states:

These hostels will be built and owned by the Federal Government; those intended primarily for Indian and Eskimo children will be operated by the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, as, virtually all Indians and Eskimos in the Northwest Territories are either of these faiths. All schools operated in conjuncture with the hostels will be operated by the Government through the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, which, on April 1st, became responsible for Indian as well as other education in the Northwest Territories.

All the new schools and hostels will be financed by the Federal Government which will pay all costs with respect to the education and training of Indian and Eskimos since they are a federal responsibility. The Government of the Northwest Territories will be asked to finance a share of the cost of construction and operation of the hostels and schools in proportion to the attendance of children who are other than Indian and Eskimo [NWT-000539].

The Oblates

- 1931 Letter, May 5, 1931, from the department to Rev. Sister McQuillan, Principal of the residential school, indicating that O.M.I. Bishop Breynat was personally involved in requesting the department to obtain an electric generator for the school [ICU-000011].
- A letter from Secretary A.F. MacKenzie, dated August 25, 1934, indicates that O.M.I. Father Lefebvre obtained permission from Mr. Sutherland, Acting Supt. of Indian Education, to purchase and then bill the department for a washing machine [ICU-000042].
- 1947-49 There are a number of letters written on Oblate Commission letterhead, from Father

Plourde, O.M.I., Superintendent General of the Commission, indicating Oblate involvement at the R.C. residential school at Aklavik [ICU-000205; ICU-000209; ICU-000228; ICU-000239].

The Grey Nuns

A Press Release lists all of the R.C. Church missionaries involved in education in the N.W.T. The Grey Nuns are noted as "the first white women to nurse and teach the Indians in the Northwest Territories" [NWT-000614].

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

No formal written agreements for Aklavik R.C. were located.

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

To date, we are unaware of any convictions for abuse at Immaculate Conception Residential School or of any convicted abusers present at the school.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Epidemics and Health Issues

- 1957 Memorandum, October 27, 1956 indicates that the federal day school at Aklavik was closed due to an influenza epidemic [NWTG-000583]. It remained closed as of November 1, 1957 [NWTG-000568].
- 1959 Memorandum, March 16, 1959 provides Dr. Lyons' report of an outbreak of "pneumonitus" at the R.C. Mission School at Aklavik; he reports hospitalizing selected cases [NPC-601443]. A follow-up report written April 15, 1959 states that 105 children were seen and that no new cases have been seen for 10 days [NPC-605423a].

Sanitary Conditions

- Report, September 20, 1938 notes that the Roman Catholic Mission operates a school for Indian and Eskimo children as well as a hospital. Drinking water in the establishments is boiled before use. In the summer months the children use outdoor privies situated about 60 feet from the river bank and the pits were noted to be flooded with water. In the winter indoor chemical tanks are used and contents are disposed of on the river ice. Unburned rubbish and garbage is also disposed of on top of the river ice [NPC-622988].
- A letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Director of N.W.T. Administration reports on the progress made regarding sanitary conditions at Aklavik. The document notes that the R.C. Mission is upstream from the town and in the previous year a sewage system consisting of large metal tanks containing caustic soda was installed in the basements of the school and hospital; at intervals the treated sewage is pumped into the river. Concern is expressed that during the fall 'freeze-up' some of the material is frozen into the ice which is dependent upon for drinking water. It is recommended that pumping the tanks should be suspended during the freeze up [NPC-603141].

A letter from the Senior Sanitary Engineer to the Medical Health Officer notes that children at the Roman Catholic Residential School wash their own dishes in a common pan of water and recommends that the dishes be sterilized by submersion in a chlorine solution of hot water according to accepted methods [NPC-622974].

Curriculum

1947 Letter, September 17, 1947 reporting on the Roman Catholic Residential School at Aklavik from Sister Kristoff notes that the curriculum at the school is restricted to reading, writing and arithmetic and that geography and history are part of the reading materials only. In addition religious instruction occurs for one half hour per day and students study vocal music for one half hour three times per week [NWTG-001719[009-009].

"The Alberta curriculum taught in most of the residential schools in the Mackenzie District of the N.W.T." [NWTG-001745[001-001]].

Letter from the Inspector of Schools to the Deputy Commissioner notes that manual training is being taught at the four residential schools in the N.W.T. [NWTG-000196[002-002].

A letter directed to principals in the N.W.T. notes that the program of study for intermediate and high school in the N.W.T. will follow Alberta curriculum until such time that the department prepares a special curriculum for schools in the N.W.T. All Alberta Curriculum authorized subjects should be taught and teachers are "at liberty to choose freely within the rather generous boundaries of the curriculum and to add desirable areas of their own selections as they move beyond the minimum requirements" [NWTG-000199].

Attendance

A series of documents discuss issues of attendance and truancy at N.W.T. residential schools. The documents seem to support the notion that attendance at the residential schools in Aklavik is not at issue [NWTG-001709[000-008][002-008][008-008]; NWTG-001713].

Anglican Students Residing at Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School

A series of correspondence was located regarding the attendance of Anglican students at the Aklavik Roman Catholic Residential School in 1955 and 1956. A meeting was held between the Department and representatives of the two schools to discuss the situation [ICU-000334]. Subsequent reports to the Director and Deputy Minister indicate that despite the unusual situation the existing arrangements between the two Churches seemed satisfactory and it is recommended that the R.C. Church be reimbursed for Anglican students residing in their residence [ICU-000327; ICU-000328[000-003]].

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Name	Position	Tenure Dates
Sister A. McQuillan	Principal	1927-1931
Sister A. Robiset	Principal	1932-1933
Sister Sarrasin	Principal	1934-1935
Sister J. Dussault	Principal	1936-1948
Sister Kristoff	Principal	1946
Sister M. Louise Champoux	Principal	1949-1950
Sister Louise Duport	Acting Principal	1951
Sister Irene Gallant	Principal	1950-1959

Narrative Completed: October 16, 2005 Narrative Updated: November 7, 2005

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