

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.

Portage La Prairie IRS
School Narrative
21 July 2004 (revised)

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

NAME OF SCHOOL and VARIANTS

1896- 1908	Portage la Prairie Sioux Boarding School	[PLP-0900]
1896- 1927	Portage la Prairie Boarding School	[PLP-0914]
1927- 1965	Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School	[PLP-3402]
1965 -1975	Portage Indian Student Residence	[PLP-3402]

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

Opening Date:

1891 The boarding school opened in 1891, after a period of being operated as a day school by the Presbyterian Church. [PLP-0899]

Day School:

1959-63 Classroom space at Portage IRS is rented to Mt. Pleasant School District as Indian children are all integrated into Portage city schools.
[PLP-0764, 0313]

1957 Residence is used more as a hostel as students attend classes at city Schools.
[PLP-0074]

1961-70 Students attending city schools are placed in private foster homes, due to a lack of space in the Student Residence [PLP-0104]

Closing Date:

1975 School closed 30 June 1975 [PLP-0113]

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

- 1891-1926 The school was established and administered under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. [PLP-0899]
- 1926-1969 The school was administered by the United Church of Canada's Woman's Missionary Society and from 1965 by the Board of Home Missions of the United Church of Canada. [PLP-0966]

Dates managed by Government

- 1969-1975 Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development [PLP-3414]

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Major Renovations:

- 1962 Regional DIAND Office in Winnipeg coordinates \$20,000 in interior decoration and renovation at the school. [PLP-4178]
- June 1964 Addition to Auditorium and construction of game room lockers. Canteen entrance is modified. [PLP-3493]

Dates Owned by Church:

- c. 1890- 1913 The Presbyterian Church in Canada built the original school with no government support for land or materials circa 1890. The government provided financial support of the students and school building repairs after that date. There was a proposal for a new building to be provided by DIAND in 1912 but D.C. Scott was not in favour of a government owned institution at Portage. [PLP-0899, 0118]

Dates Owned by Government:

- 1913-1975 Order-in Council passed on November 1, 1913 for the reconstruction of the new school. According to one letter, the initial school building was built by the church, but when it was reconstructed in 1913, it became the property of DIAND. [PLP-0045]

Date Turned Over to Band:

1980 The land (and likely the buildings) were turned over to the band as part of a Land Entitlement agreement [PLP-0125]

LAND

Location:

Land located one quarter mile east of Portage la Prairie town, not on reserve.
[PLP-0899, 0833]

Crescent Lake Road, Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, comprised of River Lots 50, 51 and 52.
[PLP-0114, 0116]

Dates Owned by Church:

Land was owned by the Church prior to 1914. [PLP-0899, PLP-0118]

Dates Owned by Government:

Land was purchased for the school in 1912 from the estate of Margaret Cumming.
[PLP-0833]

In 1914, DIAND purchased portions of Lots 51 and 52 and title to these lands was vested in His Majesty the King, as represented by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. A further area comprising portions of Lot 50 was acquired in 1919.
[PLP-0118]

Order in Council PC 1977-6/48 authorized that Lots 50, 51 and 52 be transferred to the Department of Public Works. [PLP-0116]

Date Turned Over to Band:

Lands were turned over to Long Plains Reserve no. 6 in 1982. [PLP-0132]

PHOTOS, PLANS and OTHER MEDIA

Photo of school building on front. Postcard 1965. [PLP-004028]

Photos of School Building (interior) no date. [PLP-00806]

GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

1941	Actual enrollment hovered around 95
1942	Actual enrollment hovered around 95
1943	Actual enrollment hovered around 95
1944	Actual enrollment hovered around 95
1945	Actual enrollment hovered around 97
1946	Actual enrollment hovered around 100
1947	Actual enrollment hovered around 100
1948	Actual enrollment hovered around 105
Mar-June 1949	Actual enrollment hovered around 103
Sep-Dec 1949	Actual enrollment hovered around 125
Mar-Jun-Dec 1950	Actual enrollment hovered around 110
Sep 1950	135
Mar-Jun-Dec 1951	Actual enrollment hovered around 114
Sep 1951	Actual enrollment hovered around 143
Mar-Jun-Dec 1952	Actual enrollment hovered around 115
Sep 1952	137
1953	Actual enrollment hovered around
Mar-Jun-Dec 1953	Actual enrollment hovered around 125
Sep 1953	152
Mar-Jun-Dec 1954	Actual enrollment hovered around 130
Sep 1954	161
Mar-Jun-Dec 1955	Actual enrollment hovered around 130
Sep 1955	154
1956	Jan-June enrollment hovered around 130 and from Sept to Dec enrollment dropped to 115
1957	Jan-June enrollment hovered around 115 and in September it dropped to 22 enrollment. Residence is used more as a hostel as students attend classes at city schools.
Sep 1957	180
1958	Actual enrollment hovered around 100
1959	Actual enrollment hovered around 100
1960	Actual enrollment hovered around 100
1961	Actual enrollment hovered around 105
1962	Actual enrollment hovered around 110
1963	Actual enrollment hovered around 95
1964	Actual enrollment hovered around 90
1965	Actual enrollment hovered around 90
1966	Actual enrollment hovered around 78
1967	Actual enrollment hovered around 70

1968	Actual enrollment hovered around 75
1969	Actual enrollment hovered around 70
1970	Actual enrollment hovered around 65
1971	Actual enrollment hovered around 65
1972	Actual enrollment hovered around 48
Sep 1973	83
1974	Actual enrollment hovered around 50

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

- 1891-1926 Presbyterian Church in Canada [PLP-0899]
- 1926-1969 United Church of Canada's Woman's Missionary Society and later by the Board of Home Missions of the United Church of Canada. [PLP-0966]

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

- 1962 Agreement outlined responsibilities of both Church and Department in management of the school (The copy of the agreement found for this school was found to be incomplete but it appears to be the standard agreement signed. [PLP-0794]
- 1961-70 Portage Student Residence operates strictly as a boarding home, with all students attending city schools. A joint agreement with the Portage Collegiate school board exists. [PLP-0074]

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Incidents (Physical)

- 1949 Allegations of excessive corporal punishment and repressive disciplinary measures were investigated and remedial actions taken by requesting that the principal and staff member concerned resign from Portage la Prairie school. [PLP-0022, 0024, 0024a,b, 0031, 0037, 0042]
- 1969 List of students' complaints concerning ill-treatment by the residence Administrator. [PLP-0088]

CONVICTIONS

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Health:

- 1912 Epidemic of measles in 1912, followed by pneumonia. Doctor and two nurses attended children. One child died. [PLP-0908, 0909]
- 1915 Rubella epidemic. Ten children quarantined. [PLP0916a, 0918]
- 1918 School closed and some children sent home due to epidemic of Spanish influenza. There were no cases of the disease in the school. [PLP-0939, 0941]

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

W.A. Hendry	Principal	Prior to 1909
Rev. J. S. Millar	Principal	1909-1911
W.A. Hendry	Principal	c.1911-1934
James T. Black	A/Principal	Sep 1931 - Mar 1932
Rev. Wm.R. Wood	A/Principal	Nov 1934-Jul 1935
Rev. Joseph Jones	Principal	June-July 1935-Sep 1942
John A. McNeill	A/Principal	Oct 1942-Dec 1944
Rev. A.C. Huston	Principal	Oct.1944-c. Nov 1946
Rev. Joseph Jones	Principal	Nov. 1947-July 1949
Mr. Lachlan McLean	Principal	July 1949-June 1957
William Warren	Principal	July 1957-May 1958
Mrs. Winnifred Gall	Principal	May 1958
Harry Atkinson	Principal	Sep 1958
Jack O. Harris	Principal	Fall 1958- Feb. 1965 (c. Oct 1958)
J.O. Harris	Administrator	Feb 1965 - June 1970
Charles Greaves	Administrator	July 1970
J. P. Malcolm	A/Administrator	Sep 1974-1975

Research completed: March 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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