

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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**Sacred Heart IRS  
School Narrative  
Feb. 8, 2005**

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

**NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS**

c.1893 - 1926

- Roman Catholic Day School [#00006]
- RC Peigan School [#00008]
- Roman Catholic School on the Peigan Reserve [#00012]
- Roman Catholic Boarding School on the Peigan Reserve [#00013]
- Boarding School at the Roman Catholic Mission on the Peigan Reserve [#00015]
- Peigan R.C. Boarding School [#00018]
- Peigan Reserve Catholic Boarding School [#00029]
- Sacred Heart Boarding School [#00035]

1926

- The Department approved the school's official name as Sacred Heart Indian Residential School [#00098].

1927-1961

- Peigan Indian Residential School [#00706]
- RC Peigan School [#00099]
- R.C. School on Peigan Reserve [#00720]
- Sacred Heart School at Brocket [#00306B]
- Sacred Heart Indian Boarding School on the Peigan Reserve [#00111]
- Roman Catholic Indian Residential School on the Peigan Reservation [#00114]
- Brocket School [#00767A]
- School #759 [#01089]

1961-1966

- Peigan R.C. IDS, School #737 [the Peigan IDS replaced Sacred Heart IRS] [#01089]
- Sacred Heart Day School [#01223]
- Brocket IDS [#01213]

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1887, January | The Roman Catholic Missionary Society constructed and opened a school on the Peigan Reserve [#00203C, #00211A]. |
| 1889, August  | The Government gave permission for the school to accept three boarders [#00214A].                               |

1895, November	The Church informed the Government of its intention to send two Sisters to take over the day school and open a boarding school [#00010].
1897, January	A kindergarten was started at the Roman Catholic Boarding School on the Peigan Reserve [#00020, #00021].
1898, September	The Roman Catholic Mission constructed a new boarding school [#00879, #00893].
1926-1927	A new Roman Catholic boarding school was constructed [#00699A].
1950	A small day school for Roman Catholic children was opened in Brocket [#00186A].
1953, September	A second day school classroom for Roman Catholic children was opened [#01142, # 01143, #00186A,].
1955, March	A new two-room day school was opened in Brocket [#01144, #01146].
1960-1961	All Catholic students, both day and residential, attended school at Sacred Heart IRS [#00561 , #00267].
1961, June	Sacred Heart IRS was closed [#01089, #01051].
1961, September	A new Roman Catholic day school opened, replacing Sacred Heart IRS. [#00142, #01157].
1963, March	Sacred Heart IRS was demolished [#00920].

## **MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL**

### Dates managed by Church

1886, December	The Catholic Mission hired the first teacher for the school on the Peigan Reserve [#00203A].
1895, November	The Church sent Sisters to open a boarding school [#00010].
1898, September	An agency report stated that the boarding school was to be conducted under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, with the schoolwork under the charge of the Reverend Sisters of Charity [#00879].
1899, December	Sisters were in charge of the school [#00777].
1920-21	The Grey Nuns had charge of and managed the school [#01066, #01065].
1923, April	The principal and the Grey Nuns of Nicolet were responsible for placement of the teaching staff at the school [#00084, #00085, #00087].

- 1923, April            The school was financed and controlled jointly by the Government and the Roman Catholic Church [#00087].
- 1928, May            A letter indicates that the school had been under the financial control of the Sisters but was now under the absolute control of the Oblates [#00247].

Dates managed by Government

- 1923, April            The school was financed and controlled jointly by the Government and the Roman Catholic Church [#00087] .
- 1929, June            The schools were financed by Government grant and conducted on a partnership basis between Government and Church [#00245].

Dates managed by Band or other aboriginal group

- 1986                    The Peigan Board of Education was involved in management of the Peigan School [#00872].<sup>1</sup>

**SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

- 1887, January        The Roman Catholic Missionary Society erected a school house on the Peigan Reserve [#00211A ].
- 1891, August        The Church requested permission to erect a log house to be used as a new school for Roman Catholic children [#01117].
- 1898, September    The Government funded the building of a Roman Catholic boarding school by the Roman Catholic Missionary. The school, located at the centre of the reserve, was a three-storey building facing south, with two-storey wings on the east and west sides. The building housed dormitories, apartments for teaching staff, a sewing room, dining rooms, classrooms, and recreation rooms. [#00879, #00893, #00965].
- 1906, September    The stable was a Government-owned building [#00837].
- 1907, May            An addition was made to the school [#00840].
- 1909, July            A letter from the Sisters indicates that the school was the property of the Government [#01069].
- 1918, February      The school attic was used as a dormitory for the Sisters [#01015].
- 1918, August        The attic was renovated and used for pupil accommodation [#00071].

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<sup>1</sup>It is not evident that the Peigan School referred to is in any way associated with the former Sacred Heart IRS.

- 1922, May A Government memo stated that the Roman Catholic Residential School on the Peigan Reserve was Church-owned [#00896].
- 1923, October The Government agreed to take over partial interest in the schoolhouse at Brocket [#01060, #01059].
- 1924, August A cottage was purchased by the Government to be turned into a stable for the school [#01055, #01054].
- 1924, December A heating plant was installed in the school [#00091].
- 1926, October Construction was started on new stable [#00219].
- 1926-1927 A new Roman Catholic boarding school was built. The school, provided by the Government, was a frame construction, three-storey building with a basement and flat roof. A barn, chicken coops, implement shed, and shop were also part of the school complex. Church authorities later built a rectory and church inside the school grounds. [#00699A, #00101, #00102, #00660A, # 01087].
- 1929, October An ice house and cold storage were built [#00294].
- 1939, October The school had an electric lighting plant [#00683].
- 1946, September The Brocket school was Government property [#00767A].
- 1948, August The Band Council granted permission to the Church authorities to move Sacred Heart Church to Brocket Townsite [#01087].
- 1948-1949 A workshop and implements shed were converted to a farm instructor's residence [#00271A, #00269].
- 1950 A small day school for Catholic children was opened in Brocket [#00186A].
- 1953, April Sacred Heart was rewired for electricity [#01108].
- 1953, September A second day school classroom for Roman Catholic children was opened at the Peigan community hall [#01142, #00186A].
- 1954, September A new waterline to the school was installed [#01144].
- 1955, March A new two-room day school was opened at the Brocket Townsite; the classroom at the community hall was closed [#01144, #01146, #00186A].
- 1955, September The old infirmary and sewing room were converted into a girls' dormitory [#01107].
- 1958, September The gymnasium was in its own building and housed a classroom [#00514].

- 1958-1959 The school had one permanent and four temporary classrooms; one classroom was located on the gymnasium stage [#00514, #01104].
- 1959, August A main electrical circuit and fire alarm stations were installed [#00432].
- 1959, May The basement of the school contained the dining rooms, laundry, kitchen, boiler room, and recreation rooms. The first floor housed the administration, classrooms, staff room, and store rooms. Additional classrooms, staff rooms, and store room were located on the second floor. The third floor housed the dormitories. Six classrooms were in operation [#01075A].
- 1960, February Storage sheds and a manual training shop were located 200 ft. southwest of the school [#00594B].
- 1960, February The Government claimed that all buildings at Sacred Heart IRS were Government-owned, while the Oblate Fathers claimed to own some of the buildings [#00594, #00594A].
- 1960, October Two portable classrooms were erected at the site of the Sacred Heart IRS. Upon the closing of the IRS, the portables were to be moved to the site of the new Roman Catholic Day School, adjacent to the river [#00142, #01159, #01112A, #00579, #00538].
- 1961, April Buildings at Sacred Heart IRS were Government-owned. [#01093].
- 1961, June Sacred Heart IRS was closed effective June 30, 1961. The school was to be used for classroom accommodation and as a teachers' residence for the 1961-62 school year [#1092A, #00165, #01051].
- 1963, March Sacred Heart IRS was demolished [#00920].
- 1987 A teacherage existed adjacent to the Peigan School [#00408].<sup>2</sup>

## **LAND**

- 1877, September Treaty 7 was concluded September 22, 1877 between Her Majesty's Representatives and the Peigan Tribe [#00186A].
- 1891 Sacred Heart School was located near the centre of the Peigan Reserve, near the site of the old agency and the Old Man's River [#00001, #00064].
- 1926 - 1927 A letter from the Indian Commissioner stated that the present site of the school was unsuited for school purposes [#00321]. A new school was

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<sup>2</sup>It is not evident that the Peigan School referred to is in any way associated with the former Sacred Heart IRS.

built on the southwest quarter of Section 7, Township 7, W 4<sup>th</sup> [#00699A, #00385, #01159].

1929, November      The Peigan Indians had provided Sacred Heart with a section of land and, in 1929, granted an additional quarter section until such time as the Band required it for its own use [#00297, #00293, #01087].

1959                    The school was located 5.5 miles East of Brocket, 12 miles from Pincher Creek [#01075A].

1960                    New day school, set to open in 1961, was to be erected on the site adjacent to the river [#00142, #01159, #01071, #01112A].

**PHOTOS, PLANS AND OTHER MEDIA**

<b>Item #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
00170B	c. 1891	Map of Peigan Reserve.
00325	August 15, 1925	Map of proposed boarding school site.
00659	August 17, 1937	Building plans for school basement and proposed well.
00394	July 14, 1948	Photographs of Sacred Heart IRS.
00422	August 20, 1959	Building plans for school water reservoir.
01159	April 5, 1960	Map of Peigan Reserve showing Sacred Heart IRS and site of proposed day school.
00563	August 4, 1960	Building plans for portable classrooms.

**GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME**

**Sacred Heart IRS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1887	29 scholars
1896	8 pupils
1897	10 pupils
1899	25 Indian children on the roll, 5 supplementary pupils
1900	26 pupils
1915	24 pupils
1916	26 pupils

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1920	35 pupils
1921	37 pupils
1927	44 pupils
1929	52 pupils in residence
1932	55 pupils in residence
1933	55 pupils in residence
1946	69 pupils in residence
1948	65 scholars
1950	69 pupils
1952	72 pupils
1953	72 pupils
1954	70 pupils
1955	91 pupils
1956	80 resident pupils; 27 day pupils
1957	78 resident pupils; 31 day school pupils
1958	77 resident pupils
1959	76 residential pupils; 46 day pupils
1960	47 residential pupils; 133 day pupils
1961	46 residential pupils; 136 day pupils

**Peigan Indian Day School/Peigan RC Day School**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1951	37 pupils
1952	37 pupils
1954	40 pupils
1955	40 pupils
1956	52-60 pupils
1957	60 pupils
1961	165 pupils
1962	176 pupils



<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1963	202 pupils
1964	155 pupils
1965	182 pupils
1966	171 pupils
1967	120 pupils
1968	94 pupils
1969	74 pupils
1972	115 pupils

### **STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES**

- In 1929, the Department admitted six orphan girls from the northern part of the province [#00180A].

### **RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

- The Reverend Sisters of Charity (a.k.a Grey Nuns of Nicolet, Grey Nuns of Montreal) were involved at the school throughout its history [#00879, #01066, #00087, #00165].
- Until the school closed in 1961, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were involved in the administration of Sacred Heart. The position of principal was always held by an Oblate Father [#00109, #00234C, #00230C, #00541].

### **WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

- Correspondence indicates that a 1911 Agreement regarding future maintenance and management of five Roman Catholic boarding schools was signed by the Federal Government and the Bishop of the St. Albert Diocese in March 1911. No copy of the actual agreement was found in the collection [#00048, #00051, #00052, #00053].

## DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

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

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Major Events

- The lack of an adequate water supply was an on-going problem at Sacred Heart [#00321]. New wells were drilled several times in hopes of improving water supply [#00657, #00660A, #00662A, #00623B]. The school ran out of water on several occasions, the first time 1933, and was closed due to lack of water in 1956 and again in 1958 [#00763A, #01150, #00501]. Between 1941 and 1960 the lack of water often necessitated trucking water from Brocket to the school [#01134, #00510, #00573, #00544, #00540].
- In January 1955, the basement of Sacred Heart flooded [#01145].
- In January 1960, fire destroyed the manual training shop and adjacent storage facilities [#00594A].

### School Attendance and Educational Planning

- During the 1950s, overcrowding was an issue at Sacred Heart. Children were sent off-reserve to attend other schools and high schools, including Lacombe Home, Red Deer, St. Mary's IRS, and Pincher Creek [#00932, #01082, #01144, #01146, #00118, #01149, #01163, #01153]. Certain students took their schooling by correspondence [#01108B, #01126].
- In 1955 and 1959, truancy was a problem [#01147, #01153].
- The Educational Survey Commission, appointed in 1956, reported on the educational requirements on the Peigan Reserve and recommended an increased day school program, and closing of the residential schools. Those Catholic students requiring residential care would be sent to Blood R.C. Residential School. Based on these recommendations, the Department decided to construct a six-room expandable day school for Catholic children, set to open in 1961 [#00119, #00186A,].
- In 1955, some students began attending Sacred Heart on a day school basis. This continued until the closing of the school [#01107, #01149, #00267].
- In 1960, most Sacred Heart IRS students went home on weekends [#00924].

### Health

- In 1916, there were cases of typhoid at Sacred Heart, which were attributed to water contamination [#00061].
- A polio epidemic delayed the opening of the school in 1952 [#01140].
- Sacred Heart was closed due to influenza in 1957 [#01290].

### Death of Students

- Deaths of students were reported on March 3, 1901 [#00782], March 11, 1901 [#00785], May 2, 1903 [#00804], February 29, 1904 [#00811], December 11, 1905 [#00827], and November 13, 1948 [#00251].
- On September 12, 1937, a female student was crushed between a trailer and the ice house, and died of her injuries. The staff of the school was subsequently exonerated of blame in the death [#00253, #00255A].

### Other Information

- A residential school located at Fort Providence on the Mackenzie River (NWT) was also named Sacred Heart [#01353, #01356].

## **PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS**

### **Sacred Heart IRS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure Dates</b>
Rev. Father L.J. Danis, O.M.I.	Principal	At least 1896-1897
Rev. Father L. Doucet, O.M.I.	Principal	1898-1900
Reverend Father L.J. Danis, O.M.I.	Principal	1901
Rev. Father L. Doucet, O.M.I.	Principal	1902-1905
Rev. M. Lepine, O.M.I.	Principal	At least 1905
Rev. Father L. Doucet, O.M.I.	Principal	1906 - 1910
Rev. Father Salaun	Principal	1910 - at least 1913
Rev. Father Riou (Ruauux)	Principal	At least 1915
Rev. M. Lepine	Principal	1916
Rev. Father Doucet	Acting Principal	1916
Rev. Father J.L. Levern, O.M.I.	Principal	1916 - at least 1932

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure Dates</b>
Rev. Father J.M. Salaun, O.M.I.	Acting Principal	1932
Rev. Father J.L. Levern, O.M.I.	Principal	1933-1937
Rev. E. Ruaux, O.M.I.	Principal	1937-1943
Rev. George Crepeau, O.M.I.	Principal	1943-1946
Rev. Father Maurice Lafrance, O.M.I.	Principal	1946-1948
Rev. Father Ernest Forestier, O.M.I.	Principal	1948-1952
Rev. Father Martin Michaud, O.M.I.	Principal	1952 - 1955
Leo Couture	Principal	1955
Rev. Father Martin Michaud, O.M.I.	Principal	1955-1961
Rev. Fr. Paul-Ant. Hudon, O.M.I.	Assistant/Acting Principal	1959-1960

**Peigan IDS/Peigan RC Day School**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure Dates</b>
A.L. Smedstad	Principal/Teacher IDS	At least 1950
Sister Lucille Gamache	Principal	At least 1961-1962
Roland Cote	Principal	1962 - at least 1966
P.R.E. Lethbridge	Principal Peigan School	At least 1972

**Narrative Completed: Feb. 8, 2005**

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

