

This narrative history of a Residential School was researched and produced by the Government of Canada as part of its response to litigation and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has not verified the content of this document. It is provided here for reference purposes only. Documented incidents of sexual and physical abuse are based on the documentary record and do not take into account survivor testimony.



You are welcome to contact the NCTR if you wish to add, comment on, or challenge any versions of the history presented herein.

**St. Joseph's RS  
School Narrative  
March 31, 2005**

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

**NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS**

The school name of St. Joseph's Residential School was continuously referred to in various ways during its years of operation. Please note that the school names listed below were used interchangeably during its operation.

1898-1907	St. Joseph's School (FRU-010121[000-000])
1908	St. Joseph's Boarding School (FRU-010000[000-000])
1909	Fort Resolution Indian Boarding School (FRU-010003[000-000])
1910	Fort Resolution School (FRU-010004[000-001])
1911	Fort Resolution (St. Joseph's Mission) Boarding School (FRU-010007[000-000])
1924	Resolution Residential School (FRU-010020[000-000])
1925	St. Joseph's School (FRU-010022[000-000]) Fort Resolution Residential School (FRU-010024[000-000]) St. Joseph's Residential School (FRU-010025[000-000])
1927	St. Joseph's Boarding and Day School (FRU-010029[000-000]) Fort Resolution Indian Residential School (FRU-010030[000-000]) Resolution Indian Residential School (FRU-010032[000-000])
1936	St. Joseph's R.C. School (FRU-010051[000-000]) St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Day School (FRU-010057[000-000]) St. Joseph's Residential and Day School (FRU-010058[001-001])
1938	St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Mission School (FRU-010064[000-002])
1950	Fort Resolution Roman Catholic Residential School and Day School (FRU-010105[000-001])

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY**

1898	Chart indicates St. Joseph's Residential School was "probably" opened in 1898. (FRU-010043[000-000])
1900	Document dated March 25, 1925 states that the federal government has provided grants to the day school associated to the St. Joseph's Mission since February 1900. (FRU-010027[000-000]) <sup>1</sup>
1903	Report dated December 12, 1954 states that a boarding school in Fort Resolution was opened in 1903 under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church (North - NWT 003169[000-000])

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<sup>1</sup>The opening year of the day school was not necessarily opened in 1900; rather, it began receiving funding from the federal government in February 1900. References made to the Fort Resolution Day School generally discuss issues of funding for day pupils. Documentation suggests that "the day school" is about the education of day pupils at the residence rather than an actual school building that functioned separately as a day school.

- 1908 The main building of this school was erected in 1908. (FRU-010051[000-000])
- 1911 Extract of an inspection report states that “At Resolution the Roman Catholic Mission erected a new school building, which has only been occupied a year.” (FRU-010009[000-000])
- 1936 Report states that the children do not attend school for very many years and “the highest standing they attain is Grade V” (FRU-010051[000-000])
- 1947 Inspection report indicates that Grades 1 to 8 are being taught at Fort Resolution Roman Catholic Residential School (FRU-010095[000-000])
- 1949 Letter discussing the policies of appointing teachers highlights that the Roman Catholic Mission School was the only educational facility prior to the summer of 1949. It also notes that:
- During the past year a Government Day School has been erected, which we must point out is not an Indian Day School. This school has now been completed for three months and still stands idle at governmental expense of heating, due to the Department of Mines and Resources professed inability to secure a teacher (FRU-010119[000-000])
- 1957 Memorandum discusses keeping the Fort Resolution Residential School open for residential pupils only, as the new school and hostel at Fort Smith will not be ready for occupation on October 1<sup>st</sup>. It is anticipated that the transfer of pupils and teachers from Fort Resolution to Fort Smith<sup>2</sup> will take place during the Christmas holidays. (FRU-010113[000-000])
- 1958 Letter stating that the residential school at Resolution is now closed (FRU-010118[000-000])

## **MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL**

### Dates managed by Church

During the entire operating history of St. Joseph’s Residential School, the school was managed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns. The federal and territorial government were involved with the school on a financial capacity but essentially, the daily operational management of the school was under the authority of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie.

- 1912 School is run by the Grey Nuns and “is under the direct supervision of Bishop Breynart.” (FRU-010011[000-000])

- 1913 Letter regarding the requisition of desks states that “under the new contract for the maintenance and management of this school, the Church authorities are called upon to supply equipment of this kind” (FRU-010015[000-000])
- 1923 Grant for the maintenance of 9 destitute children at Resolution Residential School is made out to Rev. Father J.C. Lafebvre, OMI, c/o St. Joachim Church, Edmonton, Alberta (FRU-010020[000-000])
- 1928 Grant to St. Joseph’s Residential School for the maintenance of 11 destitute children is made to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie (FRU-010120[000-000])
- 1936 Indian Residential School at Fort Resolution “is under the control of Right Reverend G. Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie” (FRU-010054[000-000])
- 1950 Grant to the Roman Catholic Day School, Fort Resolution made to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie (FRU-010104[000-000])
- 1957 Missions are responsible for recruiting children to residential school but admissions require the approval of the District Administrator or the Indian Superintendent. (FRU-010116[000-000])

#### Government Responsibility

- 1951 Report to the Northwest Territories Council by H.R. Low on Northern Education states that Fort Resolution R.C. Residential School, similar to the Fort Smith R.C. Day school is under a dual system of administration from the federal and territorial government. The report also discusses the Grey Nuns involvement with providing “a home life for the children in the residence” and providing them with education at the school. (NWT-003000[000-000])
- 1954 Report titled “Education in Canada’s Northland” states,  
The government assists non-federal schools by annual operational grants, by grants for the support and maintenance at residential schools of Eskimo, Indian and other children and by furnishing school supplies and equipment to all schools except those in organized school districts. (NWT-003169[000-000])

#### SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- 1908 New school is currently under construction and possession of the school is anticipated to be taken over next summer. (FRU-010001[000-000])
- 1909 Letter states that the new school is “nearly furnished” and “contains large classrooms and dormitories [that are] “well lighted and well ventilated.” (FRU-010002[000-000])

- 1911 Extract of an inspection report states that the Roman Catholic Mission erected a new school building that has only been occupied for a year. In addition to the school building there are “two ice houses, two store houses, one barn, two closets, a large house for the priests and one now used as a store house, formerly the old school.” Construction of a new wing that will consist of three classrooms will be occupied next autumn. (FRU-010009[000-000])
- 1912 Fire escapes added to the school (FRU-010012[000-000])
- 1912 Two classrooms are under construction and it is anticipated that it will be completed by the end of March. (FRU-010013[000-000])
- 1916 Extract of a report states that the right wing of the Resolution Boarding School has been completed and is capable to accommodate 75 scholars (FRU-010016[000-000])
- 1916 Extract from the Annual Report of Inspector for Schools in Treaty 8 states that two rooms are reserved to be used as infirmaries but are rarely in use. (FRU-010017[000-000])
- 1917 New Acetylene gas plant installed (FRU-010018[000-000])
- 1928 Voucher reimbursing the Church authorities for the purchase of materials to erect ice-house and cold storage for the Fort Resolution Indian Residential School (FRU-010037[000-000])
- 1928 Letter stating that the Fort Resolution Indian Residential School is a church owned institution and therefore, the paint requested should be purchased from the per capita earnings from the school. (FRU-010036[000-000])
- 1935 Acetylene plant explosion resulted in a fire that nearly destroyed the old St. Joseph’s Residential School (FRU-010052[000-000])
- 1936 Electric light plant was installed with assistance from the federal government (FRU-010055[001-002])
- 1938 Indian Affairs’ Estimates for the fiscal year 1938-1939 lists Fort Resolution Roman Catholic Residential School as a church owned Indian Residential School. (FRU-010063[000-000])
- 1943 The Fort Resolution Indian Residential School owns a boat (FRU-010082[000-000]) which is used for visiting fish nets and for the transportation of children to visit their parents who live along the Great Slave Lake (FRU-010083[001-001])
- 1944 Roof repaired at the Resolution Indian Residential School (FRU-010089[000-000])

- 1944 Outside toilets being built at Resolution Indian Residential School (FRU-010093[000-000])
- 1946 Recommendation for the purchase of a pipe furnace at a cost of \$1150 (FRU-010094[000-000])
- 1947 Extract from 1947-1948 Annual Report on Fort Resolution states, “The school building in Fort Resolution is outdated, dilapidated and a potential fire hazard.” The report recommends that the school building should be replaced. (FRU-010097[000-000])

**LAND**

- 1911 School is being constructed on “one of the bays of Great Slave Lake.” (FRU-010006[000-000])
- 1911 Operational Agreement regarding the boarding school located at Fort Resolution, in the Mackenzie District. (FRU-010007[000-000])
- 1911 Extract of Inspection report states “An addition is shortly to be added, which will make it the largest building north of Edmonton in Treaty 8 District.” (FRU-010009[000-000])
- 1916 “Nearly four acres of land in the vicinity of the school are given up to gardening and the different crops of vegetables and roots are sufficient for the upkeep of the school.” (FRU-010017[000-000])
- 1936 St. Joseph’s R.C. School has “6 oxen, 3 horses, 10 cows and 6 other young cattle. The farm consists of 40 acres where oats are planted and also a large garden.” (FRU-010051[000-000])

**GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME**

Year	Number of Students
1911	13 boys, 16 girls, 5 children under 5 yrs old
1912	75 boarders
1913	56 children on the school report
1916	47 boarders
1929	over 100 boarders
1937	104 boarders, 16 day scholars
1939	28 boys, 56 girls
1940	25 boys, 56 girls

Year	Number of Students
1941	17 boys, 40 girls
1942	15 boys, 42 girls
1943	15 boys, 31 girls
1944	17 boys, 33 girls
1945	20 boys, 37 girls
1946	23 boys, 38 girls
1947	30 boys, 36 girls
1948	35 boys, 40 girls
1949	29 boys, 40 girls
1950	41 boys, 40 girls
1951	46 boys, 46 girls
1952	33 boys, 43 girls
1957	72 pupils

### **STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES**

Students from, at least the following bands attended St. Joseph's Residential School: Yellowknife "A", Yellowknife "B", Chipewyan "C" and Dog Rib Tribe.

There may be alternate ways of spelling these band names.

### **RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

- 1923 Grant for the maintenance of 9 destitute children made out to Rev. Father J.C. Lafebvre, OMI, c/o St. Joachim Church, Edmonton, Alberta (FRU-010020[000-000])
- 1936 Inspection report states that "There are 10 Sisters of Charity Grey Nuns from Montreal at this school, and there is one priest at the Mission and 8 brothers." (FRU-010051[000-000])
- 1948 Fort Resolution Residential School is listed as a church owned school in the diocese of Most Reverend J. Trocellier, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie (Fort Resolution Item #00800)
- 1950 Grant to the Roman Catholic Day School, Fort Resolution made to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie (FRU-010104[000-000], 07/11/1950)

1950 Letter regarding the increase of per capita rates to schools that are under the jurisdiction of Rev. J. O. Plourde, O.M.I., implies that Fort Resolution Indian Residential School is under his jurisdiction (Fort Resolution Item #016683)

### **WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

1911 Operational Agreement between His Majesty the King and Right Reverend G Breynat, OMI, Vicar-Apostolic of Mackenzie regarding the Fort Resolution (St. Joseph's Mission) Boarding School, effective April 1, 1911. (FRU-010007[000-000])

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

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

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Other Concerns or Complaints**

1937 An extract of a report regarding the refusal of Treaty Indians at Resolution to accept Treaty payment reads:

The Chiefs complained about the R.C. Mission School, they say that the Indian children when they go to school have to work too hard. Sometimes they work sawing wood from morning until night and that a large number get sick and die. When they go to schhol [sic] we have them well clothed, and when they come back to us they have hardly any clothes on and are half starved. When they are at school it is like the children are living in hell, that is why we sometimes have to take our children away. (FRU-010059[000-000])

1952 Letter regarding complaints received from Indian students which states:  
...that during their last two years at Mission Residential School they were employed continuously by the Missions without pay or other enumeration, on work projects such as cleaning hen houses, feeding cattle and maintenance projects in and about Mission establishments, instead of receiving class room instruction. (FRU-010106[001-001])

1957 Due to over-crowded conditions, Bishop Trocellier would like to transfer the children from the Resolution residential school to the Fort Smith Hostel (FRU-010114[000-000])

#### **Epidemics and Health Issues**



- 1920 Whooping cough resulted in the death of two school pupils (FRU-010019[000-000])
- 1927 Telegraph regarding a serious shortage of food supply due to failure in fishery during the fall and lack of potatoes due to a dry summer (FRU-010031[000-000])
- 1930 Conducting violet rays treatment and inoculations on children at the Convent. Indian Agent also comments that there is enough food, “as much as the children can eat.” (FRU-010040[000-000])
- 1930 Letter regarding the inability to provide “proper food and care” to the school children at the residential schools in the Mackenzie District due to the rates paid for “the transportation of our annual outfit from the railways terminals” (FRU-010041[000-000])
- 1935 Acetylene gas plant explosion resulted in two persons badly burned on hands and face (FRU-010048[000-000])
- 1936-1940 The school was closed a number of times due to health concerns such as La Grippe, Chicken Pox and Influenza. (FRU-010056 [001-002], FRU-010060[001-002], FRU-010068[001-002], FRU-010069[002-002], FRU-010074[000-000])
- 1943 All students had a physical examination and a clinic was held to extract teeth and remove enlarged tonsils (FRU-010087[000-000])
- 1944 Immunization from Scarlet Fever was conducted on 1943-1944 pupils and pre-school children (FRU-010088[000-000])
- 1944 Vaccination against smallpox were given to pupils and pre-school children (FRU-010090[000-000])
- 1945 Requisition for lumber to build new toilets highlights that the “present toilets are unfit and unsanitary and have to be replaced.” (FRU-010092[000-000])
- 1947 On the children’s admittance to the school, they undergo a medical examination and are x-rayed for Tuberculosis. (FRU-010095[000-000])
- 1947 School closed to the Day Pupils due to Chick pox (FRU-010099[001-001])
- 1947-1948 Extract from the 1947-1948 Annual Report on Fort Resolution states that:  
 All new pupils on entering the Fort Resolution School are given a complete medical check up, including X-Ray. They are inoculated against Diptheria and Whooping Cough and are vaccinated against Smallpox...Each child is examined at monthly intervals by a hospital nurse. (FRU-010097[000-000])

## **Vocational Training**

- 1911 Extract of a report from Inspector of Boarding School in Treaty No. 8 states that “The boys help in the garden, and with the wood and furnaces, the girls do all the sewing and knitting for the school.” (FRU-010009[000-000])
- 1944 “The oldest pupils helped put in 80 bags of potatoes and large quantity of carrots and turnips on the Mission farm.” (FRU-010090[000-000])

**Associated Institutions**

Due to limited documentation at the current time, the relationship between the St. Joseph’s Hospital School and the St. Joseph’s Residential School during the early years is unclear.

- 1925 In reference to the hospital wing at Fort Resolution Indian Residential School, the Government opposes designating the school as a hospital. The federal Government refuses to pay grants for patients who are treated at the residential school. (FRU-010127[000-000])
- 1955 The name of the hospital school at Fort Resolution appears as the following:  
 -St. Joseph’s Hospital School (FRU-010125[000-000])  
 -Fort Resolution Hospital School (FRU-010126[000-002])  
 -Resolution Hospital School (FRU-010126[001-002])
- 1956 Memorandum inquiring into whether the hospital teacher at Fort Resolution falls under the authority of the Mission School principal or the Federal Day School principal. (FRU-010123[000-000]) A reply to the inquiry states that the policy on the “administration and discipline” of Hospital teachers “comes under the jurisdiction of Federal Day School Principal.” This implies that the administrators at St. Joseph’s Residential School had no real authority over the teachers at the hospital. (FRU-010124[000-000])
- 1959 Memorandum regarding Bishop Piche’s inquiry as to whether the Government has any use for the former hospital building in Fort Resolution. The document suggests that the building is church-owned. (FRU-010128[000-000])

**PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS**

**Principals**

The Principals listed below were primarily in-charge of the daily educational responsibilities of St. Joseph’s Residential School.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Unknown	Principal	1903-1907
Sister A. McQuillan	Principal	1908-1925

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Sister J. Dussault	Principal	1925-1935
Sister V. Metivier	Principal	1935-1936
Sister M. L. Champoux	Principal	1936-1938
Sister Kristoff	Principal	1938-1940
Sister S. Lapointe	Principal	1940-1944
Reverend R. Lafleur	Principal	1943
Reverend Father Riou	Principal	1943
Sister O. Lavoie	Principal	1944-1948
Sister J. Dussault	Principal	1949-1952
Sister M. Boulet	Principal	1954-1957

### **Administrators**

St. Joseph's School was administered under the jurisdiction of the Oblates of the Roman Catholic Church within the Diocese of Mackenzie and the individuals listed acted as administrators of St. Joseph's Residential School. The Administrators were responsible for the overall management of the residence. Due to limited documentation, the list below might not be a complete representation of all administrators.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Reverend Gabriel Breynat, O.M.I., Bishop of Adramyte, Vicar-Apostolic of Mackenzie	Administrator	1902-1943
Reverend J.C. Lefebvre, O.M.I.	Administrator	1910 - 1928  Start and end dates unknown
Rev. J. O. Plourde, O.M.I.	Administrator	1950  Start and end dates unknown
Reverend J.M. Trocellier, O.M.I., Bishop of Adramyte, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie	Administrator	1956, 1957  Start and end dates unknown

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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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