

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. Michael's IRS
School Narrative
[April 30, 2004]

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

NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS

- **Alert Bay Boys' Home** [# 00291] **1893 - 1929**
 Residential School for Boys [# 00857]
 Indian Girls' Home at Alert Bay [# 02494]
 Boarding School for Girls [# 00297]
 Boys Industrial School [# 02518]
 Alert Bay Industrial School [# 05044]
 Alert Bay Girls' Home [# 00004]

- **Indian Residential School, Alert Bay** [# 00296] **1929 - 1974**
 St. Michael's Indian Residential School [# 00299, # 00300]
 Alert Bay Indian Residential School [# 00300, # 03078]
 St. Michael's Hostel [# 02667]
 St. Mike's [# 00682]
 St. Michael's Student Residence [# 07121]
 Alert Bay Student Residence [# 07124]
 St. Michael's Indian School [# 07137A]

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

- 1893 Alert Bay Boys' Home opened [# 00291]
 (Some educational activities appear to have occurred in Alert Bay prior to 1893
 but documents are unable to confirm this)
- 1894 Alert Bay Indian Day School (IDS) open at least as early as 1894 [# 00230];
 July 8, Indian Girls' Home at Alert Bay opened [# 02494];
 Residential School for boys opened [# 00857]
- 1905 June, Alert Bay Girls' Home closed [# 02518]
- 1912 July, Alert Bay Girls' Home re-opened [# 00257, 00291]
- 1929 November 2, official opening of new Alert Bay Indian Residential School
 [# 00296]
- 1930 Residence #4 constructed [# 01300]

- 1939 February 21, Official opening of the St. Michael's School Preventorium. To be used for: patients who are tuberculosis suspects or first infections [# 00671]
- 1941 January 1, the Preventorium became a separate institution from the school in this year [# 60292]
- 1948 Agreement between the government and the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada to have the children from the IRS attend classes at the IDS. This was undertaken on a gradual basis [# 00350]
- 1950 A further agreement was reached for all IRS children to attend the IDS for classes but, due to space constrictions at the IDS, 3 classrooms at the IRS would continue to be utilized [# 00360A, # 00355]
- 1952 90-100 children from the Alert Bay IDS and Alert Bay IRS start attending classes in the provincial schools in Alert Bay [# 01307]
- 1953 Residences # 2 and #3 constructed [# 01300]; April, Preventorium closed [# 00121]
- 1955 February, manual training building at the school was destroyed by fire [# 00954]
- 1956 Residence #5 constructed [# 01300]
- 1960 September, Grades 1-6 from the IRS will attend the IDS while grades 7 and 8 from the IRS will attend the provincial schools [# 00824]
- 1965 Kindergarten classes transferred from the Alert Bay IDS to the provincial school. In same year it was decided that Grade 8 pupils will no longer be admitted to Alert Bay IRS [# 60566]
- 1969 All IRS students attending class in provincial schools [# 07641]
Alert Bay Indian Day School closed [# 07125]
- 1972 Discussion surrounding possible closure of school, describes buildings, feelings of the community, staff etc. [# 02859A]
Correspondence indicates that students entering high school grades are transferred from the Alert Bay Residence to the Alberni Residence [# 07449]
- 1974 December 31, Alert Bay Student Residence closes [# 07765]
- 1975 April, school buildings transferred to Nimpkish Band [# 01300]
- 1982 February, all school land transferred to Nimpkish Band [# 01300]
- 1984 Buildings become known as Namgis House which consisted of: an administration office for the Nimpkish Band; an extension of North Island College; a lounge; an elementary day school; a kindergarten and pre-school; a wood carving craft school; a snack bar and live-in quarters for teachers [# 07148A]

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

From its inception in 1893 until 1922, the Alert Bay Boys' Home was managed by the Church Missionary Society. [# 00267]

From its inception in 1894 until 1922, the Alert Bay Girls' Home was managed by the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia, Anglican Church in Canada. [# 00267, # 00004]

In, or around, 1922 until 1929, both the Alert Bay Boys' Home and Girls' Home were managed by the Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada. [# 03733]

From its inception in 1929 until March 31, 1969, the school was managed by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) which later changed its name to the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada (MSCC). The MSCC had three different administrative organizations involved at the school: (1) The Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission until 1946, (2) the Indian School Administration until 1963, and (3) Residential Schools and Hostels Division until 1969. [# 01117, # 00758, # 60238]

Dates managed by Government

From April 1, 1969 until its closure in December 1974, the school was administered by the government.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- | | |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1893 | First school building erected [# 02478] |
| 1911 | New Girls' school erected. [# 00253] |
| 1916 | Verandah at Girls' School refitted to become a dormitory [# 02549, # 02556] |
| 1927 | New building erected, to be used as a classroom for boys until new school is erected at which point it will become the carpenter shop [# 03743] |
| 1929 | November 2, official opening of new Alert Bay Indian Residential School [# 00296] |
| 1930 | Residence #4 constructed [# 01300] |
| 1938 | June, fire occurred in boys' dormitory and cloak room, no injuries resulted [# 00503] |
| 1939 | February 21, Official opening of the St. Michael's School Preventorium [# 00671] |
| 1939 | June 13, fire at the school [# 00505] |

- 1946 Building of the Old Girls' Home is being used as a classroom by the school and is condemned as a fire trap [# 02066E]
- 1948 Four classroom block provided to the Alert Bay IDS from buildings secured through the War Assets Corporation from the Port Hardy Military camp [# 00358]
- 1949 October, waterproofing of entire school completed [# 05644]
- 1950 Preventorium building renovated including a new furnace, new radiators, a pantry was built [# 00133]
- 1953 Residences #2 and #3 constructed [# 01300]; Preventorium building converted into a hostel for senior girls [# 01841A]
- 1955 February, manual training building at the school was destroyed by fire [# 00954]
- 1955 Former Girls' Home building demolished [# 00905, # 00682]
- 1956 High school girls are accommodated in the former Preventorium building while the senior boys are housed in a single dormitory. Recommendations that a hostel be built near the school for the High school boys [# 00974]
- 1956 Residence #5 constructed [# 01300]
- 1957 Two staff residences constructed [# 07048, # 60368]
- 1958 Barn at school demolished [# 01175]
- 1959 New floor in Assembly Hall, improved outdoor playing areas [# 00160]
- 1961 Recent structural improvements reduced total dormitory area [# 60537]; including alterations to 2nd floor dormitory to construct new washrooms [# 10081]
- 1965 Fire Protection Survey describes buildings [# 05160, # 07106]
Contract entered into for renovation of mechanical services and replacement of heating system [# 03539]
- 1966 IRS building re-roofed [# 07111]
- 1967 Fire Protection Survey describes buildings [# 07112]
- 1968 Renovations to mechanical system and new fire sprinkler system undertaken [# 60399B]
- 1970 A dwelling on the school land is transferred from the North Island District to the school "...to meet his urgent housing needs." [# 60335]
- 1971 Trailer moved from Lejac Student Residence to Alert Bay Student Residence and was used as staff accommodation [# 60327B]

1975 April, school buildings transferred to Nimpkish Band [# 01300]

In the late 1950s and the 1960s, several data forms regarding staff accommodation were completed. These "Data on Dwellings" forms described the rooms, fixtures and occupants amongst other things. [# 60373C, # 60374, # 60377, # 60376, # 60362, # 60345A, # 60345B, # 60351, # 60375, # 60342A, # 60342B]

LAND

- 1891 A Minute of Decision dated March 5, 1891 set aside a reserve of 410 acres on the western side of Cormorant Island for the purpose of an Indian Industrial School [# 05034]
- 1927 Correspondence discussed the land surrounding the two schools and where the new school ought to be located [# 06962]
- 1931 Lease Agreement between the Anglican Synod of British Columbia and the Government for the leasing of the water frontage near the school and its wharf [# 06679]
- 1939 June 21, Industrial School Reserve, Cormorant Island, the title was transferred to the Dominion Government as an ordinary Indian Reserve [# 01383, # 60127]
- 1946 It was noted that in this year 35 of the 45 acres of school land were under cultivation [# 60276]
- 1948 Boundaries of the land needed for the school agreed to between the government and Missionary Society of the Church of England, the land was greatly reduced [# 60039]; value of the property was \$17,000.00 [# 10456]
- 1950 March, land known as Lot 1957 (Industrial School Reserve, Cormorant Island) was set aside as Alert Bay Indian Reserve No. 1 [illegible] with the exception of the Industrial School site [# 02651, # 60127]
- 1962 Lease given to Alert Bay Air Services for a portion of the school land [# 60019]
- 1968 5-year Lease given to Alert Bay Air Services for a portion of the school land upon which an aircraft maintenance hanger and ramp will be constructed [# 60140]
- 1972 Discussion of who owns school land and history of ownership [# 60127]
- 1982 February, all school land transferred to Nimpkish Band [# 01300]

PHOTOS, PLANS AND OTHER MEDIA

00/00/0000	01055P	Photograph
00/00/0000	01055V	Photograph
00/00/0000	01055Z	Photograph
00/00/0000	01055AA	Photograph
00/00/0000	60496	Plan
1882 (circa)	07278A	Sketch
1892 (circa)	00403	Plan of proposed Industrial School
1892 (circa)	00404	Front view of proposed school
1925 (circa)	06892A	Sketch
1928	00291	Newsletter
1929 (circa)	01055	Photograph
1929 (circa)	01055A	Photograph
1929 (circa)	00428	Newspaper article
1929 (circa)	00972B	Photograph
1929 (circa)	00972C	Photograph
1929 (circa)	00972D	Photograph
1929 (circa)	00972E	Photograph
1929 (circa)	00972F	Photograph
1929 (circa)	01055Q	Photograph
1929 (circa)	01055R	Photograph
1930 (circa)	01055[O]	Photograph
1940 (circa)	01055J	Photograph
1940 (circa)	01055K	Photograph
1940 (circa)	01055L	Photograph
June 3, 1940	01115	Plan
1943 (circa)	03674A	Plan
6/5/ 1944	02773	Newspaper Article
November 18, 1944	02769	Newspaper Article
June 12, 1946	02066C	Plan

1948 (circa)	60016	Plan
April 21, 1948	00338	Newspaper Article
1949 (circa)	01003	Photographs
1950	00133	Annual Magazine
July 18, 1950	00972A	Photograph
1951 (circa)	03423E	Plan
1951 (circa)	03423F	Plan
1951 (circa)	01275A	Map
1951 (circa)	03349	Plan
1952 (circa)	03154	Plan
1952 (circa)	03155	Plan
1953 (circa)	07005	Plan
1958 (circa)	60363	Plan
1958 (circa)	60364	Plan
1958 (circa)	60371	Plan
1958 (circa)	60372	Plan
1958 (circa)	60373	Plan
January 12, 1961	07090	Newspaper Article
February 23, 1961	07092	Newspaper Article
1963 (circa)	60375C	Plan
1963 (circa)	60342C	Plan
January 6, 1964	60156A	Plan
1965 (circa)	00680	Souvenir Guide
1965 (circa)	07000	Newspaper article
1965 (circa)	05160A	Photographs
1965 (circa)	05160B	Plan
1966	01055E	Photograph
1966 (circa)	01055G	Photograph
January 1968	07652	Newsletter
February 21, 1968	07116	Newspaper article
May 1968	00682	Newsletter

May 1, 1968	07118	Newspaper article
June 26, 1968	07119	Newspaper article
January 3, 1969	07115	Newspaper photograph
March 5, 1969	07121	Photograph
October 1969	07124	Newspaper article
October 1969	07125	Newspaper article
October 1969	07126	Newspaper article
December 1969	07127	Newspaper article
December 1969	07129	Photograph
April 1970	07133	Newspaper article
1972 (circa)	60121B	Map
1972 (circa)	03115	Newspaper article
1972 (circa)	07001	Newspaper article
1972 (circa)	07002	Newspaper article
1972, spring	07134	Newspaper article
1973 (circa)	07137A	Newspaper article
1973 (circa)	No document #	Newspaper article
February 15, 1973	03106	Newspaper article
September 20, 1973	07137	Photograph
1974 (circa)	07003	Newspaper article
June 1974	07138	Newspaper article
June 13, 1974	07139	Newspaper article
September 4, 1974	07140	Newspaper article
September 18, 1974	07141	Newspaper article
1975	01055[I]	Photograph
January 23, 1975	07142	Newspaper article
1984	07147	Newspaper Letter
January 31, 1992	07149	Newspaper photograph

GENERAL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

1894	35 students in residence at Boy's Home; 10 students in residence at Girls' Home
1916	32 students in residence at Girls' Home
1922	36 students in residence at Girls' Home
1924	42 students in residence at Boys' Home
1928	43 students in residence at Boys' Home
1937	204 children in residence
1944	120 children in residence
1950	210 students in residence
1959	228 children in residence, of these 147 attending IDS for classes and 81 attending provincial school
1961	168 children in residence
1969	153 children in residence
1972	85 children in residence
1974	36 children in residence

STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES

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

Ahwamish, Aiyansh, Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Campbell River, Canyon City, Cape Mudge, Gilford Island, Gitlakdamix, Greenville, Hartley Bay, Kincolith, Kitamaat, Kitasoo, Kitkatla, Kitselas, Kitsumkaylum, Kitwancool, Kitwanga, Klemtu, Klowitsis, Kwawawain, Kwawkewlth, Kwawwawaineuk, Kwickeutaineuk, Lakalzap, Mamalillikulla, Masset, Matilpi, Metlakatla, Nakwakto, Nimpkish, Nishga, Nuwhitti, Oweekayno, Port Essington, Port Simpson, Quatsino, Quawshelah, Skidegate, Squamish, Tanateuk, Tsawataineuk, Tsimpshen, Turnour Island.

There may be alternate ways of spelling these band names.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Church of England (Anglican Church) [# 00225]

Anglican Church of Canada [# 00758], including the Women's Auxiliary (WA) [# 00291]

The Church of England is the mother Church of the Anglican Communion, which covers many countries, including Canada.

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

1912	Agreement for the Operation of a School, between His Majesty the King, represented by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs of Canada and the Right Reverend John Charles Roper, D.D., Bishop of Columbia, Victoria, British Columbia. June 8, 1912 [# 00004]
1948	Agreement between the government and the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada to have the children from the IRS attend classes at the IDS. [# 00350]

- 1962 Agreement for the Operation of Alert Bay Indian Residential School, between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and The Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada. May 1, 1962 [# 03078]
- 1970 Chaplaincy Service Contract. November 4, 1970 [# 02865]

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Convictions

William Peniston Starr, Physical Education Instructor at St. Michael's IRS between approximately March 4 and June 30, 1956, was convicted, in 1992, of 13 counts of sexual and indecent assault of children at Gordon's IRS in Saskatchewan between the years 1968 and 1983. [Indictment and Judgment of the Court]

The following suggestions of abuse, 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 (Physical)

In 1947, a student wrote home to her father stating that a staff member beat her up with a paddle until she was swollen and that she was locked up in a dormitory. [# 02782B] A telegraph from the same year requested an investigation into the conditions at the school due to allegations of "...physical abuse and insufficient food..." [# 06520]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 1917, some girls snuck out of the school building at night in order to "...see some of the camp boys." Six girls were given a "thrashing" as punishment. [# 24101]

In 1918, two girls attempted to burn down the Alert Bay Girls Home. As punishment they were "caned". [# 00272]

In 1924, two fires occurred at the Alert Bay Girls' Home, on the 7th and 15th of September. Three girls at the school confessed to starting these fires, all three were publicly whipped and one was expelled as punishment. [# 02612]

As early as 1924, a cadet corps was operated at the school. [# 00286, # 00291] In 1944 they were described as "...one of the best-trained juvenile groups in Canada." [# 02773] In at least 1952, there was a room specifically set aside for the cadets at the school. [# 03378] In April of 1958 it was noted that the Cadet Corps had disbanded. [# 01171] In October 1969, it was noted that Air Cadets, with 16 boys, and Scouts, with 8 boys, were launched. [# 07125]

In 1947, there were complaints made about the conditions at the school. It appears that between 25 and 30 children had run away from the school due to the poor conditions. As a result of the complaints an inspection was carried out which concluded that the resignations of the Principal and Vice-Principal should be accepted. In addition to the conditions at the school, there was a report that, on three occasions, staff members were assaulted by Indians from the nearby reserve. [IRC # 48090A, IRC # 48090C, # 02782B, # 02781A, # 02782, # 02778, # 06514, # 02787B, # 02790A, # 06520]

A lack of hot water at the school in 1949 resulted in correspondence regarding the lack of bathing the children were receiving. One instance of boys not having been bathed for two weeks was documented. [# 05240A]

In February of 1952, a complaint was made by a student in a letter to her father about the treatment she and the other girls at the school were receiving from the staff members. In particular, she mentions a strapping given to one of the girls. In response, the Indian Superintendent indicates that the girls' punishment was deserved and that the real problem was with staff members who sided with the pupils, he also states in regards to the Principal that "...his temper got the best of him and he poured it on..." [# 00125, # 00126]

In 1952 there were two incidents of break-ins at St. Michael's IRS. In the first incident a female staff member was assaulted in her bedroom in the residence at night by "An Indian about 26 years of age, former pupil of this school..." In the second incident, a man entered a staff bedroom in the night and was apprehended. [# 00697A]

In 1960, 1964, 1968, 1969 and 1970, food service inspections were undertaken at the school. These inspections by Regional Nutritionists generated reports regarding a broad spectrum of topics including: cooking staff, kitchen, menu, dining room, bakery, store rooms, quality of food and nutrition. [# 00753B, # 00753C, # 00208, # 00156A, # 07785A, # 07786B]

In July 1963, there was correspondence regarding a member of the staff. In particular there was a report regarding the book-keeping practices at the school and the strapping of thirteen students in front of the school. The government concluded that the staff member should be removed from his position. [# 60243C, # 00662, # 00661]

In June of 1965, a water shortage in Alert Bay caused the IDS and the IRS to close a few days in advance of normal summer holidays. [# 01692]

The students at the school, in April 1970, donated and raised money and purchased a swimming pool for the Alert Bay Student Residence. [# 07133]

Arts and Crafts at the school

Throughout the history of the school, it appears that Indian arts and crafts were undertaken. The earliest mention of the work the children did in this regard was in 1936 and there were further references throughout the years. [# 00324, # 01055J, # 07121, # 07118] In 1940, two totem poles were purchased and erected in front of the school. [# 02717, # 01055L] In March of 1963, it was noted that the school was holding classes in carving with a group of about 15 boys. [# 10143]

Farm at the school

It appears that a farm was in operation at the school from approximately 1910 until approximately 1957. An effort was made to provide sufficient vegetables, butter and milk for the entire school. In addition, instruction was given to the pupils in operating the farm. [# 07214, # 00972A, # 06995, # 00195, # 06964, # 03746, # 05881, # 02693, # 00188D, # 60276, # 60272A]

Work at the school

It appears that at various time frames, children were expected to work at the school.

In 1916, complaints were made that at the Girls' Home, the children were being required to do general work around the school which they should not have been asked to do. [# 00267] A similar complaint was noted in 1917 in regards to the Alert Bay Boys' Home. [# 02579]

In 1944, it was reported that after grade four, the children attended school only half a day and spent the other half of the day working in the garden, kitchen or laundry. [# 02769]

Health at the school

There were numerous outbreaks of influenza, measles and chickenpox at St. Michael's IRS throughout its history. [# 00196, # 00092, # 03335, # 01317C, # 00196, # 00133, # 02743]

It appears that a dispensary and infirmary was located at St. Michael's IRS between at least 1950 and 1968. [# 01003, page 2, # 03423F # 00133, # 01834, # 07652]

The Preventorium, built in 1939 [# 00671, # 01115] and closed in 1953, [# 00121] was used for "...patients who are tuberculosis suspects or first infections. They stay from 6 months to 2 years, being admitted from St. Michael's School or convalescents from Nanaimo and Miller Bay Hospital ... Occupational therapy and classroom instruction are a daily routine... The staff consists of a Nurse Matron, Teacher, Kitchen Matron and General Assistant." [# 00133, 60342C]

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Rev. A.W. Corker	"In Charge"	05/30/1893 - 12/00/1893
	Principal	12/00/1893 - 04/06/1921
Rev. Alfred J. Hall	Acting Principal	07/00/1906 - 07/00/1907
Rev. F. Comley	Acting Principal	06/00/1915 - 06/00/1916
Vivian Spencer Lord	Principal	04/13/1921 - 04/18/1923
B.W. Todd	Acting Principal	04/18/1923 - 06/01/1923
Rev. F.S. Spackman	Acting Principal	06/01/1923 - 09/17/1924
	Principal	09/17/1924 - 11/30/1926
Rev. F. Comley	Acting Principal	12/01/1926 - 12/31/1926
Frank Earl Anfield	Acting Principal	01/00/1927 - 02/05/1932
	Principal	02/05/1932 - 10/15/1943
Allan Wallace Derrom	Temporary Acting Principal	10/13/1943 - 11/15/1943
Rev. S.J. Wickens	Principal	11/15/1943 - 10/25/1947
R.D. Forrester	Temporary Acting Principal	10/25/1947 - 11/24/1947
Rev. B.O.G. Dixon	Principal	11/24/1947 - 09/00/1948

Rev. John Edwin Allsopp	Principal	10/00/1948 - 05/00/1951
Rev. A.B. Cheales	Principal	05/00/1951 - 10/20/1954
Rev. John L. Dalton	Principal	10/20/1954 - 01/07/1963
R.A. Mayling	Principal	01/07/1963 - 04/30/1964
Dennis J. Wheeler	Acting Principal	01/13/1964 - 02/03/1964
Dave Lawson	Principal	05/01/1964 - 06/00/1965
Joseph John Warner	Principal/Administrator	09/00/1965 - 05/00/1972
Dennis J. Wheeler	Administrator	06/00/1972 - 12/31/1974

Narrative completed: July 6, 2004

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

