

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. Andrew's [Whitefish Lake] IRS
IAP School Narrative
January 11, 2010

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

NAME OF SCHOOL AND VARIANTS

- Whitefish Lake Anglican Residential School [WFL-000559¹]
- St. Andrew's Mission [WFL-000701]
- Church of England school at Whitefish Lake [WFL-000242]
- St. Andrew's Indian Boarding School [WFL-000228]
- St. Andrew's Mission Boarding School [WFL-000630]
- Whitefish Lake (C.E.) Boarding School [WFL-000016]
- Whitefish Lake (St. Andrew's Mission) Boarding School [WFL-000020]
- Whitefish Lake Indian Boarding School [WFL-000258]
- Whitefish Lake C.E. Indian Day School #769 and Sovereign Indian Day School #728 [WFL-000175]

Years during which the school was operated solely or in part by the Federal Government as a residence for school age students

September 1, 1908 to June 30, 1950

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

A. Opening Dates

1892 - Whitefish Lake Mission founded [WFL-000105].

1893 - Summer of 1893, day school building at Whitefish Lake erected [WFL-000770].

1904 - Day school resumes operation: Reverend W.G. White decided to take a small number of boarders into the mission house. "Since school opened on Nov. 4th we have had the entire care of 10 children, besides giving a good dinner to the 6 or 7 day scholars that attend" [WFL-000244].

1906 - New residence school building opens with day pupils also attending [WFL-000105; WFL-000558].

1907 - Whitefish Lake is "only recognized by the Department as [a] day school" and receives only the day school grant [WFL-000237].

1908 - St. Peters IRS boarding school grant transferred to St. Andrew's IRS, which had up until this point been considered a day school by the government [WFL-000234; WFL-000323; WFL-

¹ Documents cited with the prefix WFL are from the St. Andrew's [Whitefish Lake] IRS, Alberta Document Collection. These are Crown-sourced documents.

000324-0000; WFL-000324-0001; WFL-000602]. There are five Indian children in residence during this year, and others attending as day students [WFL-000320].

1909 – “[W]e have only one child in continuous residence” [WFL-000229]; however, there are 20 pupils in residence at Whitefish Lake [WFL-000631].

1910 - Government increases per capita grant at Whitefish Lake Boarding School to twenty five pupils [WFL-000019]. Government grants are to be given to Indian children only, and preferably to orphans and children of destitute parents [WFL-000313-0000]. Since the school buildings were owned by the Church, Metis and Non-Treaty children were able to be admitted to the IRS as “charity cases”; however, the IRS could not receive government grants for these students [WFL-800074].

1915 - The Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) requested that due to falling enrolment at Whitefish Lake IRS and increasing enrolment at St. Peter’s IRS, the boarding school grant formerly transferred from the latter to Whitefish Lake be re-established at St. Peter’s IRS, while the Day school grant is transferred back to Whitefish Lake [WFL-000307]. Ultimately, the government did re-establish boarding school status at St. Peter’s IRS, while also keeping boarding school status at Whitefish Lake [WFL-000605].

1928-1929 - The erection of a new school with a 100-pupil capacity to replace those at St. John’s IRS, St. Peter’s IRS, and Whitefish Lake IRS is discussed as a means of reducing the funds required of the MSCC to run three small schools in remote locations [WFL-000040-0000; WFL-000109; WFL-000114; WFL-000303; WFL-000304; WFL-000305]. This building was never built [WFL-000585].

1932 - Upon the closing of St. Peter’s IRS, its pupils were transferred to Whitefish Lake IRS and St. John’s IRS, as was school equipment [WFL-000027; WFL-000028; WFL-000301].

1934-1936 - The MSCC began issuing requests for an amalgamation of St. Andrew’s IRS and St. John’s IRS into a modern building capable of accommodating 75 children. The government began preparations for such a building, though it was never erected [WFL-000069; WFL-000079; WFL-000086; WFL-000087; WFL-000091; WFL-000092; WFL-000093; WFL-000101; WFL-000576].

1949 - The large majority of children attending the school are from the local village, and “only one child came from outside the village” [WFL-800140].

1950 – Classroom portion of school closed June 30, 1950 [WFL-000180]; Whitefish Lake IRS buildings and facilities are converted into day school effective September 1, 1950 [WFL-000172; WFL-000180; WFL-000280; WFL-000283; WFL-000739]. It is unknown whether a much discussed new day school building was ever constructed. “Whitefish Lake School ceased to operate as of August 31st, 1950, by arrangement between Indian Affairs, the Diocese and [Indian School Administration]” [AAC-082800²].

1951 - January 10, Whitefish Lake Day School was renamed the “Sovereign Indian Day School” and the school number was changed from #769 to #728 [WFL-000175].

² Documents cited with the prefix AAC are from the Other Party General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada Document Collection. These are not Crown-sourced documents.

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

A. Dates Managed by Church

1923 – St. Andrew’s IRS [Whitefish Lake IRS] was under Diocesan Control prior to 1923; after this date control moved to the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church in Canada (MSCC) [GRG-025525³].

1924 - The government notes that school is conducted under “M.S.C.C. auspices” [WFL-000159].

1925 – “The Department has made no arrangement with the [MSCC] regarding any repairs that may be needed to the buildings of the schools conducted under their auspices...” [WFL-000039].

1947 – “This is a church-owned school and the M.S.C.C....operate it” [WFL-000529].

1949 – The school is administered by the Indian School Administration of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada [CGY-081354⁴].

B. Dates Managed by Crown

N/A

C. Band Involvement

No band involvement in management of school

D. Provincial Involvement

No Provincial involvement in management of St. Andrew’s IRS

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

A. Dates of building, renovations, additions, that are part of the IRS complex

1893 - Log day school building “built of logs, with shingled roof... 20 by 22 feet” [WFL-000770].

1906 – “We have just put up a new building which though not quite complete has been made comfortable for the winter” [WFL-000040-0001; WFL-000109; WFL-000558]. School is large enough for 30 or 40 pupils [WFL-000242].

1923 - The school buildings “are very poor, and do not measure up to the standards required by your Department” [WFL-000458].

³ Documents cited with the prefix GRG are from the St. George’s IRS, British Columbia Document Collection. These are Crown-sourced documents.

⁴ Documents cited with the prefix CGY are from the Other Party - Anglican - Synod of the Diocese of Calgary Document Collection. These are not Crown-sourced documents.

1924 - Roof noted as requiring repairs [WFL-000159; WFL-000160]. Hail storm “broke seven windows in the main school building, two in the Mission House” and damaged the “kitchen roof as well as the roofs of the stores and other buildings” [WFL-000161]. Contractor recommended that “no repairs be placed on the present main building. The main timbers are decayed and the floor joists are in bad condition. It is recommended that logs be taken out this winter and a new building erected in the spring” [WFL-000157; WFL-000158]. The MSCC did not approve of the erection of a log building suggested as a replacement for the current school building, and requested that a new school be established at Lesser Slave Lake to replace St. Peter’s IRS and Whitefish Lake IRS [WFL-000155; WFL-000156]. A decision was made to make the main building at the Whitefish Lake IRS habitable for the coming winter [WFL-000152-0000; WFL-000154].

1925 - Required repairs included: replacement of rotting floor in boys’ dormitory and replacement of one of the mission buildings’ roofs [WFL-000132; WFL-000141]. The new roof was then installed on the school [AAC-085165; AAC-085166].

1927 - Requested by Church from Department of Indian Affairs: “Repairs to main school building and stable, new implement shed, and poultry house... Total estimated cost \$3000.00” [AAC-090258]. A list of improvements to the school that year and paid for by the government included “a platform in front of the school, a new floor in the children’s dining room, eaves troughs and down pipes, Singer sewing machine provided, and also copper reservoir for the kitchen range, etc.” [AAC-085181].

1928 - Initial correspondence begins concerning the government’s wish to build a new classroom building at Whitefish Lake IRS [WFL-000119; WFL-000121; WFL-000123].

1929 - Inspection notes that there are no fire escapes from the dormitories at Whitefish Lake IRS [WFL-000116; WFL-000117]. “[M]ain school building... is made of logs and was built by [the MSCC] some years ago... [T]he building itself is more like a big farm house than a school” [WFL-000116]. A fire escape was then added to the school building [AAC-085200].

1931 - Description of buildings includes: “...the residence for the children [erected over twenty-five years ago], a residence for the Principal [erected about thirty-five years ago], a separate building for a classroom, a horse and cow stable, as well as a storehouse. All the buildings have been constructed with log walls” [WFL-000107-0001].

1936 - Building conditions are described as ‘deplorable’, money for minor repairs is allocated [WFL-000068; WFL-000069].

1938 - Sleeping quarters were enlarged [WFL-000410].

1938 - 1940 - The old Church is torn down and a new Church and Community/Public Hall are under construction [WFL-800039⁵].

⁵ Documents cited with the prefix WFL-8 are from the Other Party documents within the St. Andrew’s [Whitefish Lake] IRS, Alberta Document Collection. These documents are from the Anglican Diocese of Athabasca Fonds, Provincial Archives of Alberta Collection. These are not Crown-sourced documents.

1939 - Building conditions described as dangerous [WFL-000573; WFL-000720-0006]. The following buildings are noted as being on the school ground: Main home building; New addition to home building; Principal's Residence; Day School; Church building; Public Hall; Workshop; Store House [WFL-000380; WFL-000392].

1942 - New school building requested by Church from the government large enough to accommodate potentially 80 pupils; pupilage increased from 30 to 35; a new dormitory was added to the existing building to accommodate the extra students. The Church supplied the school with a new stock barn [AAC-087161].

1943 - Difficulty in retaining and recruiting staff is attributed to condition of buildings [WFL-000363]; addition made to school residence [WFL-000362].

1944 - Department notes that Indians of the Whitefish Lake reserve have made enquiries into purchase of "two old one story buildings on the White Fish Lake Reserve, one the old school and the other the old teacherage" [WFL-000668]. The buildings are described as "primitive" and in "poor condition"; it is also noted that "water must be drawn from a hole in the ice on the lake", and the fire risk at the school is high [JON-800274⁶]. Due to the condition of the buildings, recommendation is made to dismantle them for lumber, to be given to the Indians at no charge [WFL-000669].

1944 – 1948 - Minor building repairs and additions undertaken, including the construction of a fire escape for the girls' dormitory [WFL-000494-0000; WFL-000520; WFL-000536; WFL-000543; WFL-000566].

1946 - Director clarifies that a new school building will not be erected at Whitefish Lake School [WFL-000210]

1947 - Electric lighting plant with batteries acquired [AAC-087449]. List of Church owned buildings: Mission House and Boarding School Building; Dwelling; 1st Storehouse; 2nd Storehouse; School [AAC-082695].

1949 - The following buildings are noted with valuations on the School grounds: Shed; 3 barns; stables; Post Office; School; Staff and Quarters residences; Diesel room; Roots House & Work Shop; Warehouse; Watchman Residence [WFL-000353; WFL-000482]. Recommendation is given by Department of Indian Affairs not to purchase the Whitefish Lake IRS from the MSCC, and that the Roman Catholic day school is sufficient to handle the needs of the area [WFL-000466; WFL-000268].

1950 - Discussion begins on converting Atikameg Day School (then a Roman Catholic day school) into an Anglican day school to allow for Whitefish IRS to close, and its pupils to attend a day school [WFL-000195]. Existing classrooms and present living quarters were to be used as a Day School until construction began on a new school building [WFL-000186; WFL-000279; CGY-081348]. The government rented accommodation from the MSCC at Whitefish Lake IRS as new day school building could not be built in 1950 [WFL-000285; WFL-000287].

⁶ Documents cited with the prefix JON-8 are from the Other Party documents within the St. John's [Wabasca] IRS, Alberta Document Collection. This document is from the Anglican Diocese of Athabasca Fonds, Provincial Archives of Alberta Collection. These are not Crown-sourced documents.

1950 - Whitefish Lake IRS buildings and facilities are converted into day school [WFL-000175; WFL-000280]. A description of the school and accompanying photographs of the school and its associated buildings circa 1950 was created [WFL-000172]; the complex included school classroom building, teachers' residence, and a community hall.

B. Dates owned by Church

1906-1950 - Church built the school and has ownership [WFL-000053; WFL-000096; WFL-000596].

1929 - “[M]ain school building... is made of logs and was built by [the MSCC] some years ago.” [WFL-000116; WFL-000303].

1938 - “[T]he Whitefish Lake Indian Residential School is the property of the Church of England” [WFL-000427].

1944 - Department notes that Indians of the Whitefish Lake reserve have made enquiries into purchase of “two old one story buildings on the White Fish Lake Reserve, one the old school and the other the old teacherage” [WFL-000668]. Due to the condition of the buildings, recommendation is made to dismantle them for lumber, to be given to the Indians at no charge [WFL-000669].

1946 - “The building is owned by the M.S.C.C...” [WFL-000212; WFL-000611].

1948 - Governmental letter regarding suggestion of purchase of Whitefish Lake IRS buildings from the MSCC [WFL-000683].

1949 - Recommendation is given to not purchase the Whitefish Lake IRS from the MSCC, and that a day school opens in place of the IRS [WFL-000268; WFL-000291; WFL-000466].

1950 - The government closed the Residential School as of August 30, 1950 [CGY-081348] and rented IRS classrooms and teacherage from MSCC for use as a day school [WFL-000181].

1952 - The property at Whitefish Lake, Alberta, formerly owned by the Indian School Administration of the Church of England in Canada “has now been transferred to the Diocese of Athabasca” [WFL-000348].

C. Dates owned by Crown

1947 - An Anglican Church document c. 1952 discussing “Sale of Northern Schools” quotes 1947 Board of Management meeting minutes which note: “That negotiations be opened at once with the Dominion Government with a view to the sale of the Indian Residential School buildings, erected and owned by the M.S.C.C., at... [numerous schools mentioned]... (Wabasca and Whitefish Lake added later) and that the proceeds of the sale of these buildings be applied on the accumulated operating deficit of the [Indian School Administration]” [CGY-081898-0000].

LAND

A. Treaty Number; location on or off reserve; name of closest town

Treaty 8 area; off-reserve [WFL-000313-0000; WFL-000015; WFL-000627; WFL-000631]

Location: "... on the Little Whitefish Lake... 45 miles north east of Grouard, and about 60 miles from Enilda, closest railway point..." [WFL-000107-0001]

B. Dates Owned by Church

Owned by the Anglican Church of Canada for the entire lifetime of St. Andrew's IRS from 1908 to 1950

C. Dates Owned by Government

N/A

D. Dates of changes of Ownership

N/A

PHOTOS, PLANS AND OTHER MEDIA

Item #	Date	Description
WFL-000173	00/00/0000	Photo of school and residence building
NCA-010284 ⁷	05/00/1948	Photo of school and residence building
WFL-000747-0000	06/17/1950	Written description of individual buildings at St. Andrew's IRS
WFL-000747-0001	06/17/1950	Photos of school and outbuildings
WFL-000172	09/11/1950	Photos of school and outbuildings; written description

GENERAL ENROLMENT STATISTICS OVER TIME

NOTE: Day and residential pupils attended classes together at St. Andrew's IRS during the lifetime of the residence. Enrolment figures are shown from 1920 to the date of the closing of the residence in June 30, 1950. In most documents, only the total numbers of pupils are shown for any given school year. In some cases, only an average number for the year is available.

For school years where documents are available to show a differentiation between residential and day pupils, the figures are shown in separate columns. Where discrepancies in student numbers appear on documents for the same school year, the highest number found is shown on the table. For some years only Treaty pupils are shown on available documents.

Year	Number of Students	Residents	Day Pupils
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⁷This document is from the Anglican General Synod Archives. This is not a Crown-sourced document.

Year	Number of Students	Residents	Day Pupils
1920/21	28		
1921/22	27		
1922/23	27		
1923/24	20	18	
1924/25	28		
1925/26	41	30	
1926/27	40	29	
1927/28	42		
1928/29	40	26	
1929/30	29		
1930/31	31		
1931/32	30	18	
1932/33	29		
1933/34		29	
1934/35		31	
1935/36	39	29	
1936/37	43	31	
1937/38	41		
1938/39	41		
1939/40	44		
1940/41	51		
1941/42	No information found		
1942/43	33		
1943/44	33		
1944/45	No information found		
1945/46	No information found		
1946/47	25		
1947/48	31		
1948/49	25		
1949/50	37		

STUDENTS FROM OTHER RESERVES

No information located

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

St. Andrew's [Whitefish Lake] IRS was owned and operated by the Indian School Administration of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada. No documents have been located to show that any other religious group managed or operated St. Andrew's Residence at any time during its existence as a student hostel.

1901 - School operates "in connection with the London England Missionary Society" [WFL-000701]

1907 - School conducted under the auspices of the Church of England. [WFL-000241]

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

1910 - Memorandum and Draft Agreement for Church of England Schools in Canada including St. Andrews IRS [Whitefish Lake]; the memorandum explains terms of the agreement, authorized pupilage and amount of per capita grant per school [AAC-090237].

1911 - School Operating Agreement [WFL-000629]

1920 - Sample [blank] agreement between the Board of Management of Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada and the Authorities of a Diocese, by which the Board of the Missionary Society "is prepared to assume financial responsibility for the support of the Indian and Eskimo work in the Dominion of Canada..." including education and negotiations for funding from the Federal Government [AAC-084822-0000].

1922 - Agreement between the Board of Management of Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada and the Authorities of the Diocese of Athabaska regarding responsibility for the funding of Boarding Schools in the Diocese [AAC-084563].

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Incidents (Physical)

To date, we are unaware of any convictions for abuse at St. Andrews [Whitefish Lake] IRS or of any convicted abusers present at the school.

1946 - A report concerning an incident involving the Principal and 3 female pupils of Whitefish Lake reads, "Nurse Helen Marshall advised she had received disturbing information from a teacher at the Whitefish school that the principal there had stripped the girls and strapped them as punishment." It appears that the school matron had lost \$15.00 of school funds and that \$5.00 had been found by a female pupil. She spent the money on treats which were "distributed amongst the girls." During the nurse's visit, a 15 year old male pupil also reported that he had received strapping from the Principal. It was recommended that "Mr. M. McCrimmon, on his next visit to the Lesser Slave Lake Agency, be instructed to investigate these charges completely and fully, and submit a report so that... the necessary disciplinary action may be taken" [WFL-000626; IRC-040067⁸].

⁸ Documents cited with the prefix IRC are from the Incident Report Document Collection. These are Crown-sourced documents.

1948 – Summary report that references corporal punishment administered by Principal as injurious to students [WFL-800142].

Other Incidents

1937 – Allegation that Principal physically and verbally assaulted a parent of one of the students [WFL-071166].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Health

1928 - The Matron notes in telegram to Field Secretary, MSCC, that “all the pupils were ill” [WFL-000247].

1938 - The School Principal notes in a Letter to the government that health and conduct conditions have improved at the school as a result of each child sleeping in their own bed and not sharing beds [WFL-000405-0000].

1948 - There is a polio outbreak on the Whitefish Lake Reserve, delaying the school opening by two weeks. Children are slow to return to the school, and only one student returns on the opening day [WFL-800057].

1950 - Measles epidemic [WFL-800122-0000]

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Name	Position	Tenure Dates
Reverend W.G. White	Principal/Administrator	1904-1909
Reverend C.D. White	Principal/Administrator	1909-1937
Reverend Robert Thompson Cathcart	Principal/Administrator	1937-1948
Reverend George Skelton Johnston	Principal/Administrator	1948-1950

Narrative Completed: January 11, 2010

Narrative Updated:

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



National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA