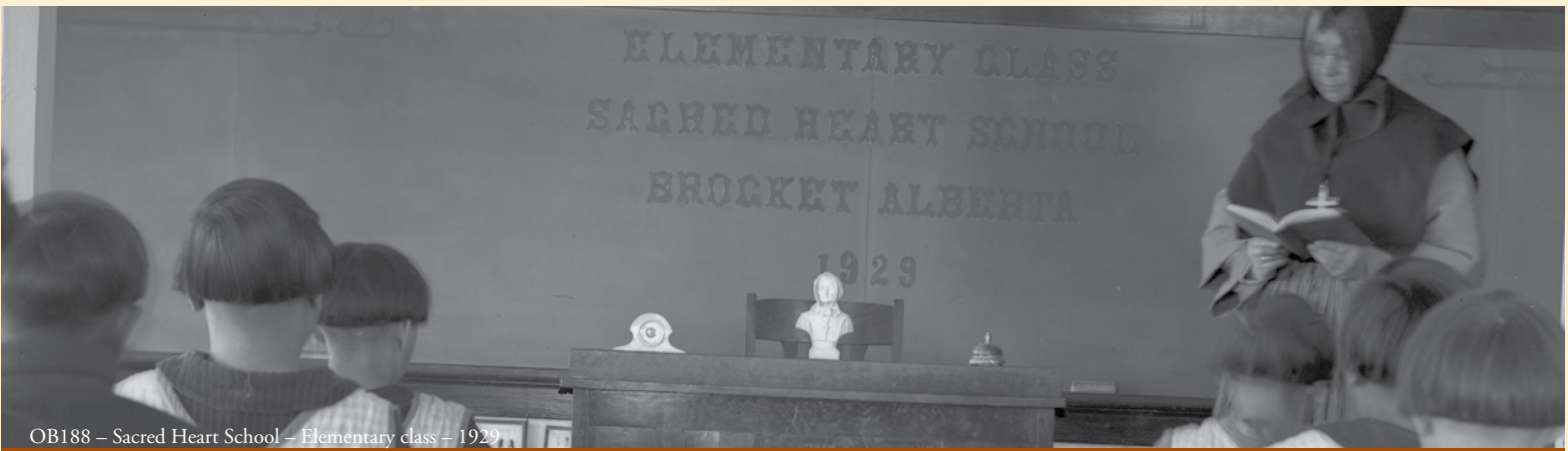




Roman Catholic  
**Indian Residential Schools**  
in Alberta



OB188 – Sacred Heart School – Elementary class – 1929

**Prior to the development of the Indian Boarding or Residential School system established by the federal government, mission schools existed in several locations.**

These early mission schools were sometimes day schools, but often an orphanage / school would be established within a convent so the orphans could be given an education.

In the 1880s, as a result of treaties being signed and commitments made to provide an education to the Aboriginal peoples, the government built a few Indian Industrial Schools. The first in Alberta was Dunbow, or St. Joseph's Industrial School, which opened in 1884 at High River.

In 1892, an Order in Council mandated the financing of Indian Schools through a per capita grant system; this remained in place until 1958, when it was replaced by controlled cost accounting.

In 1911, an agreement was signed by various Catholic Entities and the federal government for the Maintenance and Management of Indian Boarding Schools. The agreement was for a five-year term and was not generally renewed.

After the First World War, the government decided to move away from the Industrial Schools as they had proven to be more expensive and less effective than the Indian Boarding Schools already in existence in many locations. Dunbow School was closed in 1922 and its assets (livestock, equipment, supplies) transferred to other Catholic Indian Boarding Schools in southern Alberta. The government also began a program of building Indian Residential Schools. Over the ensuing years, new government-owned schools were constructed at various locations, many to replace existing Church-owned Indian Boarding Schools.

By 1920, the Government of Canada introduced strict school attendance legislation which required all 'Indian' children between the ages of 7 and 15 to

attend an Indian Residential School of their faith. Until about 1950, most students went only as far as Grade 8 (15 years of age), and while the official starting age for students was 7, many did not start until they were older.

In the 1940s, some residential schools began accepting 'day students' that attended classes at the school but did not stay in residence. By the mid-1950s, some residential schools began offering high school classes.

On September 1, 1954, all (religious and lay) teachers employed at government-owned schools became federal government employees.

In 1958, the per capita grant system was replaced by a controlled cost accounting system. It should be noted that during the entire per capita grant period, as well as the new accounting system, school accounts were audited annually by federal auditors and any shortfall had to be made up by the institution itself. At many schools and for many years, staff members were never able to draw a salary as the per capita grant was insufficient to cover all the school expenses. In addition, during both World Wars as well as the Depression, the amount of the per capita grant was cut by the government and generally not fully restored to what it had been prior to the cut.

In 1968, administrations were split between a residence administrator and a school principal, each overseeing their respective administrations.

On April 1, 1969, all remaining staff (lay and religious) at the schools and residences became government employees, effectively ending the role of Catholic entities in the institutions.

In 1970, Blue Quills School at St. Paul closed; parents occupied the school building and in 1971, the school reopened under Band administration. The last Indian Residential School closed in 1996, but a few former residential schools remain in operation today run by individual First Nations communities.

During the span of the Indian Industrial / Boarding / Residential Schools it is important to note:

- The forms used to calculate the per capita grant were the Quarterly Returns. These were completed at the end of each quarter (March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 31). These forms were completed at the school, usually by the principal, and sent to the Department of Indian Affairs.
- Admission and discharge forms were also completed and sent to Indian Affairs on a quarterly basis. These forms listed all new admissions during the quarter, their age and any education they had received. The discharges listed all the students who left the school during the quarter, their age, the amount of time at the school, the level they had attained and the reason for leaving, including illness and death. Sometimes these also list the cause of death.
- Government auditors came each year to audit the accounts of the schools.
- The principal was also expected to prepare monthly and annual reports for Indian Affairs, which included statistics on the numbers of students, staff and their qualifications, as well as information on school activities over the period. A summary of the financial situation was also included.
- Government policy dictated the language of instruction at these schools (English); however, many Catholic missionaries continued to teach catechism in the language of the students.
- Indian Affairs set the policies for admission, attendance and holidays, and also determined who would attend as Day Students versus Residential Students when that became an option.
- All of these reports and forms were sent to the Department of Indian Affairs – some are now in Library and Archives Canada (LAC), but many were destroyed.



OB33005 – St. Bernard's IRS – Housekeeping class for girls – 1942



# Listing of Indian Residential Schools in Alberta

OB305 – St. Mary's IRS – Students dancing – March 1959

- 1. Assumption Indian Residential School – Hay Lakes / Chateh AB**

Assumption Indian Residential School opened in 1951. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The Sisters of Providence withdrew June 30, 1971. The school closed in 1974.
- 2. Dunbow / St. Joseph's Indian Industrial School – High River, AB**

In 1884, the first Catholic Indian Industrial School in Alberta was built by the federal government at High River. St. Joseph's or Dunbow Indian Industrial School was established to provide a practical skills education as well as basic education. The curriculum included a half day of classroom studies and a half day of manual or practical training.

Missionary Oblates and Grey Nuns of Montreal worked at the school. Due to its location, it was difficult to attract students and often students ran away. In addition, parents would often remove their children from the institution. With the high cost of running the school and the difficulties recruiting students, the federal government closed Dunbow Industrial School in 1922.
- 3. Ermineskin Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Hobbema, AB**

The institution started as an Indian Boarding School in 1895 on the Ermineskin Reserve. In 1955, the federal government constructed new facilities to replace the old school.

Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Assumption worked at the school. The school closed in 1975.
- 4. Foyer Youville Home / Youville Indian Residential School – St. Albert, AB**

Foyer Youville Home was established as a convent school / orphanage by the Grey Nuns of Montreal in the 1860s. In the 1890s, they began receiving the per capita grant for Indian Boarding Schools from the federal government. In 1948, a fire destroyed the school and it was not rebuilt.
- 5. Sacred Heart Indian Boarding school / Indian Residential School – Brocket, AB**

Sacred Heart Indian Boarding School opened on the Peigan Reserve in 1895. Missionary Oblates and Grey Nuns of Nicolet (who merged with the Grey Nuns of Montreal in 1941) worked at the school. The school closed in 1961.
- 6. Holy Angels Indian Residential School (Ecole des Saints Anges) – Fort Chipewyan, AB**

The school opened as a mission school in 1874 and began receiving the per capita grant as an Indian Boarding School in 1900. In 1942, the federal government constructed a new residential school building. In 1959, the new Fort Chipewyan Indian Day School was constructed and Holy Angels became a hostel. In 1963, the jurisdiction of the Fort Chipewyan Indian Day School was passed from Indian Affairs to Northland School Division and in 1964, the Day School was renamed the Bishop Piché School. Missionary Oblates and Grey Nuns of Montreal worked at the school. The Holy Angels Hostel closed in 1974.
- 7. Immaculate Conception Indian Industrial School / St. Mary's / Blood Indian Residential School – Standoff / Cardston, AB**

The Immaculate Conception Indian Boarding School opened at Standoff on the Blood Reserve in 1898. In 1926 the federal government built a new Indian Residential School at Cardston. This school was referred to as St. Mary's or the Blood Indian Residential School. Missionary Oblates and Grey Nuns of Nicolet (who merged with the Grey Nuns of Montreal in 1941) worked at the school. The religious staff left the school in 1975 and the school closed in 1988.
- 8. St. Augustine's Indian Boarding School – Smoky River, AB**

St. Augustine Indian Boarding School began receiving per capita grant in 1898. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. In 1907 the per capita grant and the Indian students were transferred to the new Indian Boarding School at Sturgeon Lake / Calais.

Note: After the Indian Boarding School left, the location was used for another (private) mission school which continued to operate until 1950 when the mission was abandoned. This school is not classified as an Indian Residential School under the terms of the Settlement Agreement.
- 9. St. Bernard's Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Lesser Slave Lake / Grouard, AB**

The Indian Boarding school opened in 1894. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school closed in 1961.
- 10. St. Bruno's Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Jossard, AB**

The school opened in 1913. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school closed in 1969.
- 11. St. Henry's Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Fort Vermilion, AB**

The school opened in 1900. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school (free-standing building with classrooms) became part of St. Mary's Separate School in June, 1964. The residence continued in use as a hostel until it closed in 1968. During that four-year period the children in the hostel attended the Separate School.
- 12. St. Francis-Xavier Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Sturgeon Lake / Calais, AB**

The school opened in 1907 to replace the St. Augustine's Indian Boarding School at Smoky River (Peace River). Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school closed in 1961.
- 13. St. Joseph's / Notre-Dame-des-Victoires Indian Boarding School / Sacred Heart Indian Boarding School / Blue Quills Indian Residential School – Lac la Biche / Saddle Lake / St. Paul, AB**

A mission school existed at Lac la Biche for many years, but St. Joseph's or Notre Dame des Victoires Indian Boarding School at Lac la Biche only began receiving the per capita grant in 1891. By 1898, the decision was made to relocate the boarding school to Sacred Heart on the Saddle Lake Reserve and the school became known as Sacred Heart Indian Boarding School. In 1931, a government-built institution opened at St. Paul under the name Blue Quills Indian Residential School.

Missionary Oblates and Grey Nuns of Montreal worked at the school. In 1970, Blue Quills Indian Residential School was closed by the federal government. At that time the parents occupied the school to protest the closure and in 1971, the school reopened under Band administration. Blue Quills College continues to operate today.

Note: After the Indian Boarding School left Lac la Biche, a Private Mission (Boarding) School for French-speaking, Catholic students opened and continued to operate until the 1960s. This school meets neither of the criteria for institutions set down in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.
- 14. St. Joseph's / Ste. Trinité Indian Boarding School / Crowfoot Indian Residential School – Blackfoot Crossing / Cluny, AB**

St. Joseph's or Ste. Trinité (Holy Trinity) Indian Boarding School opened on the Blackfoot Reserve in 1900. It later became known as Crowfoot Indian Residential School. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school closed in 1968.
- 15. St. Martin's Indian Boarding / Indian Residential School – Wabasca / Desmarais, AB**

The Indian Boarding School opened in 1901. In about 1960 a new school was built by the Government of Canada. Missionary Oblates and Sisters of Providence worked at the school. The school closed in 1973.



OB37366 – Hockey players – no date



OB294 – St. Mary's IRS – Grade 1 children, no date