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"They used to wake up those little kids, those young ones, and tell them not to sleep all over on the outside – not inside – outside all over ..." (Samuel Ross, *Where Are the Children*)

Photo: Looking South-east over the Residential School, March 30, 1965/PADH 23346 (Photo courtesy the Prince Albert Daily Herald and the Prince Albert Historical Society)

Students were punished—often severely—for speaking their own languages. Conrad Burns, whose father attended the Prince Albert school, named this policy for what it was: "It was a cultural genocide. People were beaten for their language, people were beaten because ... they followed their own ways." (*The Legacy*, Vol. 5, p. 6)



PA classroom with Principle Bramwell, ca. 195-, The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada/P7556-46

PRINCE ALBERT INDIAN

The Prince Albert (Lac la Ronge, All Saints, St. Alban's) Indian Residential School (Treaty 6) opened in 1947 and closed in 1997. The school was operated by the Anglican Church of Canada until 1969, when the government took over operation. The school was considered "temporary" and yet, it continued to function as a residence for 50 years. First Nations from the Prince Albert area officially took over operation and control in 1985 and in 1986, the land the school was on became reserve land. When the school closed in 1997 it was called the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre.

Amalgamations and Overcrowding

In 1944, temporary accommodation was provided at St. Alban's College in Prince Albert for the pupils from the St. Barnabas School in Onion Lake after the school was destroyed by fire. By spring of 1948, the boys from St. Alban's school were quartered at the military camp and trucked to classes. The Lac La Ronge (All Saints) students were moved to Prince Albert in 1948 after fire destroyed the school. Students were housed in a former military basic-training complex on the outskirts of Prince Albert. "The students were housed in six H-shaped huts, i.e. two wings were joined by the bathroom and washroom areas. The remaining huts housed the eleven classrooms in which grades one to eight were taught. There was also a Home Economics room and a Manual Training Shop. Another hut contained the staff quarters, the office and the hospital. The drill hall, a gloomy cavernous building

was used for dances, shows, basketball and volleyball."¹ In 1950, army building no. 20 was renovated to accommodate 29 students from Gordon's IRS (due to water supply failure) as well as "a number of children in need of institutional care."² In 1951, all the St. Alban's students were moved to the military camp. These amalgamations made the PA school the largest residential school in Saskatchewan. "The student population increased with the amalgamation from approximately 165 to 485,"³ causing serious overcrowding in the facility. By the 1960s, the old army base was used mainly as a student residence, with the children attending municipal schools in Prince Albert.⁴ This school had one of the largest enrolments of any residential school (550 students in 1953, for example), yet was considered a fire hazard for most of its history.⁵

Unsanitary and Fire Hazard

A 1950 inspection reported that the garbage in the kitchen had been allowed to accumulate over several days. Several fire hazards were also reported: two heating stoves without chimneys and ashes piled where they could blow into flammable material.⁶ A fire alarm was installed in 1950. That same year, "the Prince Albert fire chief condemned the heating system at the school facilities ... [and]

the Saskatchewan fire commissioner raised concerns about the complex in 1953, when it was housing 550 children. He wrote that the wood-frame buildings were highly susceptible to fire ... A 1954 fire inspection of the school reached the following conclusion: 'It cannot be stressed too strongly that occupancy of these buildings as a residential school is contrary to all accepted standards for safety of life and property, against fire. This condition is further aggravated by the lack of sufficient water supplies to prevent the possibility of a major fire gaining headway in any of the buildings. The distances between the buildings is such that the probability of fire spreading, under favourable wind conditions, from the source of origin to adjacent buildings and developing into a conflagration of serious proportions cannot be overlooked.'⁷ "Renovations were undertaken later in that year, but by 1960, the building interiors were still considered shoddy by the head of Anglican Indian school administration: 'One wonders just how much longer the so-called 'temporary buildings' are going to be considered 'permanent.' He recommended that Indian Affairs construct a new building in Prince Albert."⁸ "In 1968, the Dominion Fire Commissioner's office was once more recommending that the school ... either undergo extensive renovations or install a sprinkler system."⁹

¹ <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a71nov08.htm>

² Indian Affairs, RG10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part-11. Memorandum to the Deputy Minister, Feb. 13, 1950

³ <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a71nov08.htm>

⁴ <http://nationtalk.ca/story/doug-cuthand-saskatchewan-residential-school-survivors-walk-home-for-closure-regina-leader-post>

⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 301

⁶ Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part 11. Morrison to Ostrander, Feb. 2, 1950

⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 311-312

⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 312

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329

"Between 1976 and 1983, George Zimmerman, the husband of a dormitory supervisor at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre, sexually assaulted nine girls living at the residence. In 1995, Zimmerman was convicted on nine counts of indecent assault, one count of attempted sexual intercourse, and two counts of sexual intercourse. He was given a five-year sentence."¹⁰ The PA Grand council developed policy in 1993 that prevented spouses of employees from living in the student residence. (The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 450)

Click to read former student stories



Samuel Ross speaks about his experience at residential school (All Saints in Prince Albert & Birtle). Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.



Group of dormitories at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (old army barracks), ca. 1949, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Bernice Logan/P2004-09-294



Tom Roberts with his granddaughter Ava Tremblay. Walking "back home." Prince Albert Daily Herald, June 2016



Harry McGillivray speaks about his experience at residential school (PA and Dauphin). Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.

N RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Indian Affairs did not want to fund costly renovations because they wanted to transfer to less costly day schools. Thus, the poor conditions continued into the 1970s. "The chiefs of 10 Saskatchewan First Nations signed a petition in May 1973, calling on the federal government to complete renovations ... Indian Affairs hoped the fire inspector would allow the buildings to remain open with limited repairs. If not, it intended to place students in 'other residences, foster homes, or in their own homes.' The fire inspector agreed that if certain repairs were carried out, the buildings could remain in use for the next year, with the expectation that 'other more suitable facilities are to be provided for housing the students for the following year.'"¹⁰

In 1975, a set of prefabricated trailer classrooms was installed "without a building permit, and did not meet Prince Albert's construction standards or the National Building Code. When it was determined that, with some repairs, the building could be brought into compliance, the Prince Albert fire chief agreed that the 'occupant life safety was adequate.' In March 1980, Sol Sanderson, the chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, warned that the classroom block at the Prince Albert residence would probably be closed by the federal fire marshal unless it had significant repair. Sanderson suggested that it was likely the building needed replacement."¹¹

Two Staff Resign over Conditions in School

In 1952, two teachers, Victoria Ketcheson and Patricia Watson, resigned from the school claiming that the majority of their co-workers appeared to be "social misfits, unable to get jobs elsewhere. They are a quarrelsome, suspicious and gossipy lot. Their treatment of the children is worse than that of each other. Many openly consider [them] 'dirty breeds' and sub-human [sic]. They apply one set of standards to 'whites' and quite another to Indians. This is aptly expressed by the oft-used phrase—'they're only Indian'—anything goes. Nothing is done to induce the staff to fulfill their duties as either Christians or working members of this institution. The children are maltreated, cussed at, made to bear the brunt of senile sex instincts, exposed to the most brutish forms of behaviour and nothing is done to stop such proceedings."¹² The letter continued, "The staff has no conception of preventative discipline. Children are allowed to run wild until whipping is the only means of discipline possible. This was forcibly illustrated when three small boys tried to run away. They were picked up and thrown into prison for one week. The prison consists [sic] of a small space partitioned off in the hut used as a hospital. The top two feet of the walls are made of chicken wire so that the inmates are exposed to any disease current in the hospital. At one stage during their confinement they were properly switched for the benefit of the entire school."¹³ The rest of the staff responded with a letter that

described the allegations as "grossly untrue and utterly unwarranted."¹⁴ "Fifty staff members signed a petition expressing their confidence in the principal."¹⁵ "In a separate letter to his superiors, Principal A. J. Scrase suggested that the two women were acting from religious motives, since they had recently been 'speaking favorable of the Roman Catholic Church—not only in connection with schools, but in their teaching.'"¹⁶ "One unsigned letter defending the principal noted that the room described as a jail had been used in the past by teachers and even the principal as a residence. The writer did, however, acknowledge that the runaway boys had been 'spanked with a willow in front of all the children.'"¹⁷ "The Anglican Church authorized an investigation into the complaints, but Anglican [Superintendent Henry Cook] ... believed the women were 'insufficiently experienced'"¹⁸ to make these charges. It does not appear that Indian Affairs was notified about this problem.

Sexual Abuse

"Between 1976 and 1983, George Zimmerman, the husband of a dormitory supervisor at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre, sexually assaulted nine girls living at the residence." In 1995, Zimmerman was convicted and given a five year sentence.¹⁹

¹⁰ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 329
¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 331

¹² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381

¹⁴ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381
¹⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 523
¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 518
¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 381
¹⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 450