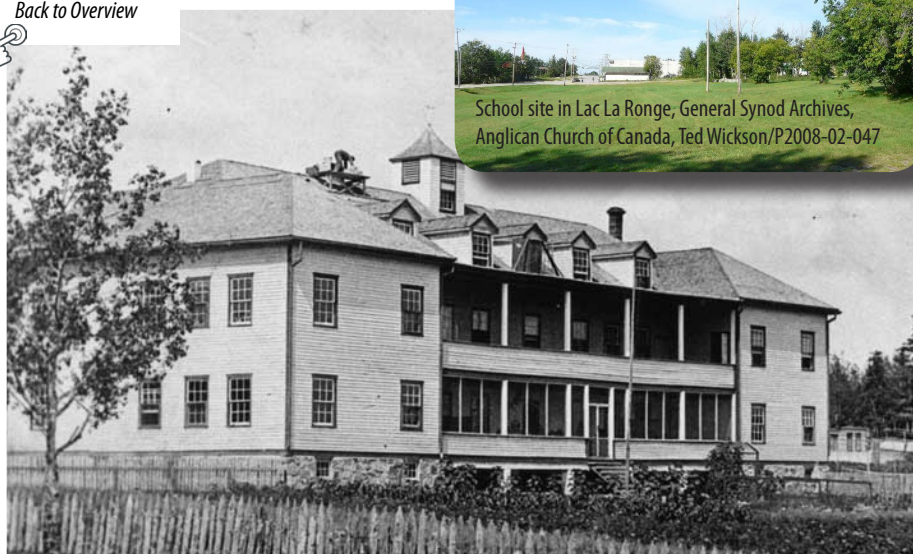


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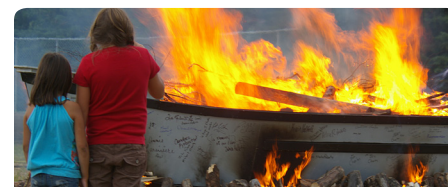
School site in Lac La Ronge, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Ted Wickson/P2008-02-047

Distant view of All Saints Indian Residential School, Lac La Ronge, ca. 1928, R.D. Davidson/Canada. Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys/Library and Archives Canada/PA-020295

[Read more about Lac La Ronge School and former students](#)



School girls going for a boat ride in the "Bonita," Lac La Ronge, ca. 192-, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-281. Listen to [Elders Recall Boat Trips to Residential Schools](#)



The Lac La Ronge Indian Band built a replica of the canoe used to transport children to residential schools. The replica was later burned in a special ceremony in August 2012. This was done to help with the healing of survivors of Indian residential schools. Photo: Eagle Feather News, Carmen Pauls Orthner, August 2012

# LAC LA RONGE INDIAN

The Lac La Ronge (All Saints) Indian Residential School (1907 - 1947), operated by the Anglican Church of Canada, opened in 1907 after the closure of a day school that had been in operation since 1889. The day school had low attendance and had difficulty securing a competent teacher. Archdeacon John A. Mackay, a mixed-blood teacher fluent in Cree, secured the funding for the residential school and set up a saw mill on site to finish the lumber used in building the school. It was located on the southwest shore of Lac La Ronge on Treaty 10 land. The school moved to Prince Albert in 1947 after it was destroyed by fire.

## Water and Sewage

In 1925, Indian Agent W. R. Taylor wrote: "The disposal system is bad and very unhealthy. The present system, as I saw it, is overflowing and lying on the surface of the ground evaporating, and when the wind blows from the east the smell from this quarter is awful."<sup>1</sup> The school was authorized to purchase a septic tank. However, the issue was raised again in 1935. After much discussion, the school received notice in 1940 that there was not money available for repairs to sewage disposal. There was also discussion regarding the deepening of a well due to a shortage of

<sup>1</sup>Library and Archives Canada, Indian Affairs RG10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 3, Letter from Taylor, Aug. 26, 1925.

water, a shortage that also increased the risk of fire.

## Student Deaths<sup>2</sup> (Tuberculosis outbreak)

Zephaniah Charles (No. 133)	May 24, 1936	TB Meningitis
Grace Sophie Eninew (No. 222)	March 12, 1937	Gradually lost her sight.*
John Bird (No. 136)	June 7, 1937	Measles made TB active**
Matthew McKenzie (No. 154)	May 30, 1937	Had rickets TB made worse by measles
Absalom Bird (No. 124)	May 29, 1937	TB made worse by measles
Daniel Cook (No. 155)	July 12, 1937	TB made worse by measles
Ellen McKenzie (No. 259)	Nov. 2, 1939	TB

<sup>2</sup>Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Quarterly Returns.

A measles epidemic in 1937 caused the deaths of several children because, it was thought, the measles activated TB. In July that year arrangements were made to have a tuberculosis specialist visit Lac La Ronge in the fall to examine the children. The attending physician and Indian Agent criticized the diet, ventilation, and overcrowded conditions in the dormitory:

"Children to have better food. At present they only receive Irish Bread and lard, oatmeal in the mornings and a little peanut butter once a week. Pupils with T. B. in the same dormitory as the other pupils. A few of these are bed cases most of the time. R. S. Davis, Indian Agent."<sup>3</sup>

"This school dormitories are over crowded. Also the class rooms. No. of pupils that should attend should be reduced and better food supplied. TB is spreading in this school."<sup>4</sup>

"Dr.'s note: Patient should have been isolated and not put in over-crowded dormitory. Poor ventilation. T. B. patients not given proper sleeping or living quarters. Sleeping with other healthy boys. Taken to improvised sanatorium, but too late and too far gone."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of Grace Sophie Eninew), March 12, 1937

<sup>4</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of John Bird) June 7, 1937

<sup>5</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of the Physician who attended



Children at All Saints Anglican School, Lac la Ronge, ca. 1909-1919, Sask Archives Board, HPI/ R-A6928



Cree students at their desks with their teacher in the classroom, ca. March 1945, Bud Glunz/National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque/PA-134110



All Saints (Lac La Ronge) Indian Residential School cemetery, ca. 192-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-187



Monument to Residential School Survivors. Photo from Eagle Feather News, July 2014



Children standing in formation beside school, ca. 192-, The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, MSCC/P7538-316

# RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Indian Agent's note: "This child was in the dormitory, suffering from T. B., with sixty other children where the ventilation is not of the best and the room being terribly overcrowded. The food these children received is very poor, not the right quality for growing children..."<sup>6</sup>

Despite \$200 provided by the government for the construction of an infirmary in 1934, a 1938 survey by the Anglican field secretary states that there was still no infirmary for the children sick with tuberculosis. Patient's cots were on the verandah. Three children at the time had active TB out 98 in residence.<sup>7</sup>

## Fire Hazard

In 1920, the school was destroyed by fire. The government rebuilt the school including electricity and steam heat;<sup>8</sup> however, due to some of the materials used in construction (green lumber and defective chimneys from the Hudson's Bay Company) and a lack of funding for upkeep, the building soon became a fire hazard.

Both a 1923 report and a 1936 report described an unsatisfactory fire escape system.

(Matthew McKenzie), Apr 23, 1937

<sup>6</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-23, part 1, Statement of Indian Agent (Death of Matthew McKenzie), May 30, 1937

<sup>7</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6317, file 656-5, part 5, Westgate to McGill, June 19, 1934 (see <http://www2.uregina.ca/education/saskindianresidentialschools/lac-la-ronge-all-saints-indian-residential-school/>)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/all-saints-school-sk/>

Indeed, in 1923, the 2-year-old, three-story building had no fire escapes. Verandahs were needed and the spruce poles needed to be replaced with metal poles. Authorization was granted for a fire escape. In 1927, bush around the building caught fire when it was struck by lightning and the buildings were narrowly saved. Funds were appropriated for clearing the land around the building.

In March 1933, an urgent request was made for the replacement of the second of two defective brick chimneys on the main building.<sup>9</sup> The government had previously agreed to pay half the cost of replacing one of the defective chimneys. The following year, a second request was made for the funds for a second chimney. The government was not able to authorize the expenditure.<sup>10</sup> On March 29, 1934 a telegram informed Indian Affairs that a fire due to a defective chimney destroyed the Principal's residence. The government sent a message that there were no funds to replace the residence,<sup>11</sup> but agreed to fund \$700 for a new chimney for the main school building.<sup>12</sup> In 1936, Indian Agent Davis reported that "three fires have occurred since his last visit in January 1936." One was in the kitchen, another started on the roof and attic floor, and the third

<sup>9</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Rev. Westgate to IA, March 3, 1934

<sup>10</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Mackenzie to Rev. Westgate, March 13, 1934

<sup>11</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Telegram, Mar 29, 1934

<sup>12</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Rev. Westgate to Indian Affairs Dr. McGill

started in the wall between the playground and a classroom on the girls side of the building. He criticized the fire-alarm system which consisted of an "iron bar and bolt," which could not be "heard in all parts of the building." Agent Davis described the school as "nothing less than a fire trap." He called for improvements to the fire escapes.<sup>13</sup>

Fire did end up destroying the school. Two 12-year-old boys (Kitchener Bird and John Roberts) deliberately set it ablaze in 1947.<sup>14</sup> The boys were not prosecuted for their actions because the Indian Agent Ostrander was concerned that the boys would be seen as heroes, and that sentencing the boys to the Regina Industrial school would place them among "incorrigible white boys."<sup>15</sup> When the school was destroyed by fire in 1947, Principal Douglas Wickenden wrote, "**The 'fire-trap' has ceased to exist and mercifully without loss of life.**"<sup>16</sup> After the 1947 fire, students were transferred to Prince Albert. The Anglican Church sought to have the Lac La Ronge school rebuilt, but they were unsuccessful. Instead, students were housed in a former military basic-training complex on the outskirts of Prince Albert.

<sup>13</sup> Indian Affairs RG 10, Vol. 6316, file 656-5, part 5, Agent Davis Report, July 16, 1936

<sup>14</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 323

<sup>15</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 323

<sup>16</sup> The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 306