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The industrial school at Lebret was built in 1905 to replace one destroyed by fire the previous year. It, too, burned in 1932. Photo: Qu'Appelle Industrial School, ca. 1907, Grey Nuns of Montreal Archive



First communion, Lebret, ca. 192-
St. Boniface Historical Society
Archives, 0096/SHSB-23085



Young boy, Lebret, St. Boniface
Historical Society Archives, 0001/
SHSB-1317



The first school buildings were destroyed by fire in 1903. Church and cemetery (Sacred Heart Catholic) remain open. Canada. Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada/PA-023092

LEBRET (QU'APPELLE)

The Lebret (Qu'Appelle, St. Paul's, Whitecalf) Industrial School, (1884 - 1998) , operated by the Roman Catholic Church (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns) from 1884 until 1973, was one of the first three industrial schools that opened following the recommendations of the Davin Report, and was fully funded by the government (Battleford was the other in what is now Saskatchewan). This school was located on the White Calf (Wa-Pii Moos-Toosis) Reserve, west of the village of Lebret on Treaty 4 land. Lebret school has a long history as one of the first industrial schools to open and the last to close.

Father Hugonard opened the school and was the principal until he died in 1917. In 1983, the school property was established as a reserve of the Star Blanket Band. In 1984, the Star Blanket Band took over operations of White Calf Collegiate. "As we took it over we made a decision that the young kids should be taught closer to home. We moved up the grades taught at the school from Grades 6 to 12," said former student Vern Bellegarde.¹ At its height, during the Star Blanket Band's operation, the school was reportedly, "on its way to being ... an academically challenging finishing school for the best and the brightest young people."² The school closed in 1998. In June, 1998, half of the 185 students who attended lived in

residence.³ Wrecking crews tore it down in 1999.

Fire

The school was first destroyed by fire in 1904 and was rebuilt by 1906, against the advice of W. R. Tucker, Moose Woods Day School principal, who provided a list of the students from the reserve where he worked who had died while attending the Qu'Appelle school as well as other industrial schools.⁴ In 1927, it was reported that the school had limited fire-fighting capacity and in 1932 it was destroyed by fire again due to an electrical short-circuit.⁵ It was rebuilt again by 1936. Though the school had already burned down twice, in 1973 it was reported that the fire exits were locked (a dangerous practice intended to keep students from leaving the residence). In 1977, the Qu'Appelle school had a numbers of fires: a fire in the junior boys' dormitory in March, a fire in the senior girls' playroom in April, a trash-can fire in May, and a fire in the junior girls' locker room in June. In September, a staff member overheard a few boys saying "they wished for the school to burn down so as they could go to a different school." Later that day, she found evidence of an attempt to set a fire in the boys' locker room. In April 1978, some girls set fire to the curtains in the senior girls' dormitory. According to an incident report, "All girls concerned were spoke[n] to" by staff. It

does not appear that any of the students were prosecuted for these activities.⁶ In 1980, the senior boys dormitory was determined to be in violation of national building and fire codes.

Death and Tuberculosis

In her memoir of her years as a student at the Qu'Appelle school (1914-1917), Louise Moine⁷ wrote regarding a tuberculosis epidemic: "There was a death every month on the girls' side and some of the boys went also. We were always taken to see the girls who had died. The Sisters invariably had them dressed in light blue and they always looked so peaceful and angelic. We were led to believe that their souls had gone to heaven, and this would somehow lessen the grief and sadness we felt in the loss of one of our little schoolmates."⁸

In 1886, the TB death rates on the Qu'Appelle Reserve reached 9,000 deaths per 100,000 people, the highest on record.⁹ This same year five children died at Lebret (Qu'Appelle) school. Despite the TB epidemic, "when Dr. Maurice Seymour applied for the position of medical attendant to Qu'Appelle school in 1885, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney did not accept his application, stating there was 'no necessity for a doctor.'"¹⁰ He believed medical

¹LaRose, S. (1999). Wrecker's ball claims White Calf Collegiate. Saskatchewan Sage 3(8).

²LaRose, S. (1999). Wrecker's ball claims White Calf Collegiate. Saskatchewan Sage 3(8).

³ nctr.ca summary "Lebret"

⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 395-396

⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 465

⁶ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 324

⁷ Moine, L. (2013). Remembering Will Have to Do: The Life and Times of Louise (Trottier) Moine. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

⁸ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 2

⁹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 384

¹⁰ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 62

supplies and the Sisters would suffice.¹¹ In 1891, "the Qu'Appelle school reported that since opening in 1884, it had discharged 174 students, 71 of whom [had] died" (40.8%).¹² By 1892 Dewdney had changed his mind and had given Qu'Appelle access to a medical attendant. Contaminated water supply reported in 1897 added to health problems at school.¹³

By the late 1800s it was understood by the medical community that tuberculosis was an infectious disease that could be overcome by isolating the sick and by providing adequate diet, ventilation, and care. However, economy was chosen over the health of students, and tuberculosis experts' advice to screen out children infected with the disease and to send children to sanatoriums to recover was ignored, contributing to the high number of deaths at residential school.

School administrators, such as Principal Hugonard, resisted sending students with TB to the sanatorium at Fort San: In 1907,

increased cost of supplies, fuel and labor and the difficulty of recruiting pupils."¹⁶

Language and Culture

In 1886, Principal Hugonard sought to have Métis English speaking boys admitted because he believed it would motivate other boys to practice speaking English. His request was opposed by Hayter Reed and Edgar Dewdney at first who thought the influence would either be reversed or imperfect. In 1886, however, Dewdney agreed to allow them because a greater number of "white boys" would supply the First Nations children with a moral influence.¹⁷ Upon his arrival in Canada, Father Hugonard, born and raised in France, had learned Cree, Saulteaux, and English. He taught daily catechism class in Cree, and encouraged the Grey Nuns to teach students in Cree first, then in English. "He also prepared a Cree-English primer, and arranged to have the federal government pay for printing 2,000 copies."¹⁸ However, Hugonard was also strongly and vocally

- In 1950, an allegation of abuse and excessive corporal punishment was made against a Girls' Supervisor. The pupil's mother made the complaint.
- In 1973, a grandparent of two students claimed that two to three Supervisors were cruel towards the pupils at the IRS. A Supervisor allegedly broke a girl's arm and then laughed. Female pupils ran away from the IRS to avoid that Supervisor.
- In 1980, a Child Care Worker wrote to the Minister of Indian Affairs, requesting that the IRS be investigated regarding the alleged suffering of children
- In 1983, a Child Care Worker allegedly threw a student out of his bed, causing injury to the student's elbow.²⁰

Parental Resistance

In 1930, 8-year-old John Yuzicappi's parents felt he was too ill to attend school, and refused to send him to the Qu'Appelle school. "Having obtained a different opinion from a local doctor, Indian agent R. S. Davis had

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

Principal Hugonard argued that many students with scrofula had "no better place to be sent" than school. At the time, despite medical evidence, he believed that TB was not contagious but hereditary.¹⁴ In 1922, Principal "G. Leonard refused to carry out a physician's instruction to send TB students to Fort San, claiming that the students would be 'better off at school than in a sanatorium.'"¹⁵

"Too Much Economy," Not Enough Funding

Poor diet was a contributing factor to poor health in residential schools. In 1893, Inspector T. P. Wadsworth wrote that at the Qu'Appelle school, "very great economy has been exercised in repairing the children's clothing, darning, patching and repairing blankets. In this connection, I may observe that much of it was worn after the poorest white person would have considered the garment worn out: the condemned clothing is only fit for the rag bag."

In 1903, in response to a request for an increase for the school's per capita, Martin Benson wrote that "there is almost too much economy exercised at this school as regards the clothing and diet of the pupils,—this having been rendered necessary by the

opposed to the practice of Indigenous ceremonies.

By the time Greg Rainville attended school at Lebret in the mid 60s, however, students were being punished for speaking Cree. Rainville said, "I was punished because the nuns would get frustrated with you when they talk to you in French and English, and you're not knowing what they're talking about, and you're pulled around by the ear, and whatnot, and slapped on the back of the head, and stuff like that. And I didn't know what I was doing wrong. No matter what, I tried to do good, but I couldn't understand what they were saying, and they couldn't understand what I was saying, but I was punished."¹⁹

Physical Abuse

- In 1917, parents complained that the Assistant Principal had a violent and uncontrollable temper and that he abused the children.
- In 1932, a female pupil reported that she had been imprisoned in hospital and threatened for a two-week period. Both the principal and doctor claimed that she was put there for a nervous condition and that no threats were made.

the Mounted Police locate the boy and escort him to school [at a fee of 25 cents per mile]. Four years later, the boy ran away from school. On January 28, 1934, a Mounted Police office travelled to his home reserve and visited his parents, but could find no trace of him, although he 'believed the boy was hiding somewhere in the neighbourhood.' He warned John's parents 'of the folly of harbouring the lad by keeping him away from school.' He was informed on February 2 that the boy had returned to the school."²¹

Failure to Screen Staff

In 1966, Kevin (Keavin) Amyot, who that same year had been convicted of an act of gross indecency on a neighbour's child, was hired by recommendation as a supervisor for the Qu'Appelle school where he worked for eight months before transferring to a school in Mission, BC.²² He was convicted again in 1969 of an indecent assault on a child in Edmonton, and in 1987 pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting four Inuit boys while a social worker in the Northwest Territories. Amyot died in 2003 before he could face charges against him by former residential school students from Mission, BC.²³

Lebret/Qu'Appelle continues on next page

¹¹ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 62

¹² Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 28 (Death rates do not distinguish between current and former students.)

¹³ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 459

¹⁴ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 406

¹⁵ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 420

¹⁶ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 508

¹⁷ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 618

¹⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 619

¹⁹ The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 106

²⁰ Summary sheet from nctr.ca

²¹ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 583

²² The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 414

²³ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 428

FATHER HUGONARD



In 1924, a celebration and Indian pageant was held at the Lebreton/Qu'appelle Mission to observe the 50th Anniversary of Father Hugonard's (founder of the Lebreton Indian Residential School) coming to Lebreton. The monument seen above was dedicated to his memory in 1927 and stands in the cemetery at the entrance to the school site. ([Source Link](#), Photo credit: Shuana Niessen, Sept. 2016)

Two accounts of student recruitment

A 1955 historical account of Qu'appelle Residential school states that: "Early in 1885, Father Hugonard, accompanied by agent Lash, set out on the reserves to recruit pupils. They succeeded in getting 22 boys, who arrived at the school in the spring. In 1886 the enrolment was 45, all boys." A clearer picture of how these boys were obtained is seen in an account by Ochankuga'he – "Pathmaker" (Daniel Kennedy), who was taken to Lebreton Indian Industrial School in 1886. In his memoirs, Kennedy wrote: "In 1886, at the age of twelve years, I was lassoed, roped and taken to the government school at Lebreton..."²

An account of the stealing children On December 31, 1900, Indian agent Magnus Begg in a letter to Indian Affairs official David Laird reported that Rev. Father Hugonard was accused by the members of the SheSheep

Band of "the stealing of ... two boys from Widow Penna," the mother of the boys. In his follow up letter on January 19, 1901, he wrote that Widow Penna said, "The Rev. gentlemen and the two police-men overtook her about 25 miles from Qu'Appelle and 40 miles from the Reserve, and without speaking to her, told the police to put the boys in the waggon, she said the eldest boy clung to her but they pulled him away. She was left alone and would not have had a match if one of the boys had not stopped the waggon and given her some... She has been very sick since." Begg had interpreted a letter from Father Hugonard for Widow Penna that informed her that the boys were doing well and invited her to come and see the boys, but "She said the distance was too long, the snow too deep, and she was sick and wanted her children back." Widow Penna would have preferred the boys were taken to Cowessess school where she could see them. "The Indians were very bitter in their expressions against Father Hugonard and said there would be trouble over it yet, meaning I suppose, when the children escaped from school and returned to the reserve, that the police could not take them again so easily as when only having one old woman to deal with."³ Agent Begg was unhappy with the incident because "Before this occurred I think I was having some influence in getting them to reconsider their long objections to either having a school on the reserve or sending their children to one of the schools, but this has put my work back." He also notes that "Sec. 9... of [the 1894] Education of Indian Children regulations, that a child may be committed by a Justice of the Peace or an Indian Agent without giving notice. The Rev. Father Hugonard is neither, but of course I did not read this part of the section to the Indians." In a January 9, 1901 letter, Hugonard wrote that he had "obtained a warrant from the Justice of the Peace at the Fort authorizing me... to take the two boys aged respectively 10 and 11 years." He stated several reasons for his actions: the boys were taken "after all other efforts had failed; persuasion having been used with this band for the past 15 years without any result"; because "the mother of the two boys is a widow and seems to be largely dependent on relatives; with her wandering mode of life she could not bring the children up properly, and utterly refused to send them to any school"; because "the reduction of half the grant for all new children under 10 years places this school at a great financial disadvantage, and without maintaining the complete number the management will become embarrassed... any opportunity for securing recruits should be taken advantage of"; and because the "brother-in-law ... who was supporting them, as well as the mother-in-law... asked me ... to use force to take the children into school." Indian Affairs official David Laird wrote Hugonard to address the issue and added: "Agent Mitchell also sent me information to the same effect: he also previously advised me that you had used similar means to take children from [Muscowpetung]. Further, Laird referred Hugonard to notice prefixed to the 1894 regulations that stated the regulations "are to be put in force by any Agent only after being authorized by the Department of Indian Affairs" Laird wrote, "I am not aware that the department has given such authority to the Agents at Crooked Lakes and Muscowpetungs." Inspector McGibbon thought it "highly improper for any Principal or Teacher to go to some irresponsible J.P. and get a warrant and serve it themselves along with a constable."⁴ "Indian Affairs officials were not prepared to inform parents of their rights, or to order that a school principal return children to their parents, even though, in taking them by force, he had overstepped his authority."⁵ ([Read correspondence regarding this incident](#))

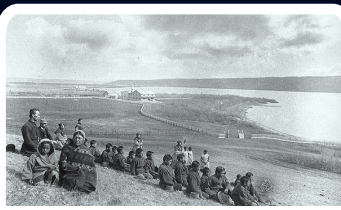
¹Sister G. Marcoux, Grey Nun (1955). *The History of the Qu'Appelle Residential School* (page 11)

²The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939, Vol 1, pp. 173-174

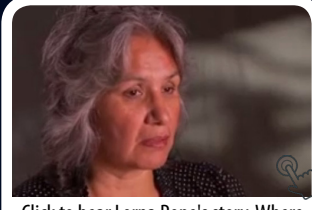
³Indian Affairs. RG Vol. 2552, File 112, 220

⁴Indian Affairs. RG Vol. 2552, File 112, 220

⁵The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 3



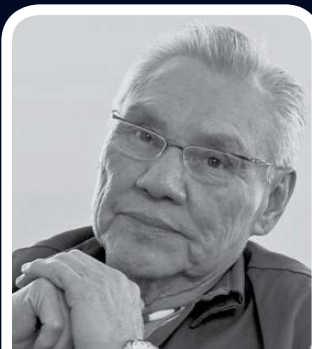
Students and family members, Father Joseph Hugonard, staff and Grey Nuns on hill overlooking the Qu'Appelle Industrial School, May 1885, Photographer Oliver Buell, Library and Archives Canada/PA-118765



Click to hear Lorna Rope's story. Where are the Children exhibit. Legacy of Hope.



Daya Madhur dance/drama portrayal of the narratives and site in Lebret



Click to read Noel Starblanket's story



SUNTEP Regina students commemorated the students who died at the Lebret Indian Residential School

Click to read stories from former students

"In 1886, at the age of twelve years, I was lassoed, roped and taken to the Government School at Lebret. Six months after I enrolled, I discovered to my chagrin that I had lost my name and an English name had been tagged on me in exchange." Daniel Kennedy
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