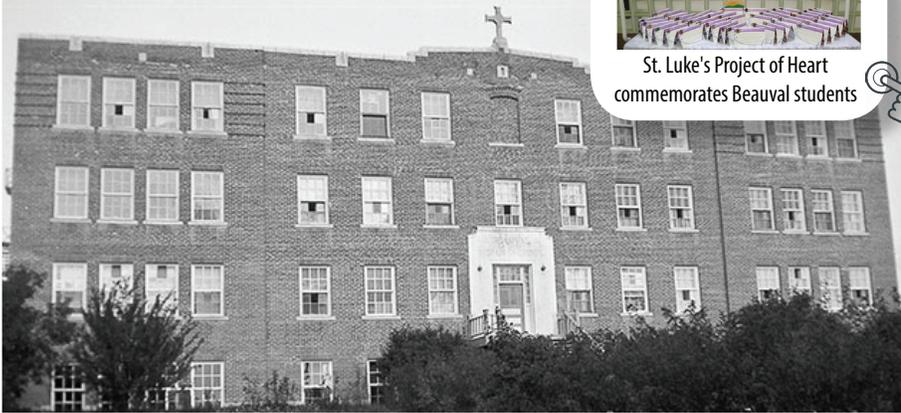


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St. Luke's Project of Heart commemorates Beauval students

"The appeal court noted that Leroux had regularly and repeatedly abused boys as young as nine years old. According to the decision, Leroux would give the youngsters mixed drinks, including martinis, before assaulting them. In some cases the assaults took place in his quarters at the school. Sometimes the boys were assaulted in their bunks." (CBC News, May 05, 2015).

Classes were taught in French at Beauval because the teachers did not speak English well. In 1912, a debate arose over whether the classes should be taught in English. A First Nation leader wrote a letter in Cree to "the Great Master in charge of schools" that if the Government banned French it would "be very difficult for us to send our children to school." French and Michif were the local languages. (The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 626) Photo: Beauval Indian Residential School, ca. 1951, St. Boniface Historical Society, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas/N2730



Maria Campbell, author of *Halfbreed*, went to Beauval school at the age of seven. [Read more...](#)

Sept. 26, 1946, A little girl wearing a school uniform and a hat. St. Boniface Historical Society, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin—Le Pas/ N1679

BEAUVAL INDIAN RE

Beauval (Lac La Plonge) Indian Residential School (1860¹ - 1995) was initially located in Île-à-la-Crosse, in what became Treaty 10 land.² It became an official boarding school in 1897 with government funding for 12 children. In 1906, the Roman Catholic Mission³ that operated the school moved the site at Lac la Plonge. The Mission ran the school until the federal government took control in 1969. The government worked in cooperation with the Board of Directors (comprised of the Chiefs of the Indian Bands in the Meadow Lake District) until the mid-70s, when the government transferred control of the residences to a First Nations parent group in response to their proposals. The school land became part of the La Plonge Indian Reserve in 1979. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council ran the school as the Beauval Indian Education Centre (an amalgamation of La Plonge High School and the Beauval Student Residence) from 1985 to 1995. The school buildings were demolished by former students in 1995.⁴

Fire and Student Deaths

In 1909, some "students died of burns when garbage disposal fires set their clothing on fire."⁵ In 1920, a fire destroyed the convent and residence and a young girl with disabilities died in the fire. In 1923, due to a boating accident, three boys drowned along with Sister Cecille Nadeau (29 years old) who died while attempting to save them. In 1926, the convent and school were rebuilt again after another fire destroyed it. In September, 1927, 19 students and one staff person died in a fire that destroyed the Beauval school.⁶ "Sister Lea and 19 boys, from the ages of 7 to 12, died...," wrote Principal Father Mederic Adam (translation). Sister Lea Bellerose had been teaching in Beauval since 1917 and spoke Cree fluently. She was in charge of the boys dormitory.⁷ The lack of access to safe fire escapes contributed to the high death toll. This tragedy prompted a national circular from Duncan Campbell Scott, that all fire-escape doors should open outward, and if sealed, only as much as a young pupil could break through, and a supervisor should have a bed near the fire exit.⁸

A new school was built and opened in 1932, but by the 1950s, this school was deemed a fire hazard. A 1952 inspection concluded the fire alarm system and facilities for evacuating children in case of fire were neglected. The

school was locking the fire-escape doors. In 1956, it was reported that the fire door had been nailed shut. That year, two fires were started deliberately, and in 1966, two 13-year-olds were caught attempting to set fire to the building. In 1970, a report stated the building was still not meeting fire codes. In 1984, the government received quotes for installing a sprinkler system at the insistence of the Fire Commissioner's office, but the record does not show whether these were installed, though the residence continued to operate until 1995.⁹

Epidemics and Student Deaths

During the 1936 epidemic of influenza and measles, the school and rectory were converted into hospitals. There were 60 deaths, 20 at the school and 40 among the families at the Mission. "In the course of last winter (1936) an epidemic of influenza and measles ravaged the north-west part of the Vicariat. It first started in Beauval and struck almost all the population. Our Indian school and the rectory were immediately converted into hospitals and despite the heroic efforts of the religious personnel there were 60 victims, 20 at the school and more than 40 among the families of the Mission. ... With an equal violence the epidemic arrived rapidly to our other Missions of the north particularly Île-à-la-Crosse, Buffalo River (Dillon) and Portage La Loche. In each of these Missions the death toll was around

¹ Joseph Bourbonnais (OMI), Principal Beauval Indian Residential School offers this date in "Considerations on Schooling in the Past. Voice of the North (1966-67 p. 6) http://archives.algomau.ca/main/sites/default/files/2012-21_003_036.pdf

² Treaty 10 was an agreement that was not signed until 1906 (after the province of Saskatchewan was formed), resulting in difficulties with government funding of schools in this territory.

³ The religious groups who operated and administrated the school from the beginning until the mid-1960s were the Oblate priests and brothers along with Sisters of St. Joseph or Grey Nuns of Montreal remained in the school into the 1970s. Vicar Apostolic Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas This archdiocese, based in Manitoba, operated two schools in Saskatchewan (Beauval and Guy at Sturgeon Landing).

⁴ As noted in *Heritage Alternatives at Sites of Trauma: Examples of the Indian Residential Schools of Canada*.

⁵ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 75

⁶ Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 3

⁷ <https://sites.google.com/site/portagelalocherhistory/6-residential-schools>

⁸ The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 475

⁹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 333.

Student attempts at burning down schools were acts of resistance and survival. Even as an adult, one former student expressed the desire to burn down his former residential school: "Mervin Mirasty told the Commission that both he and his brother were sexually abused at Beauval residential school: To this day, I've always wanted to go back and burn the place, and I never did."

(Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy, Vol. 5, p. 185)

Read Survivor Stories



Beauval (La Plonge) School that burned down Sept. 20, 1927, killing 19 boys and 1 nun. The dormitory was on the top floor. Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

The following list of boys who died in the fire was taken from the memorial monument:

- Marcel Lemaigre age 7
- Jimmy Iron age 8
- Alex Opikokew age 8
- Simon Sayers (Sayesc) age 8
- Raphael Corrigan age 9
- Jules Coullonner age 9
- Samuel Gardiner age 9
- Roderique Iron age 10
- Joseph Sayers (Sayesc) age 10
- Thomas Alcrow age 11
- Freddy Bishop age 11
- Antoine Durocher age 11
- Patrice Grosventre age 11
- Frank Kimbley age 11
- Alfred Laliberté age 11
- Moïse Larivière age 11
- Zéphrin Morin age 11
- Albert Sylvestre age 11
- Ernest Bishop age 12



Monument to the children who died in the 1927 fire. (Photo courtesy of www.theinquiry.ca/wordpress/) Inscription reads: "Many Aboriginal children were forced from their homes and institutionalized at the Beauval Mission School in 1927. A Fire at this School Killed 19 Aboriginal Students."



Beauval Cemetery, ca. 1989, Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, Fonds Deschâtelets, Keewatin

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

50 people." (Bishop Lajeunesse in 1937, translation)¹⁰

Accidental Student Death

In 1942, a student at the school was killed when hit by a truck driven by the school principal, Francois Xavier Gagnon. In the report, "Gagnon said he thought the boy had been struck while attempting to jump onto the truck's running board."¹¹

Métis Admission Policy Inconsistent

Indian Affairs wrote the school in 1925 to demand that the 45 "Half-breeds" as they were then called, be immediately discharged from the school to make space for "Treaty children." The principal responded, informing the government that the majority of children at Beauval were Métis, and most of these were orphaned, "only five of the forty-five students had living fathers and mothers."¹² The government withdrew the order, but continued to threaten that Métis children should expect to be discharged by June 1926. In 1928, Indian Affairs requested the discharge of eight "Half-breed" children. Again, the school defended their presence, referring to the Duncan Campbell Scott's ruling that "half-breed children living the Indian mode of life on reserve" were eligible for admission.¹³

In 1929, the provincial government provided grants for Métis day students.¹⁴

Sexual Abuse

In 1979, Paul Leroux, a former dormitory supervisor (1959 - 1967) at Beauval, was convicted with the sexual assault of a student at Grollier Hall (Inuvik, NWT). He spent four months in jail, but was later pardoned and his criminal record cleared. According to the NCTR, there is no record of an investigation in 1979 to determine if Leroux had assaulted other students at either Grollier Hall or the Beauval school.¹⁵ While at Beauval, Leroux had directed boys' choir, helped develop intramural hockey as well as competitive fastball and softball, and was coach of the Beauval Warriors. Between 1996 and 1998, Leroux was convicted of nine counts of gross indecency for incidents that occurred from 1967 - 1979, involving 15 students at Grollier Hall.¹⁶ He was again convicted of sexual assault in 2011 and 2013 for molesting 14 male Beauval students, 50 years after his time there as supervisor. Initially given a 3-year sentence, Leroux was out on parole in just two years. His parole was appealed in May 2015, and his sentence was increased from three to eight years, sending him back to jail. A June 2016 Battlefords Now news post states that Leroux was released on parole after serving one-third of his sentence.

"In 2004, Norbert Dufault, a former principal of the Beauval school [1963-1965], was sentenced to two years in jail for sexually assaulting eight young girls during the 1950s and 1960s. The assaults took place at the remote Dene community of Dillon, SK. ...Many of the girls he had assaulted in Dillon were also sent to Beauval. When one of these girls discovered that Dufault had arranged to have her younger sister see him after class, she confronted him. She told him that if he assaulted her sister, she would publicize the assaults that had taken place at Dillon. The girl's stand saved her sister from assault, but led to her own dismissal from the school, cutting short her education."¹⁷

Overcrowding

In 1952, the school was overcrowded with 140 students enrolled. Four years later, it was still overcrowded: "Indian Affairs J. R. Bell wrote that 'this condition may not meet with approval, however, I feel the children are immeasurably better off at the school than they would be at home, as regards food, clothing, health, cleanliness and education.'"¹⁸ That same year a father was charged and fined for refusing to send his son back to school.¹⁹ In a 1963 School paper, Voices of the North, the enrolment is reported as 183 students.

¹⁰ <https://sites.google.com/site/portagealaloche/history/6-residential-schools>

¹¹ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 233.

¹² The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 26.

¹³ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 26.

¹⁴ The Métis Experience, Vol. 3, p. 33.

¹⁵ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 414

¹⁶ http://www.nnsi.com/frames/newspapers/1997-06/jun16_97sex.html

¹⁷ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 449

¹⁸ The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 187

¹⁹ LeBeauf, M-E. (2011). The Role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police During the Indian Residential Schools System, p. 383