

[Back to Overview](#)

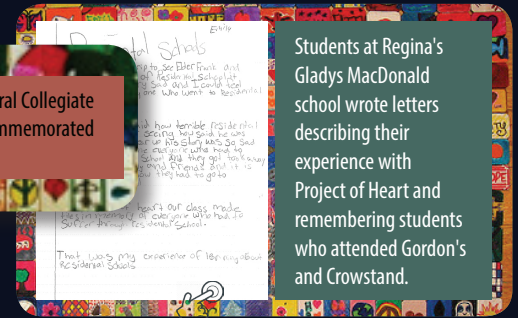


Crowstand Mission Boarding School, ca. 1901, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A4077- R-A4079-(1)-(2) ([Source Link](#))

In 2013, Moose Jaw Central Collegiate Grades 9-12 students commemorated Crowstand IRS.



Crowstand mission school pupils and staff, n.d., Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan/R-A4080 (4)



Students at Regina's Gladys MacDonald school wrote letters describing their experience with Project of Heart and remembering students who attended Gordon's and Crowstand.

# CROWSTAND INDIAN

The Crowstand Indian Residential School (1889 - 1915) was operated by the [Presbyterian Church](#). It was located near Kamsack on [Cote First Nation Reserve](#) on [Treaty 4](#) land. When the school closed in 1915, it was replaced by [Cote Federal Improved Day School](#), located on Cote First Nation Reserve, and was also operated by the Presbyterian Church, and after 1925, by the [United Church](#) (The Women's Missionary Society). The government officially approved boarding students at Cote Federal Day School from 1928 to 1939/40.<sup>1</sup>

## Poor Conditions

In 1893, an inspector "described the sewer as 'a menace to the health of all occupants of the building.' He recommended that the sewer be removed as well as the soil beneath it, as it had been contaminated by leakage."<sup>2</sup>

In 1897, a teacher was described as wearing "a fur coat in the classroom" and the classroom so cold that "water in a jug remained frozen all day, and a sewing machine could not be operated because the room was too cold."<sup>3</sup>

## Treatment of Children Who Ran Away

In 1907, the inspector of Indian Agencies, W. M. Graham reported that the Principal W. McWhinney "had been experiencing unusual trouble" with boys running away. Graham did

not think McWhinney's method of dealing with the boys was wise. He writes, "Mr. McWhinney goes after the boys and in one or two instances has tied ropes about their arms and made them run behind the buggy from their houses to the school." Some parents complained, saying "the children are not dogs." [Graham](#) told the principal to "stop this practice at once." McWhinney was instructed instead to seek consent to remove "the worst offenders to another school."<sup>4</sup> Indian Affairs official Martin Benson asked the Deputy Minister whether McWhinney's behaviour entitled the department to demand his resignation. McWhinney provided an explanation of the particular occasion in question to the Indian mission Committee: He wrote that he had gone looking for a group of runaways boys, one of whom had run away four times the previous year and four or five times that year. He was in the school buggy, accompanied by his wife. He found the three boys eight miles (almost 13 kms) from the school, accompanied by the smaller two boys' father. He took the smallest boy into the buggy and instructed the older boys to run behind. When they were approaching a bluff a half a mile later, Mr. McWhinney noticed that the boys were preparing to escape, so he tied a rope loosely round the arm of each and drew the rope over the back of the buggy and the seat, but did not

fasten it to the buggy.<sup>5</sup> "Thus we proceeded to the school, the horses walking or trotting slowly, so that the boys could follow without danger of hurting themselves in any way."<sup>6</sup> Benson's response expressed the opinion that the committee's report appeared to exonerate the principal from the scandalous occurrences at the school. He believed McWhinney's explanations to be "a lame excuse" and Benson questioned why McWhinney had brought his wife along at all because without her there may have been enough room to allow all the boys to ride.<sup>7</sup> McWhinney's explanation, though considered lame, was accepted by the Presbyterian Church officials and he continued as the principal until the school closed, and carried on as principal of the Cote Federal Day School.

## Lack of Supervision

In 1891, when male students and men from the local reserve were discovered visiting the girls' dormitory, A. J. Macrae, an Indian Affairs inspector wrote: "It is not to be wondered that the Indians regard the school with the gravest disfavor when it is remembered that the pupils concerned in these immoral occurrences were entrusted to the guardianship of the school authorities when of most tender years, and as one of them said to me, 'they have been

<sup>1</sup> [Read about staff relations at the school](#)

<sup>2</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 459

<sup>3</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 461

<sup>4</sup> Report of Mr. Inspector Graham on the Crowstand Boarding School, July 4, 1907, Indian Affairs, School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1, Public Archives of Canada.

<sup>5</sup> McWhinney to Dr. Farquharum, July 8, 1907, Indian Affairs, School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1, Public Archives of Canada.

<sup>6</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 526

<sup>7</sup> Martin Benson's letter to the Deputy Superintendent General, Indian Affairs, School Files RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1, Public Archives of Canada



Dr. Orton Irwin Grain, Medical Officer (1894). Photo Source: The Canadian Album: Men of Canada or Success by Example, (Vol. III).

*In 1914, the department's medical officer, Dr. Grain, said of Crowstand it was "the worst residential school I have had to visit, for the Department, as yet."*

(The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 413-414)



When the school closed in December 1915, it was replaced by the Cote Improved Federal Day School, operated by the Presbyterian Church, and, after 1925, by the United Church. Photo: United Church of Canada, Sask. Conference/A381.VI.G.9(q)



Click here to read letters and articles regarding school scandals. (and other stories)



*The case of the farm hand who was sexually abusing female students underscores the important point that, by 1914, government and church officials were well aware that notifying the police was a key element in an appropriate response to allegations of a staff member sexually abusing a student at a residential school. Despite this, no official policy was issued in relation to this question. In coming years, church and government officials would continue to dismiss staff rather than call in the police. (The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 64)*

# RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

allowed to grow up in wickedness which their mothers might have protected them from."<sup>8</sup> On November 27, 1907, a *Globe* newspaper article reported that "debaucheries" had taken place on several reservations, including a break-in to the girls' dormitories at Kamsack. The men who had broken in were charged with burglary and criminal assault. The male students involved were neither charged nor transferred, but McWhinney was instructed to discharge them.<sup>9</sup> (See [supplementary page](#))

When Principal McWhinney discovered that the boys and girls had been visiting each other's dormitories at night on several occasions, he punished the students and put new latches on the windows to prevent them from opening fully and "the stops were securely nailed on. The doors also were kept locked."<sup>10</sup>

## Death and Illness

In 1909, Principal McWhinney wrote of his realization of "how, in the school's early years, many of the students who had been recruited 'should never have entered school.' Many of these students died."<sup>11</sup> This statement was made two years after the [Bryce Report](#).

## Fire

In 1912, Principal McWhinney reported that a male student attempted to set fire to the school and was punished "severely." In 1913, two male students attempted to set fire to the school. These boys were "locked up" and eventually transferred to Manitoba Industrial School for Boys, a home for delinquent boys.<sup>12</sup>

## Sexual Abuse and Failure to Report

In 1914, when farmhand H. Everett, after realizing his actions had been discovered by a co-worker, confessed to Principal McWhinney that he was "having unlawful intercourse with some of the girls in his room,"<sup>13</sup> McWhinney "fired the man immediately and recommended that he catch that night's train," but did not report this discovery to Indian Affairs or the police.<sup>14</sup> McWhinney minimized the offence, rationalizing that Everett was a "well meaning young man who had fallen in a time of weakness and to prosecute him would only ruin his life and give publicity to a matter that I hoped might otherwise be kept quiet."<sup>15</sup> McWhinney's 1907 comment, "The Indian boy or girl you may know, yields easily to any impulse or desire and from twelve upwards their passions are peculiarly strong," was reflective of the church's attitude towards sexual offenses in residential schools. However,

"students complained to their parents, who in turn complained to the Indian agent. A warrant was issued for Everett's arrest but, by then, he had fled the area."<sup>16</sup> The members of the Cote Band criticized the administration because it hadn't taken proper precautions to ensure the safety of the girls. In response to their criticism, the Government notified the church that all the girls were to be discharged and sent home, and that the Principal should be sent to some other field of work. With the girls sent home, the enrolment was so low there was now an argument to be made for a day school.

In 1914, the department's medical officer, Dr. Orton Irwin Grain, "described the school as 'the worst residential school I have had to visit... ! Conditions were so bad he could see no alternative other than to close it down.'<sup>17</sup> The school was closed in December 1915. It was replaced by the Cote Improved Federal Day School. Following pressure from the United Church, in 1928 the federal government constructed a dormitory at the Cote Day School to house students from Mondays to Fridays. In 1932 the accommodation in the dormitory was judged to be inadequate. The following year, the government cut its food grant to the school. The number of students who boarded fluctuated between four and eight. The dormitory was closed in 1940.

<sup>8</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 649

<sup>9</sup> Indian Affairs School Files (RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1, part 1) Public Archives Canada

<sup>10</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 650

<sup>11</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 281

<sup>12</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 469-479, 485

<sup>13</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 563

<sup>14</sup> Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, Vol. 4, p. 104

<sup>15</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 563

<sup>16</sup> The History, Part 2: 1939 to 2000, Vol. 1, p. 563

<sup>17</sup> The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939, Vol. 1, p. 413-414