

# St. Philip's School

Fort George, QC

Fort George is on the north shore of its namesake island (formerly Governor's Island), at the mouth of La Grande-Rivière, on the Quebec side of James Bay 350 km north of Moosonee. A Hudson's Bay post was established here in 1803 as its location offered the best harbour on the east side of James Bay in the Territorial District of Ungava. Fort George had earlier served as a seasonal encampment for the James Bay Cree in the area. It was a major transit point for natives and fur traders travelling along the coast or using Le Grande (Big River) Waterway to reach distant points in the hinterland.

In addition to fostering a growing Cree settlement here, the HBC post was increasingly visited by Inuit from the north coast when Fort George became a whaling station. In 1852, the first Anglican missionary arrived but attempts at educating and evangelizing the local native inhabitants were at first difficult and impractical, given the transient nature of these peoples. A day school was firmly established in 1907 under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society.

When the Oblate Fathers established a Catholic mission and day school at Fort George in 1927, the Anglican Bishop of Moosonee, John Anderson, countered with immediate plans for establishing a residential school. Thus began a testy and healthy rivalry between Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries, which continued for many years.

The first sod for the new St. Philip's Indian Residential School was turned by Bishop Anderson in August 1932 and, six months later, the school opened with thirteen girls in residence. The Catholic residential school followed three years later (to be closed in 1952).

St. Philip's School was funded and built entirely by the Diocese of Moosonee and the local mission. It was situated on land leased from the Province of Quebec. Shortly after it opened, the school's management was transferred to the newly created Diocese of the Arctic. In 1936, responsibility was assumed by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC). The school maintained close links with Bishop Horden Memorial School at Moose Factory. St. Philip's normally took in children from the coastal bands and Bishop Horden School accommodated those from inland bands. Some Inuit children from the eastern Arctic were also enrolled at Fort George, their per capita grants being paid by the government of the Northwest Territories. In 1961, the redefined Diocese of Moosonee once again had jurisdiction over the Fort George School.

In the early decades, instruction was provided up to Grade Six, generally following the Ontario curriculum; Quebec standards were adopted in 1965. By 1950, Indian Affairs reported St. Philip's students had the best mastery of English in James Bay. There was no working farm at the school, due to its location and climate. Spoiled food and shortages were commonplace and re-supply was infrequent and expensive; as well, fresh water was often difficult to obtain.

Girls usually dominated the student body, as boys were often needed on their parents' trap lines and were kept home during hunting season. The Ungava area had no defined reserves where native inhabitants could be easily regulated and where Indian Agents could enforce school attendance.

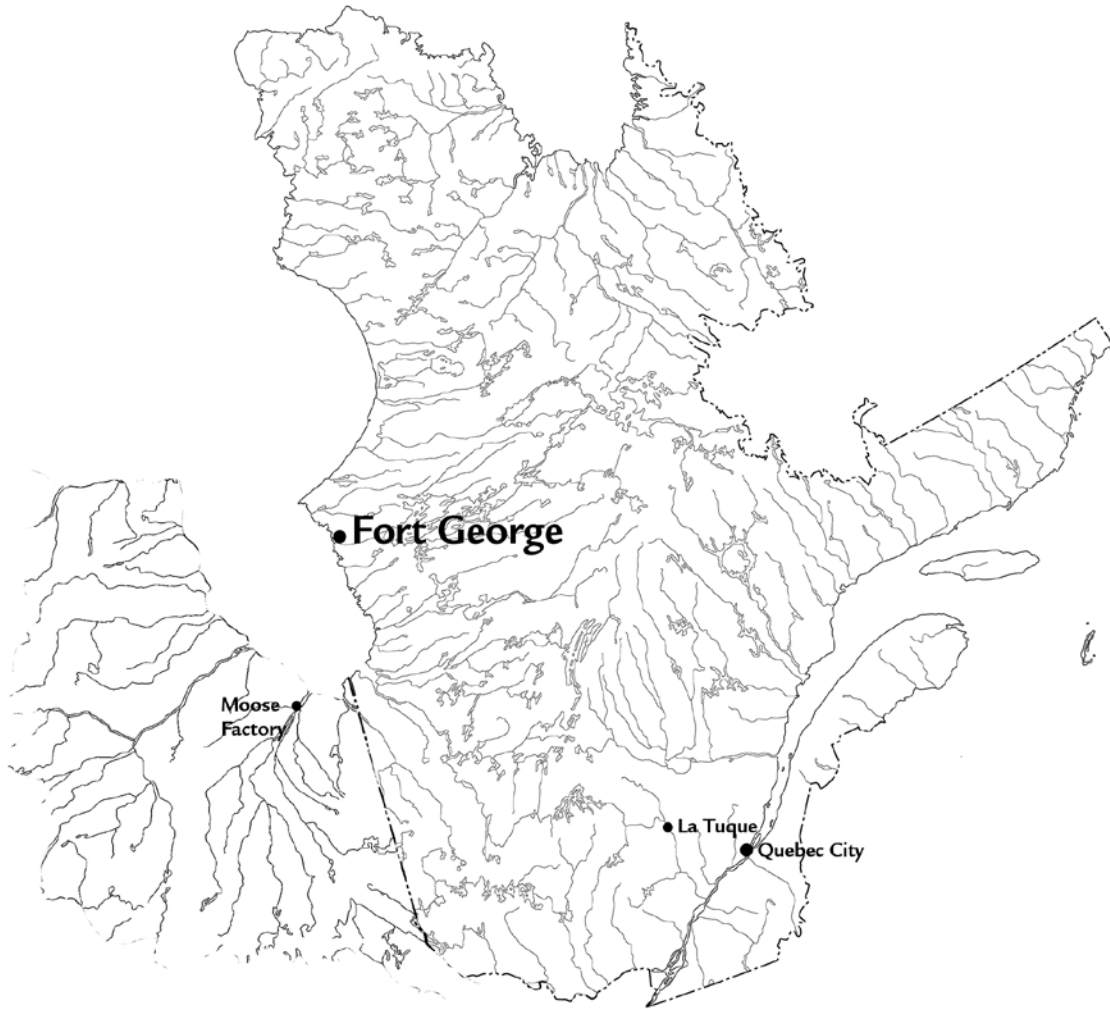
Fire destroyed the school in early 1943 and it was replaced by a larger building the following year. Pupilage increased and full primary schooling became the norm. Authorized enrolment for day students and boarders often exceeded capacity. After the war, students in senior primary school and those who qualified

for high school were sent to Shingwauk Residential School so they could attend public schools in Sault Ste. Marie. Others attended schools in Brantford (Mohawk Institute) and Hull where some boarded with local families.

Indian Affairs purchased the school buildings and property in 1953 and on April 1, 1969 the government assumed complete management of the school, which soon became a hostel. Its former classroom block became a local day school and a separate community high school opened in 1972. The student residence, associated schools, and residential community at Fort George were abandoned in 1979 due to the James Bay Hydro-Electric project, which required a greater water flow on La Grande-Rivière. Fort George became mostly a ghost town and its residents and schools were relocated 9 km upstream to safer ground at Chisasibi.

## Milestones

1907	St. Philip's Mission Day School opens.		
1932 Aug. 11	Construction commences on residential school.		
1933 Feb. 1	St. Philip's Indian and Eskimo Residential School opens with accommodation for 35 pupils. Thirteen girls are enrolled. Later this year school management is transferred from Diocese of Moosonee to Diocese of the Arctic.		
1936 Jan.	Indian and Eskimo School Commission of MSCC takes over operation of school. Government provides per capita grants based on 35 pupils and raises authorized enrolment to 50 pupils for period 1938-1947.		
1943 Jan.26	Dormitory section of school destroyed by fire. Day school continues in mission house for local children. Some boarders are sent to Moose Factory School.		
1944 July 9	New residential school opens, with authorized enrolment of 50, soon increased to 75.		
1953	Government purchases school buildings and property.		
1956	Enrolment increased to 90.		
1957	Authorized pupilage reduced to 55 to alleviate overcrowding.		
1958		1958	65 students are in residence.
		1960	New classroom building constructed.
		1963 Oct.	New dormitory building and classroom addition completed. School has capacity for 160 boarders, with 145 registered that fall. Government places authorized pupilage at 140.
		1964	Residential students total 154—a third are from Eastmain, Paint Hills and Rupert House. Forty-nine former Fort George students are at Shingwauk Hostel to attend public elementary and high schools in Sault Ste. Marie.
		1965	Many students transfer from Horden Hall (Moose Factory) to Fort George, raising number of residential students to 203. Quebec English Protestant curriculum is adopted.
		1966	Residential students drop to 175 but day students increase to 145, bringing total enrolment to 320 and necessitating three extra classrooms. Instruction is given from kindergarten to grade 6.
		1967	Authorized residential enrolment increased to 154 but 195 boarders are accepted.
		1969 Apr. 1	Government assumes operation of school. English remains language of instruction. Anglican chaplaincy service continues. School is soon renamed St. Philip's Student Residence and number of boarders declines as more native families provide foster care in Fort George.
		1971	Former classroom block becomes the government run Sand Park Elementary Day School.
		1972	Public high school established at Fort George
		1975	St. Philip's Student Residence closes. James Bay Agreement creates the Cree School Board, which assumes responsibility for education of all Cree children of James Bay, Quebec in 1978. Instruction in the Cree language is mandated.
		1979-1980	Fort George community and schools are relocated to nearby Chisasibi due to James Bay hydro-electric project's effects on La Grande-Rivière.



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