



Shingwauk Indian Residential School

Sault Ste. Marie, ON

In 1832, the Province of Upper Canada decided to establish a mission at Sault Ste. Marie where religious education and vocational training would be given to local native groups. Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Colborne, a devout Anglican, recruited a divinity student, William McMurray, to carry out this task on behalf of the government. Funding for this missionary venture was provided by the newly formed Society for Converting and Civilizing the Indians in Upper Canada (The Toronto Society), whose members included senior colonial officials and many of the church and business elite in Upper Canada.

A combined schoolhouse and church, dubbed a “teaching wigwam,” was built about 1833 at nearby Garden River, with Mr. McMurray in charge. By the late 1830s, mission activities had generated a large following of native Anglican adherents. Among those converted was Old Chief Shingwauk (Shingwaukoons or “Little Pine”) who would later represent his Ojibways at the signing of the Robinson-Huron Treaty in 1850. Chief Shingwauk greatly appreciated the mission work carried out at Garden River. However, these activities were soon cut short as the new Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, disapproved of attempts to civilize and evangelize the Indians. All government support was withdrawn and the mission lay vacant for about 15 years. It would fall upon the shoulders of the Old Chief’s two sons, especially Chief Augustin Shingwauk, to see that the teaching wigwam was permanently restored.

From 1855 to 1871, the Garden River mission was served by the Rev. James Chance who struggled on with limited resources. During this time, Rev. Chance was visited by an Englishman, Edward Francis Wilson, who felt called upon to do missionary work among the Indians. Following his ordainment in 1867, Rev. Wilson returned to Garden River about 1872 and collaborated with Chiefs Augustin Shingwauk and Buhkwujjenene Shingwauk (sons of Shingwaukoons) in their joint effort to secure funds and support for the teaching wigwam. Their appeals to government and church (at home and in England) were successful. In particular, the Bishop of Toronto, Alexander Neil Bethune, became a strong supporter of mission work at Garden City and intervened to have Rev. Wilson put in charge.

September 22nd, 1873 saw the formal opening of the Shingwauk Industrial Home, with an enrolment of sixteen boys. Disaster struck six days later when the building was destroyed by fire; all occupants escaped without injury. Not deterred, Rev. Wilson quickly appealed for funds a second time and received overwhelming contributions. The replacement residential school would be constructed within the Municipality of Sault Ste. Marie, which had promised a \$500 grant for locating within its boundaries.

Rev. Wilson purchased a 90-acre site 4 km east of the town’s centre, on the shores of the St. Mary’s River which was the major waterway linking Lakes Huron and Superior. His Excellency the Earl of Dufferin, Governor General of Canada, was touring the Upper Great Lakes at the time and visited the school site on July 31st, 1874 to lay its corner stone. This was to be the permanent location for the Shingwauk Home (and successor buildings) for the next 100 years.

The new Shingwauk Home was formally opened August 2nd, 1875 by Bishops Hellmuth of Huron and Fauquier of Algoma. The latter diocese, newly formed in 1873, would have a close relationship with this Anglican school throughout its history. Rev. E.F. Wilson served as the school’s first principal, in charge of 50 boys mostly drawn from Ojibway settlements at nearby Garden River and distant Walpole Island, Sarnia and Muncey. While Rev. Wilson did accept girls at Shingwauk, only a few came that first year and none thereafter. In reality, there was little space for female students at this Boys’ Home.



To accommodate girls, a separate residential school building was established on a 15-acre site 5 km away, just north of the village centre. It was named the Wawanosh Home for Girls. Construction of this grand two-storey stone building commenced in spring 1877 and the first ten girls arrived that fall, before work was completed. The building fund was depleted in 1878, prompting new subscriptions for funding. As the federal Government was now more involved in native affairs (following passage of the recent Indian Act of 1876), it agreed to make an annual grant to the Wawanosh Home, provided enrolment was not less than fifteen. The Home was officially opened on August 19th, 1879 with 14 girls in residence.

In his quest to expand and streamline school facilities, Rev. Wilson soon realized that the isolated Wawanosh Home with its limited enrolment should be sold off. He formulated plans in the late 1880s to move the girls to larger facilities at the main Shingwauk site on the St. Mary's River. There was little support for this school expansion program, probably due to the recession in the 1890s. Rev. Wilson resigned as Principal in March, 1893, owing to ill health and frustration over not being able to consolidate the Boys and Girls Homes. This task would be achieved by others, a few years later. On his departure, Rev. Edward Francis Wilson left behind an educational institution firmly established among aboriginal peoples. In later years Shingwauk would earn the reputation as the Anglican Church's flagship residential school.

Milestones

1833-c1840 Province establishes day school and mission ("Teaching Wigwam") at Garden River, near Sault Ste. Marie. Managed by lay Anglican, William McMurray. Closed when government withdraws support.

1873 Shingwauk Industrial Home opens at Garden City on September 22nd, with Rev. Edward Francis Wilson serving as Principal. Frame building is destroyed by fire six days later.

1875 New Shingwauk Home opens August 2nd at Sault Ste. Marie. Built of stone, this school building will later be enlarged and stand for 60 years until replaced by a much larger facility.

1879 Wawanosh Home for Girls opens Aug. 19th with 14 pupils in residence. Home is situated on the northern outskirts of Sault Ste. Marie, about 5 km northwest of the Shingwauk Home for Boys.

1882 Combined enrolment for Wawanosh and Shingwauk Homes totals 76 pupils.

1887 Thirty pupils from both Homes travel to Montreal to join in the celebrations marking Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

1889 A baseball club, known as the Buckskin Club, is formed at Shingwauk

1900 New Wawanosh Home for Girls opens at the Shingwauk (St. Mary's River) site. Schools are administered jointly. Authorized pupilage is 26 girls and 70 boys. Old Wawanosh Home is ultimately purchased by the Children's Aid Society of Algoma, who will use it as a shelter, 1912-1955.

1935 New Shingwauk Indian Residential School, designed for 140 pupils, opens October 3rd. It is situated up on the hillside, immediately behind the old Shingwauk Home, soon to be razed.

1950s Residential students offered secondary education in local public high schools. Pupils in senior elementary grades gradually attend city schools.

1961 All 50 high school students registered at Shingwauk are boarded in private homes in the city. This practice will continue through the 1960s. Shingwauk takes in overflow of Grade 7 students from Moose Factory and Sioux Lookout schools. Shingwauk pupils attend five City schools, in grades 3 to 8.

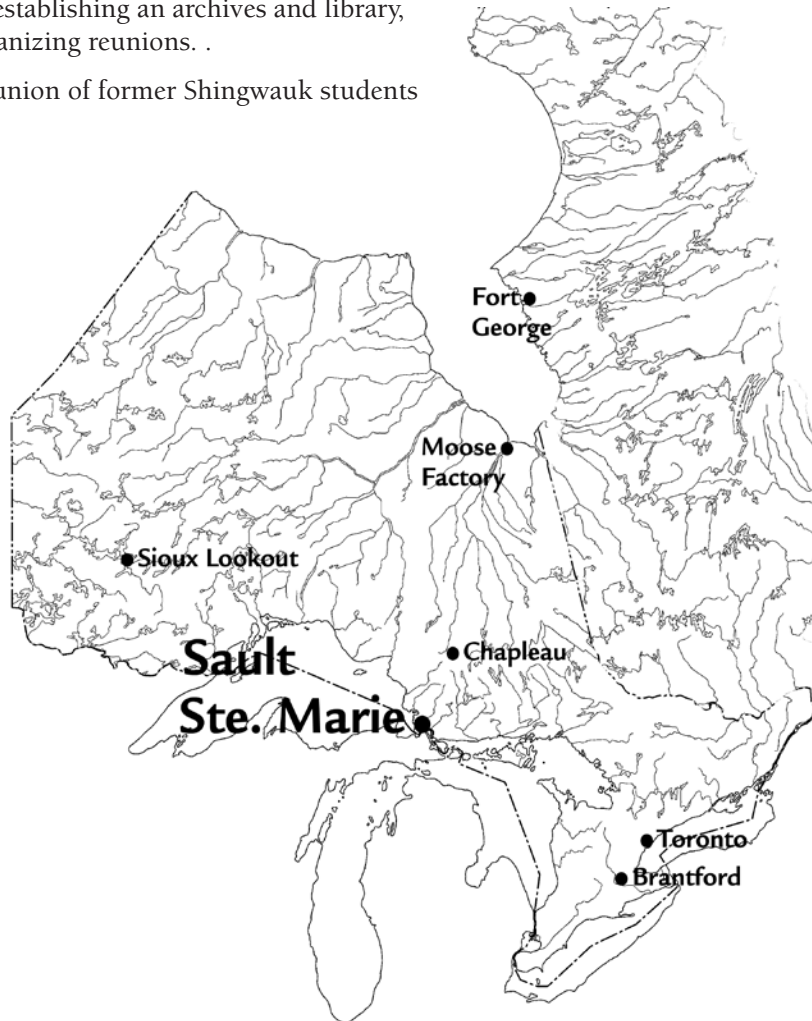
1962 Seventy-two high school students are now "living out."

1965 Entire enrolment of 127 pupils attends classes at city schools. Government paid guidance counsellor is only remaining teacher at Shingwauk.

1966 School adopts new name, Shingwauk Hall. Enrolment drops to 90. School choir performs at multi-faith service held at the Sault Armouries, on the occasion of the visit by the Most Rev. Dr. M. Ramsay, Archbishop of Canterbury.

1969, Apr.1 Government takes over remaining administrative and support functions at Shingwauk.

- Most Anglican employees (non-teaching) stay on and transfer to federal payroll.
- 1970 Shingwauk Hall closes.
- 1971 Algoma University College (established 1967) vacates temporary premises at Sault College and moves to the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School property. In the decades following, Algoma and partnering native groups will undertake many initiatives on First Nations / Canadian cross-cultural development.
- 1979 Shingwauk Project launched within Algoma University College. Project's goals are to facilitate research and a sharing of views regarding the history and experience of residential education, especially at Shingwauk and the many other church-government run schools. Specific activities include publishing books, establishing an archives and library, and organizing reunions. .
- 1981 First reunion of former Shingwauk students
- 1991 "Shingwauk Reunion '91: The Celebration of the 160th Anniversary of Chief Shingwauk's Vision." Agenda focuses on the future of Shingwauk as a First Nations / Canadian Education and Research Centre. Commitment is made to carry on the Shingwauk tradition through the establishment of Shingwauk University. Draft charter is prepared in 1992 but its adoption will be delayed for many years due protracted consultations over its mandate and legal issues over title to lands and Algoma's alliance with Laurentian University at Sudbury.
- 2006 May 19 Covenant is signed by the Shingwauk Education Trust and Algoma University College to establish Shingwauk University as a centre of excellence for post-secondary Anishinaabe (Indigenous) studies.



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