



St. Barnabas School

Sarcee Reserve, AB

The Sarcee Reserve (Tsuu T'ina Nation) was created following the 1877 signing of Treaty 7 which governed all aboriginal people living in today's southern Alberta. Five reserves were established for each of the principal native groups—North Blackfoot, Blood, North Peigan, Stoney and Sarcee. By 1883, many of the Tsuu T'ina had settled in the new Sarcee Reserve, whose eastern boundary now abuts the southwest suburbs of Calgary. Through its agency, Calgary Indian Missions, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) quickly established an Anglican presence in the Treaty 7 area. It was headed by Archdeacon John W. Tims who coordinated church work on all reserves except the Stoney, which was served by a Methodist mission. The year 1888 saw the creation of the Diocese of Calgary (out of Saskatchewan), which became increasingly involved with the Indian Affairs Department in policies regarding establishment of residential schools on reserves.

In 1888, the CMS and Archdeacon Tims recruited the Rev. Harry W.G. Stocken to run the St. Barnabas Mission, which was situated on the eastern edge of the Sarcee Reserve at Lower Camp, near the Indian Agency. Four years later he opened the Sarcee Boys' Boarding School with about six students in residence, a number that doubled the following year. The Mission also operated a separate day school.

As vocational training was limited at the Boarding School and there was no school farm, Indian Affairs established the Calgary Industrial School in 1896. It was a properly equipped school, relatively close, that provided older Sarcee boys with the necessary vocational skills the government felt were needed to enable graduates to lead a productive, self-sufficient life. The new residential school was named St. Dunstan's Indian Industrial School by its Anglican administrators. Initially, most pupils were Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee) but boys were later admitted from the Blood Reserve. St. Dunstan's was closed in 1907 due to low enrolment (Treaty 7 area native population was declining) and its distance from reserves. During the time St. Dunstan's operated, the Boarding School on the Sarcee Reserve continued to function but with fewer male students and a building that was rapidly deteriorating.

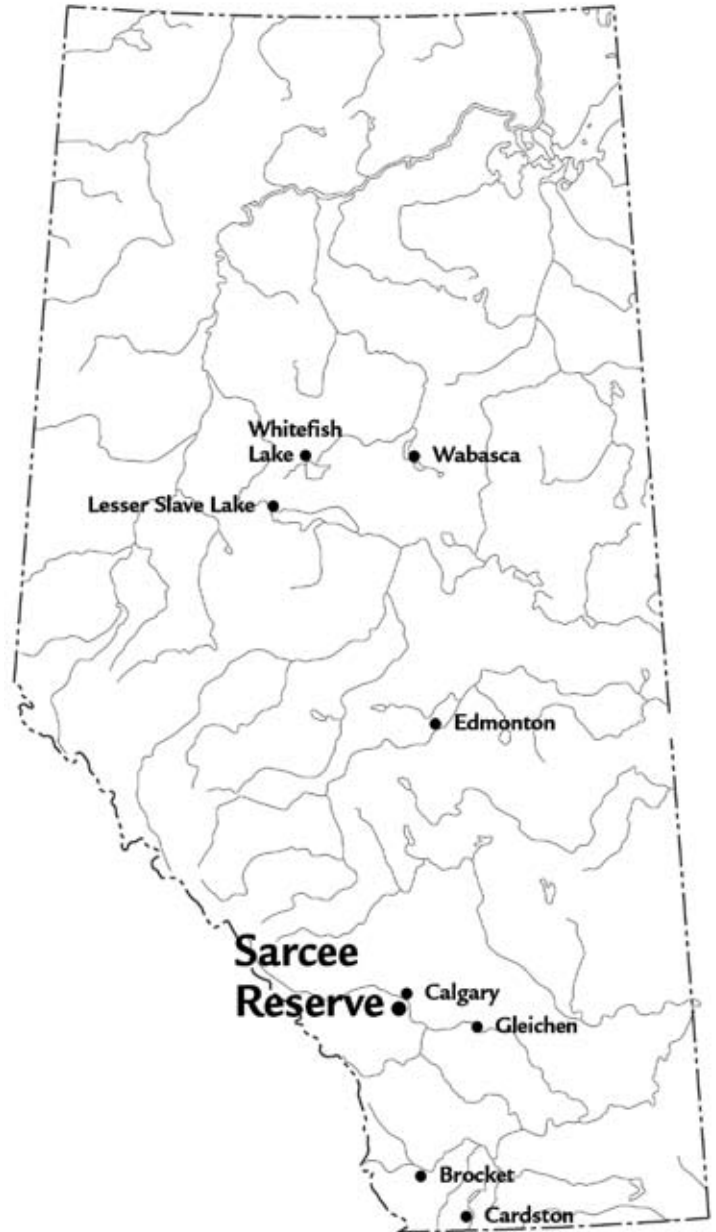
A replacement building was constructed in 1914 with government funding. The new St. Barnabas Indian Residential School accommodated about 35 boarders, all from the local reserve. One of the school's famous alumni was David Crowchild, who was born on the Reserve in 1899 and later became a famous bronc rider and headliner at the Calgary Stampede. Crowchild Trail, a major thoroughfare in the city, is named after this Tsuu T'ina native. He died on the Reserve in 1982.

Operation of the St. Barnabas School was hampered by recurring health crises affecting most of the student body, especially the 1918 flu epidemic, followed by an alarming increase in tuberculosis cases. In 1922, the residential school was closed and its dormitories became hospital wards for the many TB patients on the reserve, adults and children. Between 1883 and 1924, the Sarcee population decreased from 400-450 to about 160. Healthy children were sent to other residential schools, such as Old Sun. The Sarcee boarding school never reopened but the day school, occupying its own building, continued to operate for several decades.

Milestones



- 1883 June 27 Sarcee (Tsuu T'ina) Reserve No. 145 is established on 283 square km of land near the Elbow River, southwest of Fort Calgary.
- 1888 St. Barnabas Indian Mission established on Sarcee Reserve with support from the Church Missionary Society.
- 1892 Sarcee Boys' Boarding School opens with 6 pupils in residence.
- 1894 Enrolment increases to 13.
- 1896 St. Dunstan's Indian Industrial School opens in Calgary for older Sarcee boys. It is operated by the Anglican Church. Boarding school on Sarcee Reserve remains open for junior boys and it now accepts girls.
- 1907 St. Dunstan's School closes.
- 1911 Sarcee School is operated by the Diocese of Calgary, with sustained funding support from government.
- 1914 St. Barnabas Indian Residential School is rebuilt, with increased capacity for about 35 boarders.
- 1918-1922 Serious outbreaks of influenza and chronic tuberculosis affect most children and adults on the reserve and restrict instruction provided at St. Barnabas School.
- 1922 Residential school closes and is converted to a treatment centre for tuberculosis patients on the Sarcee Reserve. Day School remains open.



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