



St. Cyprian School

Peigan Reserve, Brocket, AB

The Peigan Reserve No. 147 (Piikani Nation), situated along the Oldman River in southwest Alberta, was established following the signing of Treaty 7 on September 22, 1877. The Piikani (North Peigan) were the smallest tribe in the Blackfoot Confederacy, which also included the North Blackfoot (Siksika) and Blood nations. Across the border in Montana, their cousins, the South Peigan, were settled on the large Blackfeet Reservation.

Anglican missionary activity among the three Canadian Blackfoot nations, as well as the Sarcee (Tsuu T'ina), began shortly after the treaty signing. Funding came from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and later the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) who set up the Calgary Indian Missions agency to coordinate this work among native peoples. The Diocese of Calgary, created in 1888, later became closely involved in pastoral work and education of Indian children on these reserves. Roman Catholic missionaries were also active throughout the Blackfoot Confederacy. On the Peigan Reserve, the Grey Nuns taught at the Sacred Heart Residential School, which opened in the mid-1890s.

Rev. George McKay was the first Anglican missionary on the scene. He arrived in Fort McLeod in 1878 and soon established St. Peter's Mission on the nearby Peigan Reserve, which had just been formed and was being settled by native Piikani families. The mission day school was replaced by a boarding school—the Peigan Mission Home—in 1890 with Rev. H.D. Bourne as its first principal. It was expanded in 1893. The Home was substandard and still too small, prompting the CMS and Indian Affairs Department to construct a new residential school west of Brocket on the bank of Pincher Creek, just off the Peigan Reserve.

The new school opened in the fall of 1897 and was named The Victoria Jubilee Home for Indian Children in honour of Queen Victoria whose Diamond Jubilee was being celebrated that year. As the school was on the flood plain of the Oldman River, high water was always a problem in springtime. By 1917, the school complex had fallen into a state of disrepair and the Church and local Piikani elders petitioned Ottawa for assistance in erecting a new school building on higher ground.

St. Cyprian Indian Residential School opened in early 1927, with capacity for fifty students. It was named in honour of the first Bishop of Calgary, the Rt. Rev. William Cyprian Pinkham who had just retired. The new school was situated within the reserve on the prairie level, four km southeast of Brocket, with a large acreage set aside for cultivation and pasture. All students were drawn from the Peigan Reserve and the older boys spent half their school day working on the farm. These activities in agriculture and raising cattle made the school largely self sufficient in "food to table," supplying for many years all of the flour, meat, vegetables, butter and eggs required to feed students and staff. In 1946, fire destroyed the barn and stables with the loss of several animals and equipment. Farming was soon phased out and the land was returned to the Piikani for their use.

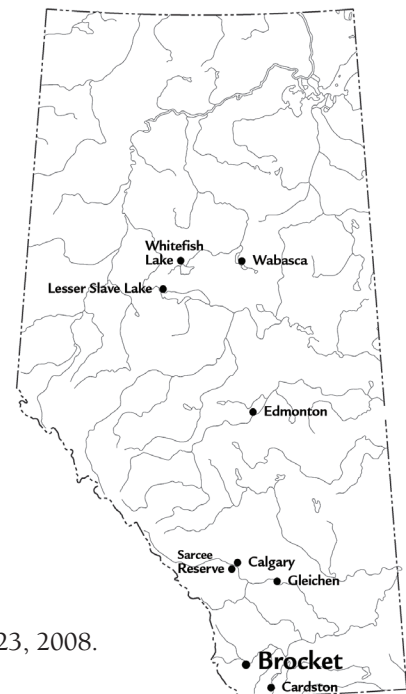
By the late 1950s, classroom space was insufficient and Ottawa followed through on its plans to close the residential school on June 30, 1961, despite objections from the Piikani community. Enrolment had peaked in 1957 with 62 pupils in residence but had fallen to 35 pupils in the school's final year, as more children became day students. As the replacement for St. Cyprian's and former day school, the Anglican operated Peigan Indian Day School opened that fall with first year enrolment of 90 students. This school continued until 1964 when Piikani children were transferred to the new elementary public school in Brocket. Since the



early 1950s, secondary students had been bused to municipal high schools in Pincher Creek and Fort Macleod. In the mid-1980s, the local Piikani band assumed control of the former day school and, in 1997, these facilities were expanded into the all-grade Piikani Nation Secondary School.

Milestones

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| <p>1879 St. Peter's Mission established on the Peigan Reserve by Rev. George McKay.</p> <p>1880 Mission day school opens.</p> <p>1890 Apr. 19 Peigan Mission Home opens with capacity for a dozen boarders. Funding is provided by Church Missionary Society (CMS).</p> <p>1892 CMS establishes agency, the Calgary Indian Missions, to coordinate funding and support activities at the Peigan school and other Anglican residential schools throughout the Treaty 7 area.</p> <p>1893 Peigan Home is expanded to accommodate 36 residential students.</p> <p>1897 Sept. Victoria Jubilee Home for Indian Children is officially opened by the Governor-General of Canada, the Duke of Aberdeen. School has capacity for about 30 children and is situated just off the reserve in the Oldman River valley at Pincher Creek.</p> <p>1909 Dormitory space expanded.</p> <p>1911 Ottawa and Diocese of Calgary agree to standards for admission requirements and school building. Government is to pay annual per capita grant of \$100 for each student. Authorized pupilage is 30, which is usually exceeded in following years. Relations soon become strained between school administrators and Indian Agent as terms of contract are not being adhered to by school staff and building condition worsens during the next 15 years.</p> <p>1920 Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) takes over the work conducted by the Calgary Indian Missions of the CMS throughout the Treaty 7 area, including the Peigan Victoria Home and other Anglican</p> | <p>1927 Mar. 4 St. Cyprian Indian Residential School opens with authorized pupilage of 50. School is situated on high ground within the reserve, with substantial land for farming, which begins in earnest in the next few years.</p> <p>1946 Oct. Barn destroyed by fire. Farming activity declines and ends by 1957 when land returned to Piikani Nation.</p> <p>1950 Day school opens as adjunct to boarding school.</p> <p>1950s High school students are bused to municipal schools in Fort Macleod and Pincher Creek.</p> <p>1957 Residential student enrolment peaks at 62.</p> <p>1961 June 30 St. Cyprian Indian Residential School closes. New Peigan Indian Day School, operated by MSCC, opens in September for about 90 children in the elementary grades.</p> <p>1964 Reserve day school closes, as its native elementary students are transferred to new public school in Brocket.</p> <p>1997 Piikani Nation Secondary School opens for all grades. It is operated by local Indian band.</p> |
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