



St. George's School

Lytton, BC

Following the creation of the Crown Colony of British Columbia in 1866, missionaries affiliated with the Anglican Church expanded their evangelizing work into the B.C. interior. Yale and Lytton soon became important centres for church work. Following an appeal from the Thompson Valley Indians, the Rev. John Booth Good moved his mission up the Fraser River from Yale to Lytton where, in August 1867, he opened an Indian Boys Day School. After 16 years serving this widely scattered pastoral charge, Good accepted a new post on Vancouver Island. His plans for a residential school at Lytton were never fulfilled.

With the formation of the new Diocese of New Westminster in 1879, its first Bishop, Acton Windeyer Sillitoe sought to improve the educational opportunities for aboriginal children in that part of his jurisdiction east of the Coast Mountains. He successfully appealed to the Sisters of the Community of All Hallows in Norfolk, England who answered the call. A small group of these Anglican nuns arrived at Yale in 1884 to found All Hallows in the West, as this boarding school for girls (native and European) became known. The school closed in 1917 when its English sponsors could not provide adequate financial support due to the hardships endured during World War I. Most of the native schoolgirls were then transferred to the recently opened Indian residential school at Lytton.

Before his death in 1894, Bishop Sillitoe recognized the need for a permanent residential school for native boys at Lytton. Again, he found a willing sponsor in England. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (The New England Company) responded to the Bishop's request and, after a few years of studying the matter, the project was brought to fruition. Rev. George Ditcham, an assisting Anglican Priest in Vancouver, became the SPG's "man on the ground" who secured a site for the school. He purchased 696 acres of land in two parcels, about 4 km north-west of Lytton, a community at the confluence of Fraser and Thompson Rivers and connected to the outside world by the Lillooet Highway and the recently completed Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 1902, the Industrial School for Indian Boys at Lytton opened, with Rev. Ditcham as its first principal. This residential school was one of only two operated by the New England Company in Canada, the other being the Mohawk Institute on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. The Company eventually faced financial hardship in managing both schools and contracted with the federal government to lease their lands and take over administration in 1922. The agreement stipulated that Anglican clergymen were to be appointed principals and Christian teachings maintained in the schools. While the Company continued to make annual grants, in later years the Diocese, MSCC and WA groups provided material support. At no time did these two schools come under direct management of MSCC, through its Indian School Administration which operated most of the other schools.

Milestones



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| 1902 | <p>Lytton Industrial School for Boys (formal name) opens. Built in the classic English Tudor style, it has a capacity for twenty. Healthy boys, seven to sixteen years of age, are taken from nearby reserves in the Fraser and Thompson valleys. The New England Company expects graduates to marry among their own people and to settle down locally on small plots of land provided by the Company. Here, former students would continue to receive practical advice and spiritual guidance from the industrial teachers and Principal. This outcome would not be achieved, probably due to its lack of priority, impracticality and the eventual disposition of most of the school's large land holdings through lease, sale or use by the school for farming activities.</p> | 1926-1927 | <p>St. George's is under quarantine much of the school year during the most devastating flu epidemic to hit the school, affecting 95 students and resulting in 13 deaths.</p> |
| 1911 | <p>Additions made to building, increasing capacity to 40.</p> | 1927 | <p>The New England Company sells its lands, farm equipment and livestock to the government. Large, modern residential school building is constructed by Ottawa on school lands about 1 km north of the former site. It has a capacity of 180. The Company continues to provide a \$5,000 annual grant.</p> |
| 1917 | <p>All Hallows School for Girls at Yale closes and its native girls are transferred to the Lytton school, which is renamed St. George's Indian Residential School. A new wing had been added in 1916 to accommodate these new arrivals. Condition of the building would deteriorate rapidly during the next ten years, with problems of poor construction, overcrowding, insufficient plumbing and concerns over fire safety raised frequently by the Indian Agents. Primitive conditions are exacerbated by decision to continue with coal oil lighting and not to introduce electricity.</p> | 1928 | <p>Original school building is vacated April 28th and new building opened. It is occupied by 74 boys and 73 girls. The old school is demolished in 1929 by local native groups who are permitted to salvage any useful materials.</p> |
| 1922 | <p>Suffering from diminished financial resources, the New England Company leases most of its property to the Canadian Government who assumes administration of the school. Essentially, the school remains an Anglican institution</p> | 1936-1937 | <p>Much of the school year is lost due to health crisis affecting most students, staff and emergency nurses. By January, 150 students are stricken with measles, followed by influenza affecting 170 children. Several deaths are attributed to pneumonia and the flu.</p> |
| | | 1949 | <p>Public High School in Lytton is to be expanded to accommodate graduates (grade 8) of St. George's seeking full secondary education from this date forward. Grade 9 had been provided within the residential school since the 1930s.</p> |
| | | 1952 | <p>212 students are in residence, exceeding the school's design capacity. This becomes the norm in the 1950s and 1960s through use of bunk beds in the dormitories.</p> |
| | | 1956 | <p>50 students from St. George's are attending the Provincial high school at Lytton.</p> |
| | | 1960s | <p>Most students in residence at St. George's attend provincial elementary and secondary schools in Lytton. Regular school bus service established in 1962.</p> |
| | | 1969 Apr. 1 | <p>Government takes over other church run residential schools and hostels in Canada. Lytton facility (government run since 1922) is renamed St. George's Student Residence and liaison ceases with Diocese of Cariboo over</p> |

hiring matters. However, the government continues the practice of hiring Anglican chaplains for the hostel until closing date is determined.

1982 Nov. Hostel building destroyed by fire.

1970 Government orders remaining school farming operations at St. George's to end. Since 1963, the church was permitted to manage the small farm and run it as a profit centre. Farmland is subsequently leased to private individuals.

1970s Enrolment declines as students from the Nass Valley, Hazelton and Kitimat areas are phased out, as these children are and will be attending days schools close to their communities. By 1976, most students in residence are from the local Lytton Band, with a few from the Thompson valley.

1979 St. George's Student Residence closes July 31. Property (including former farm lands) is set aside for the use of the Lytton Indian Band who remains undecided over possible future use of the hostel building. To accommodate displaced residents of the Lytton Hostel, the government constructs houses on the Nuuatun No. 2 and Inkluckcheen No. 21 Reserves as family dwellings for these children and parents.



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