



Mackay School

The Pas, MB
and Dauphin, MB

The two Mackay Schools in Manitoba shared a common name and registration number with Ottawa, but in reality each was a unique school. They existed in different regions of Manitoba, under different Dioceses (Saskatchewan and Brandon), and in separate eras. The later Mackay-Dauphin School did not inherit a staff and student body from the original Mackay-The Pas School. The name honours Archdeacon John Alexander Mackay who had a long career in church missionary work in the Diocese of Saskatchewan in late Victorian times, culminating with his 1920 appointment as Superintendent of Indian Missions for the Diocese. Mackay died in 1923.

In 1887, the Diocese of Saskatchewan planned to establish Indian boarding schools at Lac La Ronge and at The Pas. This was during a time of increased mission activity throughout the Diocese. While the Lac La Ronge All Saints School did become a reality in 1906, Indian Affairs felt there was no immediate need for a boarding school at The Pas (then situated within the Territorial District of Saskatchewan). The government was further petitioned in 1903 and 1907 by Indian leaders of The Pas Agency, who felt treaty obligations were not being adhered to and that education for their children should be conducted in a local residential school rather than at day schools. By this time, many of the region's native children were being sent to the Elkhorn School, far to the south.

Following these representations and a strong case made by Archdeacon Mackay in 1910, Indian Affairs agreed to support a boarding school at The Pas. The capital cost was considerably reduced due to the recent arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway at The Pas, affording low cost shipment of construction materials. As well, the local Indian band at The Pas surrendered land to the Crown to be used for the school.

The Mackay Indian Boarding School officially opened October 1st, 1915 with a capacity enrolment of 81 pupils. The three-storey frame building was steam heated and lit by acetylene gas. A separate hospital was also erected nearby. The school was situated on Fisher Island, 10 km up the Saskatchewan River from The Pas. A good supply of water was always available but the land was unsuitable for farming except for a small vegetable garden.

In 1922, administration of the school passed from the Diocese of Saskatchewan to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC), who operated the school until fire destroyed the main building in 1933. A replacement building was not built here or elsewhere in Manitoba. Many displaced students were sent to Elkhorn and Lac La Ronge schools.

A generation passed before a new Mackay School was contemplated. Following the investigation of four possible Manitoba sites (including The Pas) in spring 1954, Dauphin was chosen the best location for a new residential school. An urban setting was preferred, for the availability of low-cost electricity, access to nearby public schools and logistics of transporting children to the school. The former fair grounds in the town were purchased from the municipality and tenders soon prepared for construction. It would be built by the government and operated, once again, by the Church. Maximum enrolment was to be 250.

The Mackay Dauphin Residential School commenced operation September 1st, 1957 with 200 students in residence, most being of elementary school age. Additional dormitories were constructed in the 1960s to accommodate more high school students attending the schools in town. Conversely, many children from Dauphin attended Mackay's junior classrooms. When the government assumed administration of the school in 1969, the building had become a hostel, with all residents taking classes in town.

Milestones



- 1915 Oct. 1 Mackay Indian Boarding School opens on Fisher Island in the Saskatchewan River, 10 km west of The Pas. Authorized enrolment is 80. Government pays \$170 per capita grant. It is managed by the Diocese of Saskatchewan.
- 1915 Nov. Many students overcome by gas poisoning.
- 1922 Indian and Eskimo Commission of MSCC assumes operation of the school.
- 1929 School under quarantine most of fall due to serious diphtheria outbreak.
- 1933 Mar. 19 Fire destroys school and all escape safely. Cause determined to be staff carelessness. Half the students—orphans and destitute children—are immediately sent to Elkhorn School. Others billeted temporarily in The Pas and sent home in spring to await enrolment at other schools such as All Saints Lac La Ronge. The Pas School is not rebuilt. School lands are returned to The Pas Band (today's Opaskwayak First Nation) who will manage Fisher Island as a renewable forestry resource area.
- 1954 Plans announced for new Mackay School at Dauphin to accommodate 250 native children.
- 1957 Sept. 1 Operation of Mackay Residential School commences with initial enrolment of 200. Official opening occurs Sept. 17th. Instruction is given up to grade 8. There is very limited dormitory space for high school students who attend town schools.

- 1959 Grades 7 and 8 students attend municipal schools. In following years junior classrooms will also be phased out.
- 1962 New dormitory building constructed to house 60 high school students.
- 1966 Over 200 residential students attend town schools.
- 1968 June School becomes a hostel only, as last two classrooms close. For 1968-1969 school year, all children will attend town schools.
- 1969 Apr. 1 Government assumes management of school. Many Anglican staff remain and transfer to federal payroll. Church will continue to provide chaplaincy services for many years. Institution is soon renamed Mackay Student Residence.
- 1988 June 30 Government closes Mackay Student Residence, following years of unsuccessful negotiations to transfer the facility to native groups.



Compiled by General Synod Archives, September 23, 2008.



GENERAL SYNOD OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
80 Hayden St., Toronto, ON, M4Y 3G2

For further information, contact the General Synod Archives at
archives@national.anglican.ca or (416) 924-9199, ext. 279