

If these Walls Could Talk: A Study of St. Stephen's Relationship with Indigenous People
Truth and Reconciliation Matters
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Essay One, first published on October 5, 2024, described the Residential Schools of Canada; highlighted Anglican church leader apologies and illustrated the trauma experienced by Indigenous children and their families from the permanent harm perpetrated on them by Christian churches.

Essay Two, first published on November 22, 2024, highlights colonial thinking with respect to Indigenous peoples and describes the impact of that thinking on the residential school system with its stated goal of Assimilation and its devolution into maltreatment of indigenous children.

Essay Three, first published on January 17, 2025, provides a view, based on examination of historical records, into the thinking and attitude of The First Anglican Bishop of Calgary toward Indigenous people. The purpose of understanding his mindset is to have a backdrop as to how his thinking and attitude as a Diocesan leader may have influenced and/or aligned with Anglican clergy thinking, particularly for this study, the clergy of St. Stephen's.

Essay Four:

The Legacy of Two Schools: St. Dunstan's Calgary Industrial School 1896-1907 and Dunbow Industrial School/St. Joseph's Industrial Residential School 1883-1924

Industrial schools were established in Western Canada in the 1880's. These were initially built at Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan and High River, Alberta, **Dunbow Industrial School**, managed by the Catholic church.

In 1892, the Anglican Church felt there was a need for an Anglican industrial school in southern Alberta; the nearest being the Catholic High River school. Anglican boys could not be admitted.

Anglican leadership determined that Mission schools on the Blackfoot, Blood, Piegan and Sarcee reserves were missing students who had grown up beyond the mission schools. These were boys between the ages of 12 and 16 years who had few skills and were drifting back to the reserves. The church saw the industrial school as providing the next step in the educational process. The boys could be taught a trade and their "evangelization" continued.

Bishop William Pinkham of the Diocese of Saskatchewan and Calgary petitioned the Canadian government in 1893 to establish an industrial school in Calgary. The application was approved in 1894. The school was called **St. Dunstan's Calgary Industrial School**.

As Indigenous children were placed in Indian industrial/residential schools, they were forced to adopt the customs, language and culture of Canadian-European society. School officials removed any personal or family items that children brought to the school. Children could not wear their own clothes. They were forbidden to speak their own Indigenous languages.

Children were not allowed to keep their hair long, even though long braided hair carries cultural significance for many Indigenous people. The students were completely removed from their familiar way of life.

To detach the children from their culture, they would give them new names and numbers, cut their hair short, and force them to wear uniforms. Every aspect of their identity was suppressed, they had to abandon their way of life due to the belief that their culture was inferior to the mainstream white man's ways.

The industrial schools were located away from Indian reserves. The intent being to remove Indian students from the "disastrous influence" of their home environment and to experience and emulate the "advantages and values" of the Euro Canadian civilization.

These "values" which included punctuality, obedience, and cleanliness were enforced by constant bell ringing, inspection of hands and hair and the infliction of corporal punishments for infraction of the established rules.

Society accepted colonial thinking in the 1800's supported the policy of "aggressive assimilation" of Indigenous people ... "Indians." The residential school system was an outcome of that policy. The idea of white superiority somehow justified the use of corporal punishment in the schools to achieve student obedience. The treatment of "Indians" devolved then into sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse and neglect.

Pedophilia was rampant, so much so, that the Truth and Reconciliation Report and in recent years courts, referenced the school system as "institutionalized pedophilia."

Thousands died at the industrial and residential schools from the inflicted abuse, malnutrition, poor sanitation and untreated diseases which spread in the overcrowded institutions.

The Truth and Reconciliation Report of 2015 concluded that the residential school system was "cultural genocide." Today the policy of assimilation/elimination is understood to be genocide.

There were 130+ industrial and residential schools in Canada. Virtually all of them inflicted depraved treatment and disregard for Indigenous children. The intergenerational trauma lives on today in Indigenous families and communities.

Two of the 130 Indigenous residential schools were our **St. Stephen's, Calgary** neighbours. This essay describes the "life" of these schools in our "backyard" visible to all. The schools operated without much recognition by the population of the day and without circumspection.

Today, the "life" of these two schools would not be tolerated by our community, or Anglicans or St. Stephen's congregation within this community.

St. Dunstan's Calgary Indian Industrial School

St. Dunstan's (1892 - 1907) was operated by the Anglican Church. It was located between Deerfoot Trail and the Bow River, a short distance south of the Calf Robe Bridge, Calgary.

Rev. George H. Hogbin was appointed principal of the school in 1896. He served as Principal until it was closed in 1907.

Rev. Hogbin was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1894 and served at North Battleford, Saskatchewan; **Battleford Industrial School** (74 in unmarked graves). He held numerous other offices in the diocese at the same time. He served at St. George's, Banff from 1908 to 1911. He then returned to Calgary as Archdeacon. In 1914 he was appointed chaplain of Sarcee Army Camp and in 1917 accepted a position in British Honduras, returning to England in 1931.

Rev. Hogbin was pleased with the first year of the school's existence; ... *"the boys take pride in thinking they are being treated like human beings, and the indirect education they acquire from mixing and contact with White people is incalculable."* These sentiments reflect the current ideas of the time.

The students were taught to be neat and tidy and to clean their rooms every day. The boys wore uniforms and were inspected daily. Their hair had to be combed, but braids were permitted for those who wished to wear them. Their fingernails, shoes and clothing were also checked.

Students at St. Dunstan's were used at the time to demonstrate the success of government policy regarding Indigenous peoples. Students were presented in various public events around Calgary.

In 1889, a seventeen-year-old boy from the Piikani Nation in Brocket, Alberta (Treaty 7 territory) died of tuberculosis at St. Dunstan's. He was buried on a hill overlooking the school. His grave was piled with stones and surrounded by a small picket fence. This unmarked grave was discovered in 1956, 49 years after the school closed.

St. Dunstan's was set apart to a degree from other industrial schools in that they sent ill students home to their parents. The only death at St. Dunstan's was the young boy, who following a public search for identification was identified as John White Flying Goose.

Calgary's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report was named after White Goose Flying.

Dunbow Industrial School

The Dunbow school (1883 - 1924) was located on the Highwood River (S.E. of Calgary) near the end of (now) Dunbow Road. It was operated by the Catholic church. The students that attended were from the Blackfoot and Sarcee First Nations (now Siksika and TsuuT'ina).

During its 38 years of operation 430 children attended. Their native clothing was replaced with western clothing. Each was assigned a Christian name and number. They weren't given adequate medicine to treat illnesses like influenza and tuberculosis. They were beaten for speaking their native tongue and many were held in solitary in a barn (now dilapidated) where some scratched dates and pictures on boards are still visible today.

During its 38 years of operation 73 children died. One in six.

Students who died at the school were buried in unmarked graves near the river's edge. In 1996, flooding of the river eroded the banks and coffins with two or three bodies in each were exposed. Bones spilled into the river, the remains washing away.

The remains of 34 of the students have been located to date and reinterred at a site several hundred metres away from the river. A rock monument and a stone cairn commemorate the site

Dunbow closed in 1924. It was, according to its Oblate principal, "in a sad plight," with many parts "entirely unfit for human habitation."

Records kept by school administrators offer a glimpse into the care (or lack of same) the students received. The records also provide an insight into how the Catholic priests and nuns running the school viewed the First Nation students, and what they felt was the student's future, had they survived:

"Joseph Arcan 13/06/1888. Died at school, (we) started the cemetery".

(He was the first of seventy-three students to die at Dunbow)

"131 Charles Godin 12/04/1897. Died on the 12th of April after a very short illness of Brain Fever – not seen by doctor before his death."

"024 Lucy Sinclair 17/08/1895. This girl of the Blackfoot tribe was very well disposed. Learned English very quickly, she would have made a good servant girl. A diligent and neat worker. She suffered from a hip disease; fell into consumption from which she died."

Endnotes

The story of St. Dunstan's was excerpted from the publication:

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"The Short Life of St. Dunstan's Calgary Indian Industrial School"

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