

**If these Walls Could Talk: A Study of St. Stephen's Relationship with Indigenous People**  
***Truth and Reconciliation Matters***  
*Researched and Written by Chris Bain*

*Essay One, first published on Oct 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 Nov 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: Bishop Pinkham and Residential Schools**  
First Anglican Bishop of Calgary

First Nations peoples in Canada were initially called "Indians," a term created by European settlers.

*"An Indian is a creation of the European imagination and is legally inscribed to us by the federal government."*<sup>(1)</sup>

The Canadian government contracted with church organizations to operate the schools at a fixed rate per student which led to the overcrowding. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the conditions at the schools led to an epidemic of tuberculosis.

Church organizations were chosen to operate the schools because in the political thinking of the day, religious institutions had jurisdiction over morality. One of the main methods of "civilizing" indigenous people was to Christianise them on assumptions of ideological superiority.

**The first Anglican Bishop of Calgary was William Cyprian Pinkham.** He was Bishop of Saskatchewan and Calgary Dioceses from 1888 to 1903 and from then to 1926, solely Bishop of the Calgary Diocese.

In 1889 the Pinkham's (m. Jean Drever, 1868) moved to Calgary. They became a part of the growing city. They were related by marriage to the MacLeods and the Cross's. Both the Bishop and his wife were close friends of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. He placed a window in the Church of the Redeemer (The Cathedral) in their memory. The Pinkhams are buried in Union Cemetery, Calgary close to Col. MacLeod.

Prime Minister Bennett continued the Canadian societal thinking of the day, that assimilation of Indigenous people and the operation of the residential school system was best for the white population interests and for "educating" Indians about the advantages of a Euro-Canadian civilised community<sup>(2)</sup>.

William Cyprian Pinkham was the eldest son of a family of twelve born in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1884. He attended St Augustine's College in 1869 to prepare for ordination. He returned to Canada in 1868 to Winnipeg Manitoba where he had a role in formulating Manitoba's school act of 1873 and 1878. He became Archdeacon of Manitoba in 1882. He was appointed as the second Bishop of Saskatchewan in 1887 which included the "Provisional District of Alberta".

At the time he accepted his appointment, Bishop Pinkham stipulated,

*"That the District of Alberta become a separate diocese to be called the Diocese of Calgary as soon as possible, such that the territory more readily be brought under control."* <sup>(3)</sup>

The formation of The Diocese of Calgary occurred in 1903.

The following are excerpts from Synods where Pinkham as Bishop of Saskatchewan and Calgary reported favourably on the schools' operations and progress. They reference three schools in the Saskatchewan district of the joint diocese.

*(BP denotes Bishop Pinkham)*

Synod 1889

*BP, "the large ideas and very ardent hopes...for (the creation of) **Emmanuel College** and the establishment of a training school for Blackfoot students at Calgary as a branch of it."* <sup>(3)</sup>

Synod 1894

*BP, "was most grateful to the Indian Department for the continued maintenance of the **Battleford Industrial School**, as well as for the assistance given of **Emmanuel College**."* <sup>(3)</sup>

Synod 1896

*BP, "The Industrial school of **Battleford** continued to do excellent work..." "At **Battleford** school...there were upwards of 100 pupils and room for 50 or 60 more."* <sup>(3)</sup>

Synod 1898

*BP, "that **Emmanuel College** was going forward in a very satisfactory manner" and that "The Industrial School at Battleford continued to do excellent work under its principal and his staff of workers with the number of pupils ranging between 100 and 120."* <sup>(3)</sup>

Synod 1900

*BP, "that the Emmanuel College, the Battleford school and the school at Onion Lake were never in a more satisfactory state for doing excellent work... (he) was anxious to secure two more boarding schools at Lac La Ronge and at The Pas." (3)*

The favourable "spin" as Bishop Pinkham reported at Synods regarding the school operations is contradicted by more recent factual reports and as documented in the Truth and Reconciliation report of 2015.

### **Battleford Industrial School**

*"The rebellion in 1885 (4\*) ... those taking part were brought to trial. Some, such as Poundmaker and Big Bear, were sent to jail. Eight were hung. **The day the hangings took place all the Indian students at the Battleford Industrial School were taken out to witness the event.** The reason for this was to remind them what would happen if one made trouble with the crown and to provide a lasting reminder of the white man's power and authority," (4)*

*"Unsanitary Conditions. An 1890 inspection concluded the school had no fire protection and a sanitation system that was an invitation to an epidemic, especially infectious diseases. Thus, sick children were housed with well children; students were dying at high rates from infectious diseases such as pneumonia, influenza, and tuberculosis, which were being spread throughout the school." (5)*

*"It is unknown exactly how many children died at Battleford Industrial School during its operation. Seventy-four bodies were found to be buried in the Battleford Industrial School Cemetery when the site was exhumed in 1974." (5)*

### **Emmanuel College**

*"Samuel Blake, an Anglican, Ontario lawyer and supporter of Dr. Peter Bryce's 1907 report, noted in 1908 that nearly one-quarter of the students (32 out of 133) who had passed through Emmanuel College during a 17-year period had died." (5)*

### **St. Barnabas/Onion Lake**

*"1908 the government survey declared the building unfit for school purposes. A 1920 medical survey found that, of the 33 pupils at the Sarcee school, all but four were infected with tuberculosis." (6)*

*"In 1923, parents, received the following letter from their son: 'We are going to tell you how we are treated. I am always hungry. We only get two slice of bread and one plate porridge. Seven children ran away because they are hungry. I sold all my clothes away because I am hungry too.'" (6)*

There were four residential schools in the Anglican Diocese of Calgary between 1893 and 1969 operated by the Anglican Church. They were under the auspices of Bishop Pinkham during his tenure, 1887-1926.

The four were **St. Barnabas** Indian Residential School/Onion Lake, Sarcee Reserve, AB, 1899-1929 (*see above*), **St. Cyprian's** Indian Residential School/Piegian Indian Residential School, Brocket, AB, 1890-1961, **St. Dunstan's** Industrial School, Calgary, AB, (Piikani Nation), 1896-1907 and **St. Paul's** Indian Residential School, (Blood Reserve), Cardston, AB.

The request for the establishment of **St. Dunstan's** was made by Bishop Pinkham to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, dated 1893. This request was the result of a resolution of the Executive Council of The Synod of the Diocese of Calgary to build an industrial school in Southern Alberta for boys the ages of 12 to 16 years. At the time the nearest industrial school was in High River. This was a Roman Catholic school. Anglican boys could not be admitted.

**This essay is focused on assessing Bishop Pinkham's attitude toward and relationship with Indigenous peoples in his expansive diocese(s) and therefore his influence on the Anglican community and in this study, particularly on St. Stephen's leadership.**

Bishop Pinkham had of course, responsibilities to oversee the entire direction and goals of the Diocese. Of some note, in 1897, he consecrated St. Monica's Church in Mirror/Alix, AB. The church was built by the small village congregation spearheaded by Walter Parlby and his brother Edward. Walter was the husband of Irene Parlby who was a member of The Famous Five, celebrated for obtaining a vote for women in Canada. She was an MLA, Minister without Portfolio, for 14 years.

She believed in a pseudo-science, eugenics. As an MLA she supported the Alberta *Sexual Sterilization Act* which was in effect from 1928 to 1972. This heinous Act imposed forced sterilization of women viewed as "mentally defective." In colonial thinking this automatically included "Indian" women.

A disproportionate number of Indigenous women were sterilized.

This writer concludes that Bishop Pinkham had a benign society acceptance of colonial thinking which considered Indigenous people as being inferior to "white man" society. It appears that assimilation included acceptance of violent treatment.

Bishop Pinkham's acceptance of the residential school system was wrong as we surely know today. He had to have known the violent culture of the schools "ruled" by his fellow clergy. He clearly ignored the reports available to him concerning maltreatment, major health concerns and unsanitary conditions.

His Synod reports were of a "politically correct" demeanour of the "great benefit" of the schools' end goal of assimilation.

It is this attitude that permeated the Anglican society in his Diocese and most likely was reflected in the church leadership of the day.

St. Stephen's was under his purview from its inception in 1906 to his retirement in 1926...20 years. In subsequent years there was the influence on St. Stephen's of the ongoing residential school system. The last residential school was closed in 1996.

**How colonial thinking and The Bishop's practicing of this thinking influenced St. Stephen's will be the subject of more research and future essays.**

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### **Bishop Pinkham Junior High School**

3304 63<sup>rd</sup> Ave S.W.

...named after Anglican Bishop William Cyprian Pinkham (1844-1928)

... "responsible for creating a system to train teachers and for beginning secondary education in Manitoba. After leaving Manitoba, Bishop Pinkham lived in Saskatchewan and then he administered the Anglican church in the Calgary area. 1903–1926." (excerpt from school website)

...favourable to residential school system, oversaw administration of many residential schools

### **Bishop Grandin High School**

111 Haddon Rd. S.W.

... named after Catholic Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin (1829-1902)

... in the late 1800s, Grandin lobbied the federal government to fund the construction of residential schools

...based on TRC Report, trustees voted in 2021 in favour of changing the name to: **Our Lady of the Rockies School.**

### Endnotes

- (1) Canada's Indian Constitution, John Borrows, 2010
- (2) Facing Down R.B. Bennett, Karen Bridget Murray, 2015
- (3) Project Canterbury: An Historical Sketch of the Diocese of Saskatchewan of the Anglican Church of Canada, W.F. Payton, Archdeacon Emeritus, 1974
- (4) Saskatchewan Indian Newspaper, 1972, vo3 n07 p05

*\*In 1885, Pinkham was Archbishop of Manitoba not yet Bishop of Saskatchewan*

- (5) National Post, Tristan Hopper, 2021
- (6) Shattering the Silence, University of Regina, 1974
- (7) National Truth and Reconciliation Report, 2015

### **Upcoming**

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