

History of Dakota Education in Portage la Prairie

1. The Portage Anglican Mission school was closed in 1865.

“... because the Saulteaux of the district had abandoned the apparently honest effort they had made to become civilized.¹ Due to the arrival of the settlers from Ontario, and a large influx of fugitive Sioux from South Dakota and Nebraska, they felt that they had to go elsewhere if they would live by hunting. So they dispersed to their hunting grounds and the opportunity of teaching in Portage la Prairie came to an end.

“It is rather remarkable though that these Saulteaux whose fathers a century before had come to occupy Portage la Prairie and the lower Assiniboine country at the invitation of the Stone Sioux [Assiniboine] should now be literally squeezed out of place by the other branch of the Sioux nation, the inveterate foes of themselves and the Assiniboines.”²

2. The Red River Presbyterians saw missionary work as an important part of the pacification of Western Canada. In Winnipeg on 9 May 1877, the Presbytery of Manitoba, unanimously approved of the following Overture:

Whereas in the North West Territories and in Keewatin, those vast and sparsely inhabited regions of the Dominion of Canada as well as in the Province of Manitoba, there are large bands of Cree, Ojibway (or Saulteaux), Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Sioux and other Indians numbering some 30,000,

Whereas it is obviously the duty of the Churches of Canada to carry the Bread of Life to these Indians, and whereas the English, Romish, and Methodist Churches have long maintained missions and schools in various portions of the Territories referred to, while our own Church has done comparatively little of this important work,

¹ The great grasshopper plague of 1865 and a drought which ran from 1862 to 1868 had perhaps also aided in convincing them there was something better than agriculture.

² First Furrows, p. 113.

Whereas over this wide field the progress of settlement has begun seriously to interfere with the Indians' former means of living by hunting and the chase, which has led many of them to express strong desires to be instructed in agriculture and to have their children educated,

Whereas this has become known to the Presbytery as by other means, so especially by a communication of His Honor Lieut. Governor Morris, made to the Minister of the Interior and embodied by him in his report for 1876, in which His Honour says, speaking of the Crees and other Indians of the West, "The universal aim and is for teachers and persons to instruct them how to cultivate the ground and build houses," and again, "The universal demand of the Indians for teachers and by some of them for missionaries is encouraging) the finances of the Government can supply for the latter they must rely on the churches. And his Honor further remarks that he trusts that the Churches will continue and extend their operations among them as the field is wide enough for allo and the cry of the Indians for help is a ??? one, and

Whereas the British and Canadian mode of dealing with the Indians have secured their goodwill and avoided the troubles experienced elsewhere, and have, in conjunction with the causes above mentioned, prepared their minds in a large measure to accept such aid and instruction as the Government and the Churches may be able to afford them,

And whereas the present is assuredly the most favorable opportunity that has ever occurred for their evangelization and none more favourable need ever be looked for,

Whereas in the opinion of this Presbytery it is the manifest duty of the Church to embrace it and to prosecute the work of Indian Missions on a much extended scale and in a large hearted liberal and earnest spirit, and

THEREFORE the Presbytery do humbly but urgently overture the Honourable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to take this matter into most serious and prayerful consideration, and in order that the work may be the more successfully prosecuted, to institute a Special Board or Committee for Indian Missions, and to assign to it such appropriation of the Foreign Mission Guide of the Church or such other resources as in the wisdom of the Assembly may seem adequate to the necessities of a work unspeakably important at the present time both in a national and in a religious point of view.

Thomas Hart, Moderator
James Robertson, Clerk

3. In 1875, Oak River Reserve was established for the people of Wambdista (Sisseton) and Tanyanhdinajin (Wahpeton). The Church of England build the first church in 1880 and mission school in 1887. The Catholic Church built a chapel in 1935. The Oak River Reserve is today known as "Sioux Valley".

4. Meanwhile, the Dakota missionary from Minnesota was getting established. A report was sent January 29, 1878, from Winnipeg to Presbyterian officials in Ontario:

"[I have been] daily expecting to hear something of the Rev. S. Tayghgkausaiciye and delayed answering. It was only about a week ago that I heard from the Rev. Gentleman. He was at the time engaged in house-building and had been for some time, so that he did not report himself when he arrived. He reached the mission in November and was doing something for the spiritual welfare of the people. He has taken his family with him (four children and all are on the reserve with him. He wishes to do what he can to establish a school, and I hope that something may be done to supplement the government allowance for this purpose.

"In the meantime we have empowered Mr. Arch. McDonald, HB factor at Fort Ellice, to provide him with weekly rations. This will be better for him than an allowance for a longer time. I have written him for information about certain matters which I will report as soon as I hear from him."³

³ United Church Archives. James Robertson, Winnipeg, to Rev. Thomas Lowry, Brantford, Jan 29, 1878.

5. In March, 1886, the Rev. James Robertson, superintendent of Presbyterian Missions, wrote the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs about the "band of Sioux Indians living in the neighborhood of Portage la Prairie."

"Nothing of any account has been done to Christianize them except visits to this camp by a Sioux Missionary of our Church twice each year nor has anything been done to teach the children. Their people had no reserve there and they live by working for farmers and doing any work they can get about the town and in summer, they camp in the neighborhood of Portage la Prairie and in winter they live in the woods to the southeast of the town.

"Our Church would like to begin a school for the benefit of the children and arrangements are now in progress to erect a building. They are willing to pay something reasonable to get a good teacher and my object now is to ascertain what the Department can do to help us in this work. Our aim is to rent a room in Portage la Prairie for the summer and put an efficient teacher in charge and if the school is at all as successful as we hope, to have a building erected in the woods where the Indians camp for the winter so that school may be maintained the year round.

"If the Indian population are to cease to be a menace to the peace and progress of the country, they must be Christianized and educated. The greatest hope is with the young and hence our desire that they might be educated.

"The Department was pleased to grant an allowance of \$400 per annum to carry on the school at the Sioux Reserve on the Bird Tail Creek, and we hope that equal consideration may be given to this request. The intention is to begin the school without delay. A suitable teacher has been secured and we only wish to get the assistance or the recognition of the Department to enable us to proceed. I shall get the number of families as soon as possible and to put you in possession of the facts. I am assured, however, that there are children enough to make a good school, and that they are ready to attend when the school is opened."⁴

⁴ PAC RG10 vol 6029 file 127-4-1. Robertson to Vankoughnet, 29 Mar 1886.

6. The letter was forwarded to Francis Ogletree, Indian Agent, who lived in Portage a few hundred metres from the Dakota encampment. Ogletree replied to Ottawa in April, 1886:

"I went to the Sioux tents and found 16 lodges at the east end of the town, and was informed that seven lodges had moved out to the Lake [Lake Manitoba] for the purpose of fishing, but will be back in a short time. I got an Indian woman by the name of Mary Rose to interpret for me. From the information I gathered from her and several Indians present, I found that there are 36 children of school age among these 23 lodges and several older ones who are anxious to go to school.

"It seems that there was quite a number of them who attended school last summer in Town. They have no reserve near here. They belong to the Reserve laid out for them at the Oak Lake near the junction of the Oak River with the Assiniboine. The name of the man who is acknowledged as Chief there is White Eagle. The old people of them do not like to move away from the Portage as they have been living here for a long time and those of them who are able to work get employment from the farmers round the Portage. They also say that the Reserve at Oak Lake is too small to give each young man a sufficient quantity of land to work.

"I could not ascertain the exact number belonging to the Band, or the number of acres set apart for them. In pointing out to them that I thought it would be better for them to go to the Reserve and get the school started there and they would be away from the temptation of getting liquor, but I was informed that the same temptation existed there as a saloon had been opened just across the river from the Reserve. I enclose a list of the names of the heads of families and the number of children of school age belonging to each."⁵

⁵ PAC RG10 vol 6029 file 127-4-1. Ogletree to McColl, 17 April 1888.

7. Commissioner Dewdney wrote Ottawa on 29 June 1886 that "these Indians belong to Oak River and Oak Lake Reserve,

"... and if they are desirous of having a school established for their benefit on the Reserve, I would recommend that aid be given them, but I would not advise the granting of assistance under the circumstance to a school off the reserve. If the Department established a precedent we should have applications from all over the country for similar assistance, possibly resulting in its being used as an instrument to encourage Indians to leave their reserve."⁶

8. During a debate in 1886 in the House of Commons on estimates for "Indian purposes", Robert Watson, Member of Parliament from Portage la Prairie, referred to the "charitable ladies at Portage la Prairie having started a school for the Sioux Indians encamped near that place," and asked for the help of Indian Affairs.⁷

⁶ E.M. McColl to the Rt. Hon. Supt. General of Indian Affairs, 19 Apr 1886.

⁷ Referred to in PAC RG10 vol 6029, file 127-4, pt. 1, Vankoughnet to Watson, 12 Jul 1886. For further research in Hansard.

9. Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Lawrence Vankoughnet, contacted Robert Watson on 12 July 1886 to say he had been in communication with Indian Commissioner Dewdney about the matter, "which had previously been brought under the notice of the Dept. by another party."

"The Indian Commissioner reports that the Indians in question belong to the Oak River and Oak Lake Reserves, that if they are desirous of having a school established for their benefit on either of those reserves he would recommend that aid be given, but he cannot advise the granting of assistance under the circumstances with a school off a reserve; that if the Dept. established such a precedent it would have application from all over the country for similar assistance which would probably result in it being used as a further inducement to Indians to leave their reserves.

"There is no doubt a great deal in the views expressed by the Indian Commissioner in the matter. The Department is anxious to discourage Indians from locating themselves in the vicinity of towns or white centres where reserves do not exist, as serious evils inevitably attend their doing so.

"Reserves of ample size are provided for the Indians, and if they are not able to obtain a subsistence for themselves, the Dept. is always ready to assist them. There is, therefore, no excuse for the Indians leaving their reserves and camping in the neighbourhood of towns and white centers, and such a course is attended with the demoralization of themselves and Indians so situated are a nuisance to the White settlers.⁸

"I might add that it was only quite recently that I noticed in the public papers reports of gross intemperance existing amongst these Sioux Indians at Portage la Prairie, and I have been in communication with the Indian Agent with a view to the suppression of the same, but he informs me that he is powerless to prevent it, as the Indians have so many facilities in a place like Portage la Prairie to obtain liquor without his knowing anything about it."⁹

10. A similar letter was written to the Rev. James Robertson the following day, 13 July 1886.¹⁰

⁸ Ottawa is apparently under the impression that the "Sioux" being referred to have been resident at Oak Lake, and have drifted into the bright lights of the city of Portage, rather than having lived in the same location long before a city of Portage even existed, and continued to live there. It was the Department which had failed to create the Reserve which was responsible for them living "off reserve".

⁹ RG10 vol 6029 file 127-4, pt. 1, Vankoughnet to Watson.

¹⁰ Vankoughnet to Robertson, 13 Jul 1886.

11. In 1890, the Portage la Prairie Sioux Day School was built by the the Presbyterian Church, "and the government contributed nothing, either for land or for the cost of erecting the buildings."¹¹ The land comprised four small lots, equal to about one acre in all.¹² Among the Dakota chiefs who in 1890 had removed to western Manitoba were White Eagle and Rising Cloud. One of the two was reported to be "well educated, having gone to school in Cincinnati, Ohio."
12. The Day School opened with 26 pupils enrolled, and an average attendance of 10. The Department of Indian Affairs paid a grant of \$300 per annum as salary to the teacher of the Day School, and \$12 per capita for each pupil over the number of 25.
13. In 1891, construction was begun on a Boarding School which was operated in conjunction with the Day School. The buildings were frame on a stone foundation. The floors and walls had been painted and oiled. In 1891, Indian Affairs provided a grant of \$1000 for the 20 pupils at \$50 per capita. In March, 1892, the grant was raised to \$72 per capita for a limit of 20 pupils.¹³ The two teachers were supported by the Presbyterian Church, and were paid \$300 each from the funds of the church.¹⁴

¹¹ PAC RG10, memo to file. Reference is also made to "Dr. Moore's letter of the 21st January 1890 on file N°58244. For further research.

¹² PAC RG10. For all particulars regarding the size, dimensions, and construction of the Portage la Prairie School, see Inspector McGibbon's report thereon dated March 22 1897 on file N°119,469b.

¹³ PAC RG10. Letter of Rev. Prof. Baird, N°94600 Man. For further research.

¹⁴ PAC RG10, Memorandum to File, Portage Boarding School.

14. In June 1893, the Day School ceased to be operated as such, and became a "Boarding School". A letter sent that year from S. Laidlaw to Mr. McKay reported on an effort by the Dakotas to buy land:

"For some time, they have been paying in money in view of purchasing land to settle on permanently. They have now over \$300. There are two lots, one of 25 acres the other 41. . . owned by a Mr. Millar of the Portage. He will sell at \$25 \$15 per ac. They think that is too high a price as the land is worth very little. The other belongs to a Mr. C.L. Brown of Toronto. A gentleman here has written him, asking his terms. We all are anxious they should get it at a reasonable rate. We thought you would use your influence."¹⁵

15. That same year, in November 1893, for a purchase price of \$400, title to River Lot #99, in the town of Portage, containing 25 acres of land, passed from the Martin & Curtis law firm to three men: Samuel Marlatt (a lumber merchant who later became Inspector of Indian Affairs), Angus Daniel Mackay (a railway clerk) and William White Miller (postmaster).¹⁶ Certificate of Title N^o2547 was issued 1 November 1893.¹⁷

¹⁵ United Church Archives. Laidlaw to McKay, June 5, 1893.

¹⁶ PAM EE32.

¹⁷ Parish records indicate Lot #99 had first been patented to George Clements, of Winnipeg, 10 July 1882 via document 12741, with reference to 12190.

16. In reality, 22 Dakota purchasers had bought Lot #99 with their own money, but apparently were denied the legal right to hold title.¹⁸ Therefore, they had the three men act as Trustees under a Declaration of Trust dated 1 November 1893 in which the three declared they were holding the land in trust for the 22 Dakota owners named therein who were the equitable owners. The Declaration was then registered on the title as Caveat N^o2299.¹⁹ The statement of the three men says the land is

“in trust for David Ross, Wichawakauna (Sandy Lame Man), Kewakan (Jack) Tasagyedula (Lame Sara’s son), Keyantauinna (Frank) Sicuha, Hepi Mazakaniwicake (Nancy’s Son), Twekasdan, Kasmana (Jim Hall), Kaugi (Old Ross), Johnnie Pazi, James Bell, Peter Ross, Caskem Wakapa Tasakakomami (Curly Hair), James Essie, Sioux Tonka, Candeliuca and Minnie Yatauazin, Sioux Indians who are the equitable owners of the said land.”

17.

¹⁸ In other cases where First Nations have bought their own lands, arrangements were made to have the land turned over the Crown as a “reserve”. Such “special reserves” were not uncommon in Ontario. It provides a superior trust arrangement.

In this case, the Dakota were not allowed to buy the land in their own name because they were “Indians”, but yet they were not considered to be Indians nor did they have the benefits, such as they were, which flowed from being Indians. This fact is a part of the claim itself, i.e., it gives rise to a claim. Did Canada incur liabilities because it did not allow the Dakota to buy their own land when it did not have a lawful means of prohibiting them? Had Canada permitted them to buy and hold the lands, the trust agreement would not have been necessary. Second, having forced them into the trust agreement, Canada took on fiduciary obligations above and beyond those of the trustees.

All of this is taking place within the larger context of Canada’s refusal to provide a reserve at Portage where the Dakota Tipi people had been well established and were integrated into an economic base which would not have been available to them in western Manitoba. So a) you can’t have a reserve, and b) you can’t buy your own land here, and c) the only way you can stay here is if you have trustees hold the land for you (and then failing to supervise the trustees).

It is ironic that the Dakota were held to have no rights to hold land because they were “Indians”, and yet they received none of the protections or benefits available to Indians, including First Nations in Ontario who were non-Treaty.

¹⁹ Land Titles Office, Portage la Prairie, Lot #99 file.

18. A personal letter to Mr. McKay signed by S. Laidlaw from the "Indian Mission School" at Portage dated 14 August 1894 said,

"Our Indians are busy picking raspberries and cranberries, so they are not such a lazy crowd after all. They have all earned a good deal of money this summer. Their land has been surveyed and I hope by the time you come to make a visit to this part of your parish, you will find a neat little village and a contented lot of Indians. . ."²⁰

19. Prior to 1897, the Boarding School was rebuilt. As described by general merchant Edw. Brown in a letter to the new Interior Minister in the newly-elected Laurier Government seeking an increase to 30 in the number of students paid for by the government, at the beginning,

". . . the premises then occupied were of a very inferior character, and the number of pupils mentioned were as many as the building would accommodate. Since then, a new and commodious building has been erected by the church Board under whose auspices the work is conducted at a cost of some \$4000. There are now 30 pupils on the roll, and the accommodation is sufficient for 40, but the amount provided for maintenance is insufficient.

"During February last, your Inspector Major McGibbin made a very thorough inspection of the school and the tepees at the Indian Village, and he seemed favorably impressed with the progress made and the manner in which the work is conducted..."

20. The 1899 Annual Report on Indian Affairs for the Portage la Prairie Agency sets the "Sioux Indians of Portage la Prairie" separately from comments regarding the rest of the agency. There were 132 people residing within the limits of the town on a tract of land purchased by themselves.

"Most of them have good homes and gardens. The men can always find employment when they want it, and the women earn a good deal washing and other heavy housework. In short, these people are doing well, and would do much better if they could not get liquor. Nominally, most of them are Christians. The Presbyterians have a nice mission church in the Sioux Village which is well attended. The Foreign Mission Society²¹ of the same church has a very comfortable boarding school in the town, with accommodation for forty pupils . . ."²²

21. The Annual Report on Indian Affairs for 1901 reported that "Lot N^o14, Portage la Prairie, allotted to the Sioux Indians, has been defined and posted."²³

"This band of Indians, although not in Treaty, come within the jurisdiction of this [Manitowapah] Agency. . . There are 38 men, 37 women, and 56 children, or 131 all told. They have good houses and gardens, which are well looked after . . . They are quite independent and self-supporting, and were it not for occasional trouble through procuring liquor, it might be considered a model Indian community. They attend regularly the Presbyterian mission church in their village, and may be looked upon altogether as a superior class of Indian. There is a Sioux boarding school in the town under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. . . "

²¹ Archives relating to the Foreign Mission Committee are held in the United Church Archives at Victoria College, Toronto. Other archives may be with the Presbyterian Church of Canada. These archives have not yet been reviewed. At UCA, see Finding Aid 106 for 79.199C only. Fonds 122, series 14: In 1875, responsibility for Presbyterian missions to the Aboriginal people of Western Canada was taken up by the Foreign Mission Committee, Western Section, of the newly-formed Presbyterian Church in Canada. From 1875-1885, the Committee was aided informally by the Presbytery of Manitoba. Following the organization of the Synod of Manitoba and the North West in 1884, the Manitoba Foreign Mission Committee was appointed in 1885 to act in conjunction with the Foreign Mission Committee Western Section in the furtherance of mission work among the Aboriginal people of the North West. The Western Section had oversight of work in Formosa, China, India, North Korea, as well as missions of Chinese and East Indians in Canada. In 1912, all work with aboriginal people were transferred to the Board of Home Missions, which became the Board of Home Missions and Social Service in 1915. The East and West committees united in 1915. See also graphics database 93.049P. See fonds 116 for records pertaining to work prior to 175, fonds 123 for work after 1912. FA280. See also PCC BHM fonds 123 for records of work with aboriginal people after 1912. 79.169C 79.174C church and manse funds, properties.

²² Annual Report on Indian Affairs, Sessional Paper 14 for 1900.

²³ Annual Report on Indian Affairs, 1901, p. xxxvi.

22. The Annual Report for 1901 also presents the report of the Inspector of Indian Agency, who comments on the "beautiful piece of land containing 26 acres". The people of Sioux Village have progressed, he said, "from one of the most degraded of peoples to one of the most enlightened and progressive bands in this inspectorate.

"Their village is a model of its kind, straight street, good houses with shingled roofs, nicely whitewashed, clean and comfortably furnished, some with flower gardens in front, and all with splendid gardens of vegetables. They view with each other as to whose home is the most attractive; the consequence is that each is almost perfect in its way, and comparison cannot be drawn. Situated in the centre of the village is a nice frame church, which is well attended.

"Naturally, these Indians are good workers. . . There are quite a few of aged people among them who are faithfully provided for by those who are able to work. In the town is situated a boarding school for them . . . This school has turned out about half a dozen girls who are earning good wages as domestic servants. . .

"All this work, both in village and school, is the result of the earnest labour of a few Christian people of this town. For those acquainted with these Indians as they were 15 years ago, and as they are now, the comparison is one of the grandest object lessons of practical Christianity to be found in this great Dominion . . . Unfortunately, owing to their location, they are sometimes found the worse of liquor, which is not so much to be wondered at when we remember how easy it is for them to procure it in spite of the most stringent laws and closest supervision."²⁴

23. The Assiniboine River flooded in 1902. The Annual Report of Indian Affairs reported,

"This band is still making substantial progress. These Indians have quite recovered from the disastrous flood of April, 1902, when their village was overflowed by the waters of the Assiniboine River. They are a hard-working industrious people, and their labour is of considerable benefit to this town. Both men and women find constant employment. The only trouble we have from them is from liquor; a few are addicted to its use, and it is almost possible to prevent their getting it.

"The mission church in the village is well-attended.²⁵ Mr. W. A. Hendry of the Presbyterian Sioux Boarding School acts as missionary. The boarding school continues to do good work under the principalship of Mr. Hendry. 22 pupils are now in attendance. The school is popular with the Indians..."²⁶

24. The Annual Report also noted "these Indians"

". . . own and live on a tract of land . . . purchased by themselves within the town limits. They also have lot N^o14 of the Parish of Portage la Prairie, given to them by the Dominion Government. They are, physically, big, strong, healthy Indians, i.e., the adults. Many of the children show more or less signs of scrofula,²⁷ which will in time develop, the same as in other bands.

"They have good homes and gardens, and as they have nothing to look for from the government, they simply go out to work for the farmers and earn a good living. They get liquor occasionally and proceed in their own way to settle family difficulties, which usually causes some trouble. But they are a better class of Indians all round than the others in the agency, and if it were not for the visiting Indians and loafers in their village, we should have little trouble with them."

"There is a Sioux Boarding School in the town with accommodation for forty pupils that receives a per capita grant from the government for twenty pupils. The principal, Mr. W.A. Hendry, and his sister, as teacher, are much interested in the institution and are unsparing in their efforts to carry on very successful work."²⁸

²⁵ This presumably is the Presbyterian church located on lot 99.

²⁶ Report of Department of Indian Affairs to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, forming part of the Superintendent's Annual Report to the Governor General, 1904.

²⁷ Scrofula is a tuberculosis of the lymph glands, particularly in the neck.

²⁸ Annual Report on Indian Affairs for 1903, p. 97.

25. The report W.A. Hendry on behalf of the Boarding School itself appeared in the same Report. The school had two acres of land on the east side of Portage, owned by the church. One acre was in gardens, the other divided into two playgrounds, "one for the boys and one for the girls.

"The school can easily accommodate forty children and a staff of three. The average attendance was 22. Some of the pupils were too young to draw the grant. . . In the house, the girls have been carefully trained in habits of neatness and industry in the kitchen and laundry, also in sewing and general housework. The boys are employed in cutting wood, gardening, carpentry, and any other work which they are able to do.

"The school is heated by hot air, except the schoolroom, which is heated by a stove. The building is lighted throughout by electricity. There is one light in the basement, eight on the first floor, and four on the second floor.

"The girls have many games in summer and skating in winter. The boys have football, baseball, skating and athletic sports. The larger girls and boys spend much of their spare time, playing at lawn-tennis, which they enjoy intensely."²⁹

26. Still further details on the Portage School are found in the report of the Lake Manitoba Inspectorate. Of the 22 pupils, 11 were boys, 11 girls. 6 were at Standard I, 9 at Standard II, 3 at III, 3 at IV, and 1 at V. The agency of the Presbyterian Church responsible was the Foreign Missionary Society.

"The school continues to do excellent work. Most of the pupils are quite young, but they are a bright intelligent lot. Mr. Hendry acts as teacher, and he evidently has the knack of imparting instruction. Mrs. Hendry is a qualified trained nurse. Her services are of great benefit to the school. Miss Hendry is an efficient assistant matron."³⁰

²⁹ Annual Report, Department of Indian Affairs, 1903 p. 340. Report is dated 2 July, 1902.

³⁰ Annual Report, Department of Indian Affairs, 1903, p. 452.

27. The Report of Principal Hendry dated 1 July 1903 reported new details about the Portage la Prairie Boarding School:

"They speak English entirely, and during the last six months I have not heard a word of Sioux. The five older children read the daily papers, and are quite as fond of reading books as white children of the same age.

"One acre is used for a garden. . . Each child is given some vegetable such as carrots, beets, pease, cabbage, &c., for which he is held responsible. They take a very keen interest in their work, and enjoy it better than any amusement the school can afford them. Each tries to surpass the other in growing the best vegetables. This year, we have sixteen different kinds of vegetables, besides our potatoes.

"The conduct of the children has been good, and corporal punishment is not necessary. The health of the children, on the whole, has been good. One boy, aged nine, died with tubercular trouble in April. The ventilation of the school is good.

"There is a good well, which is amply sufficient for the needs of the school. There is also a soft-water tank in the basement, which will hold twenty barrells. From this tank, water is forced into the attic by a force pump. There are a number of exits should fire occur. We have two chemical engines, one axe, and six fire buckets. There are no ladders, which we would require in case of fire from lightning. Our proximity to the town, with a telephone in the building, strengthens our fire protection, as we could make use of the fire brigade."³¹

28. Another section of the Annual Report for 1903 suggests changes in the curriculum for the Portage la Prairie Sioux School.

"Besides classroom work, the boys are instructed in gardening and other useful employments, doing the greater part of the chores about the institution. The girls receive training in sewing, knitting, and household work. Two or three cows would be a great assistance to the school; besides being a saving of expenditure, they would be of practical benefit to the pupils in learning to take care of them. There is not enough attention given to this important branch of Indian training. The female pupils should be taught how to milk a cow and make butter, and the care of the stock generally; the school being situated in town is against it in this respect, but still it could be carried on in a small way."³²

³¹ Annual Report on Indian Affairs, 1903, p. 339, Report of W.A. Hendry.

³² Annual Report 1903, p. 300.

29. The 1904 Annual Report on Indian Affairs contained the Indian Agent's Report. In addition to the 26-acre lot in town, he said, "They also have lot N^o14 of the parish of Portage la Prairie, given to them by the Dominion government, but up to date they have refused to make any use of it. . .

"They have good homes and gardens and make a good living working for the farmers of the district. When they all return home in the fall, they usually squander a lot of money in intoxicating liquor and paying fines in the police court, but they will very seldom give any information as to where they got the liquor. I should like to see them on a reserve away from town influence, and I believe there are some of them who would develop into farmers.

"Mr. W.A. Hendry is principal of the school, and his sister has charge of the teaching. They are much interested in the work and have the confidence of the pupils and their parents to an extraordinary extent. In fact, it is like a family affair. The principal, his wife, and Miss Hendry are all interested in the spiritual welfare of the little band, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church, and hold a weekly service in the village church as well as many other meetings."

30. The Indian Affairs Annual Report for 1906 stated the "Portage la Prairie Sioux" lived on land owned by themselves, and as well, had Lot N^o14 "given them by the Dominion Government.

"... They are a superior type of Indian to the others throughout the agency, and physically the adults are large, strong, and healthy. Indications of tubercular disease, unfortunately, however, are shown by many of the children. These Indians earn a good living working for the farmers of the neighbourhood, and have good houses and gardens. While above the average Indian in morality and temperance, these Indians also squander a lot of money in purchasing liquor and paying fines, and the suppression of the illicit traffic appears very difficult, as practically no information can be obtained from the Indians.

"The Presbyterian Church is looking after the spiritual welfare of these Indians, and regularly a weekly service is held in the village church.

"There is a Sioux boarding school in town. It has accommodation for about 40 pupils, and there is an average attendance of about 25. The government allows a per capita grant for 25 pupils, and a larger attendance could be obtained if the per capita grant would permit. The school is conducted by Mr. W.A. Hendry, principal, and his sister, Miss Hendry, is assistant teacher. Mr. Hendry is a most efficient officer, manifests a deep interest in his work, and with the cooperation of his wife and sister, is doing splendid work."³³

31. In his own report for 1906, Principal Hendry stated,

"The majority of the children being under twelve years, they are not in advanced standards, but they have made good progress. The children speak English entirely at school. They express themselves better in English than in Sioux. . . Thirty minutes in the morning and the same in the evening is devoted to religious instruction. They attend the services and Sunday School of Knox Church. . ."³⁴

³³ Annual Report on Indian Affairs, Sessional Paper N^o27, 1906, p. 93.

³⁴ Annual Report, Department of Indian Affairs, 1907. Report of W.A. Hendry, Principal, 1 July, 1906. p. 338.

32. The 1906 Report also listed the Receipts and Expenditures for the Portage la Prairie Boarding School. \$350 of used clothing had been contributed, and another \$34.85 in cash had been spent on clothing. Salaries from the Presbyterian Foreign Missions Society were \$900. The other income was the \$72 per pupil per year federal grant, totalling \$1706.40. The expenditures:³⁵

Food	\$904.62
Equipment	181.74
Fuel and Light	217.05
House Furnishings	2.10
Labour	105.80
Drug Bill	26.15
Stationery	24.55
Miscellaneous	39.78

33. In 1907, Inspector of Indian Agencies Samuel Marlatt added additional details about the Portage la Prairie Boarding School. There were now 26 children, 10 boys, 16 girls.

“Owing to the school being situated in the town, there is not the same chance for industrial training as at most of the other schools. The lack of land prevents anything but gardening on a small scale. As a feeder for industrial school, it is all that can be desired. It is unfortunate that there was not more land in connection, as the staff is capable of imparting a much more extensive training.

“Mr. Hendry is a master of finance, and always keeps the expenditure within income. In this respect, as for several other important reasons, he would make an excellent head for a much more extensive foundation. . .

“General health has been only fair. There have been two or three cases of tuberculosis and several cases of measles.

“The per capita grant is from the Sioux vote, as the school was originally intended only for children of that tribe. Of late years, quite a number of Saulteaux have been admitted.”³⁶

³⁵ Sessional Paper N°27, Annual Report on Indian Affairs, Financial Statements. 1906.

³⁶ Annual Report, Department of Indian Affairs, 1906, p. 356.

34. In 1908, Indian Affairs increased by five the number of students at the Portage School for whom the per capita grant would be paid ". . . to make it possible to receive more children from the Long Plain Reserve."³⁷ Inspector of Indian Agents Swinford had made the proposal:

"Ever since the Treaty was made, the Indians of the Long Plain Reserve in the Portage la Prairie Agency have resisted all efforts to place a missionary or day-school on their reserve. Neither would they consent to their children being sent to a boarding or residential school.

"But lately, a change has apparently come over a few of them and Principal Hendry of the Portage la Prairie Sioux Boarding School, assisted by Indian Agent Logan, has succeeded in getting four pupils of school age from that reserve, very much against the wishes and efforts of the old Indians there. He also has four Sioux children of school age at the school over and above the number allowed, for which he does not receive any grant.

"This school, under Mr. Hendry's management, has kept out of debt, and I would be glad to have any Official of the Department visit there without warning. They are always ready and up to the mark, and the pupils from that Institution are a credit to them.

"Mr. Hendry remarked to me lately that he found the expense of keeping eight extra children was more than he could finance for without going into debt on his present grant, and he was afraid that after all his trouble, he would have to send the four children back to the Long Plain Reserve.

"The school being for the Sioux, he supposed he should given them the preference. But I asked him to keep them for a short time until I wrote the Department to ask if I could not get a grant for the extra pupils. . .

"It seems to bad altogether to allow children to go back to the Long Plain Reserve after trying for so many years to get them, and if these are kept at the school, it will probably lead to others being sent in the future."³⁸

³⁷ PAC RG10, R.P. McKay, Presbyterian Church in Canada Foreign Mission Committee (Western Division), 18 Dec 1908.

³⁸ PAC RG10, 19 Nov 1908, Swinford to Secretary, Indian Affairs.

35. The Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee supported the move to include the Ojibway in the "Sioux School". R.P. McKay wrote Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Frank Pedley about the situation:

"There is an Indian Reserve near Portage la Prairie called the Long Plains Reserve that has been impervious to Christian and educational influences up to the present time. However, a change has come, as it is manifestly coming to many reserves. Mr. Hendry, the principal of the Portage la Prairie Boarding School, has received a few of these children and others want to come, but he says on the present per-capita grant for twenty-five, he cannot finance it. . .

"Would it not be a pity to refuse any who want to come, and especially after long years of quiet effort to induce them to care for the education of their children? . . ."39

36. According to an insurance company map, the location of the Indian Boarding School in 1909 was on the north side of Ninth Street North East, to the south of First Avenue North East, perhaps on Lot 69. The parcel of two acres was owned by the Presbyterian Church. There were also two acres of city lots rented out. The main building was 50x32 feet, frame, 3 stories with an annex. There were also poultry, stable, and driving shed outbuildings.

39

PAC RG10 McKay to Pedley, 8 December 1908.

37. The 1910 Annual Report of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs set out what was then the government's understanding of the situation of the Dakota at Portage. There were then 35 students at the Boarding School, 30 of them paid for by Indian Affairs.

"These Indians live on a tract of land, about 26 acres, purchased by themselves and within city limits. This purchase served an excellent purpose at the time it was made, as the Indians were then wandering from place to place and nothing could be done to educate their children. They settled on this land, and immediately the Portage la Prairie Boarding School was established some twenty years ago.

"But conditions have entirely changed, and these people have completely outgrown this cramped area of land. They are physically fine, large, healthy Indians, and if they could be settled with some of the other Sioux bands, Griswold, Pipestone or Beulah, they would make a fine showing at grain-growing and stock-raising. As things are at present, they work with the white farmers and get considerable ready money, which is spent in a worthless way around the city."

38. The 1910 Indian Affairs Annual Report contained an Inspector's report on the Portage school:

"The children at this school are . . . bright and cheerful in their demeanour, something I like to see in the classroom and which is lacking in so many of them."⁴⁰

⁴⁰

Annual Report on Indian Affairs, 1910, p. 461.

39. There were moves afoot, however, both with respect to the school and Lot #99. The Inspector of Indian Agencies reported in 1910 that "while excellent work is being done at this school, the building and surroundings are unsatisfactory." Ottawa then contacted the Rev. R.P. Mackay, secretary of the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Committee, to suggest some changes:

"The Department is of opinion that the only way to overcome the difficulty referred to would be to erect a new building in a more suitable locality, and would like you to give this matter your serious consideration and submit your suggestions.

"In view of the Inspector's report, the Department does not feel justified in going to any great expense in providing material for repairs to the old building. . .⁴¹

Because the building did not meet the standards of a new contract Indian Affairs was proposing to the church, the suggestion was made by the Department that it sell the building and site and purchase a farm on which to erect a new building. A farm of 250 acres was selected about two miles from Portage.⁴²

⁴¹ PAC RG10, letter to Rev. R.P. Mackay, 10 May, 1910.

⁴² PAC RG10, memo to Frank Pedley, deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 31 May, 1912.

40. The Portage City Council recommended in March 1911 that the Dakotas be moved from Lot #99 to better farm land for the use of Portage Indian Residential school graduates. Indian Agent R. Logan sent the letter from the Secretary-Treasurer of the City of Portage on to Ottawa with his own covering letter dated 25 March 1911:

"I might say that the Sioux Indians whose property is within the city corporation are now becoming regarded as a nuisance by the city people. They are becoming more addicted to drinking and I believe the women are immoral with the lower element of the white people. In the summer the Indian women hang around the park which is not far from the Indian Village and I feel that much immorality goes on here. The women have also taken to smoking cigarettes on the street which has no doubt caused much comment among the city people.

"These Indians would do well if they were put on land, but as things are there is no prospect for the children who graduate from the Portage Boarding School unless they migrate to some of the reserves. I should be very pleased to have the department's view on the possibility of getting these Indians removed on some land."⁴³

41. Indian Commissioner Laird shared the sentiments. An official memo was generated on April 19, 1911:

"There can be no question that the city council of Portage la Prairie is making a reasonable request in asking that steps be taken to remove the Sioux Indians from the limits of that city. The reasons set forth by the council for the removal are weighty and for the good of the Indians themselves so that the Department should use its influence to get them placed on farm lands."⁴⁴

42. Federal elections were in the air. Logan, an appointee of the Liberal Laurier administration, could see there was going to be a change in government. He also knew the local Conservatives favoured getting the Dakota moved out of town. The Laurier government fell on 6 October 1911, and Sir Robert Laird Borden became Prime Minister on October 10.

⁴³ PAC RG10 vol 7774, file 27127-4. Agent Logan to HQ, Ottawa, 25 Mar 1911.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

43. Agent Logan wrote Ottawa again on December 8. He mentioned that the deed to Lot 99 was held by former Inspector of Indian Agencies S.R. Marlatt, now of Whaletown, B.C., "unless he sent it to the Department when he resigned from office.

"There are no Sioux Indians living on Lot N^o14 which was purchased in 1898 for these people. The reason is that they get ready money by working with the farmers on the Plains which they seem to prefer to waiting for a crop.

"The Sioux Band might be willing to settle on the Long Plain Reserve as there are a few intermarriages between these people, but I do not believe that they will move any distance from the Town, as they get plenty of work from the farmers whom they have known for 40 years, and the women make almost as much as the men scrubbing store floors, etc., around Town.

"There is no vacant Crown land in this locality. The number of people in the Sioux Village is as follows: men 35, women 37, children 37, total 109.

"At a Council meeting with the Long Plain Band which was held on the 4th of December last, the Band said they would surrender three sections for the use of the Sioux Band if they were paid one-half at the time of the surrender and the other half a year from the date of the surrender.

"If two sections could be purchased of the Long Plain Reserve for the use of ex-graduate Sioux boys, it would then be possible to send all the ex-graduate boys from the Portage la Prairie Boarding School to settle on the Long Plain Reserve. In a very short time the difficulty would solve itself and it would be a great help to the new Boarding School which I understand is to be built in the near future."⁴⁵

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"The secretary be instructed to write the indian agent suggesting that in the opinion of this council it is advisable to have the Indians removed from their present location in the city owing to their habit of drinking and immorality also the fact that when the children leave their school, they have nothing to look forward to and in our opinion it would be advisable to have them placed where they would have more land for farm purposes.

Carried.







