

ASSINIBOIA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL



621 Academy Road
Winnipeg Manitoba

Picture a busy high school with students going back and forth from their classroom to their residence. In the winter, there were hockey rinks and in the summer, baseball diamonds. This was how the school looked to the outside world.

Winnipeg's Assiniboia Indian Residential School operated from 1958 to 1973.

Know there was a different reality experienced by the students who were being systematically assimilated.

Recognize how difficult life was for these students from Indian Reserves all over Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Northwest Ontario and other Canadian provinces.

Imagine how alone they felt, struggling in a strange place with no family support, traditional culture or familiar language.

Admire the strength of graduates who flourished as professionals – engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, artists, leaders and healers.

It is a legacy of fear and triumph, self-doubt and resiliency.

Celebrate those who found themselves.

Remember the children and adults who were lost.

Support those students and their families who are still trying to find their way.

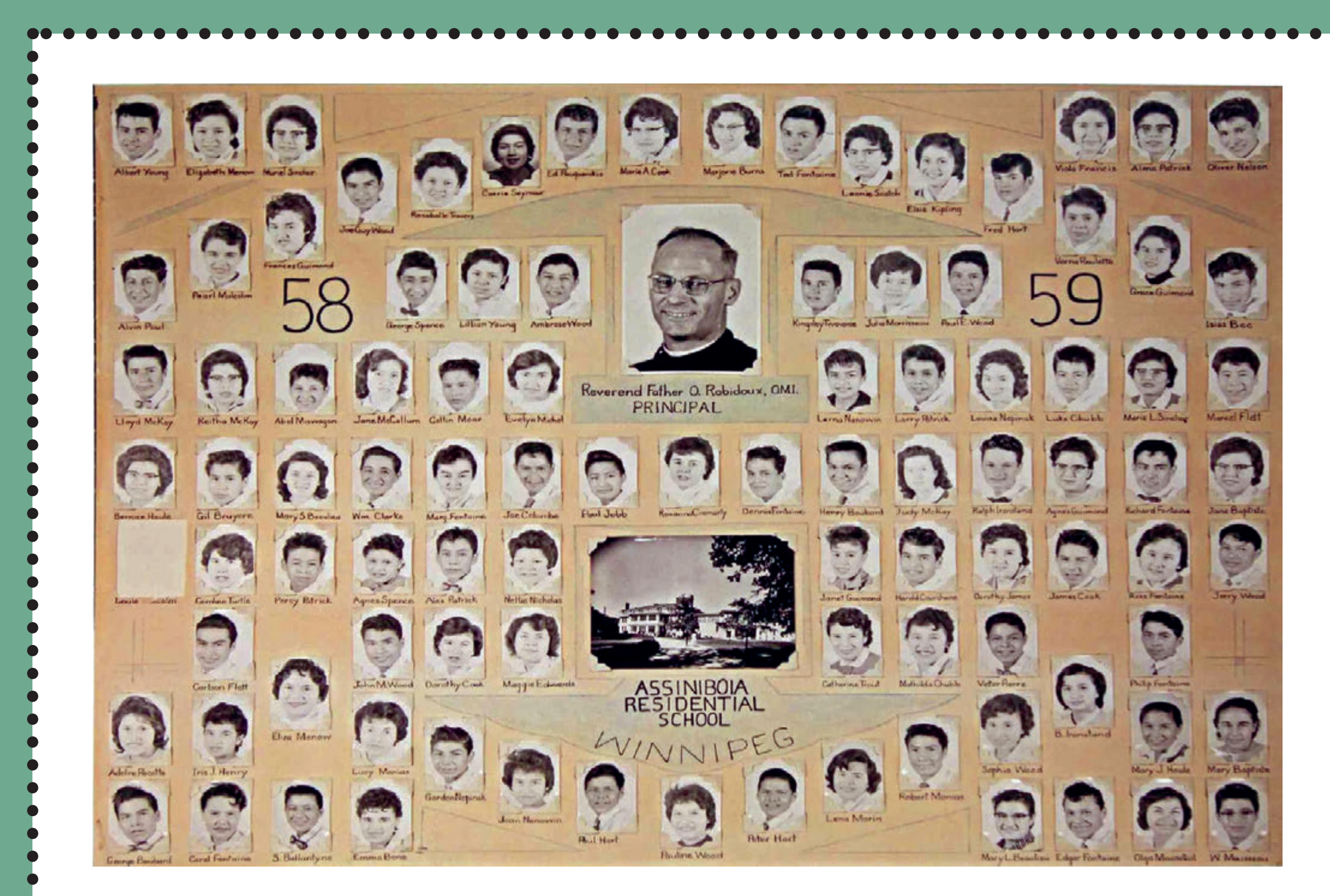


WE WERE THERE

The incarceration of these children is finally being recognized for its lifelong damage. However, as of 2017, less than half of this class has lived to be part of this acknowledgment.

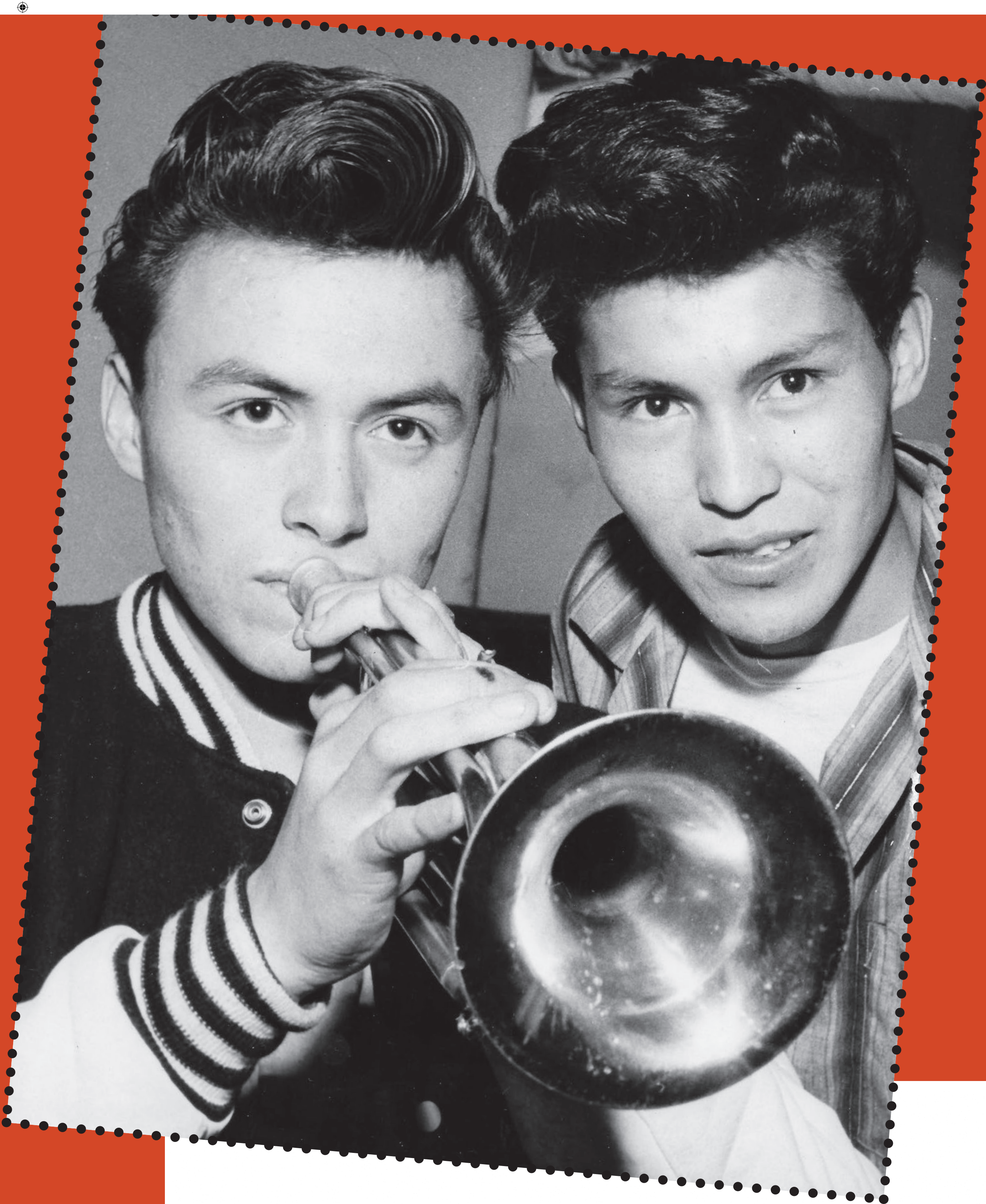
Many of these students were not provided with transportation home and were forced to remain over the extended Christmas holidays and during the summer. Although students suffered, rules slowly began to relax, making life at the school easier for those who followed.

These are the first residents of Assiniboia Residential School.



SCHOOL IN THE BIG CITY

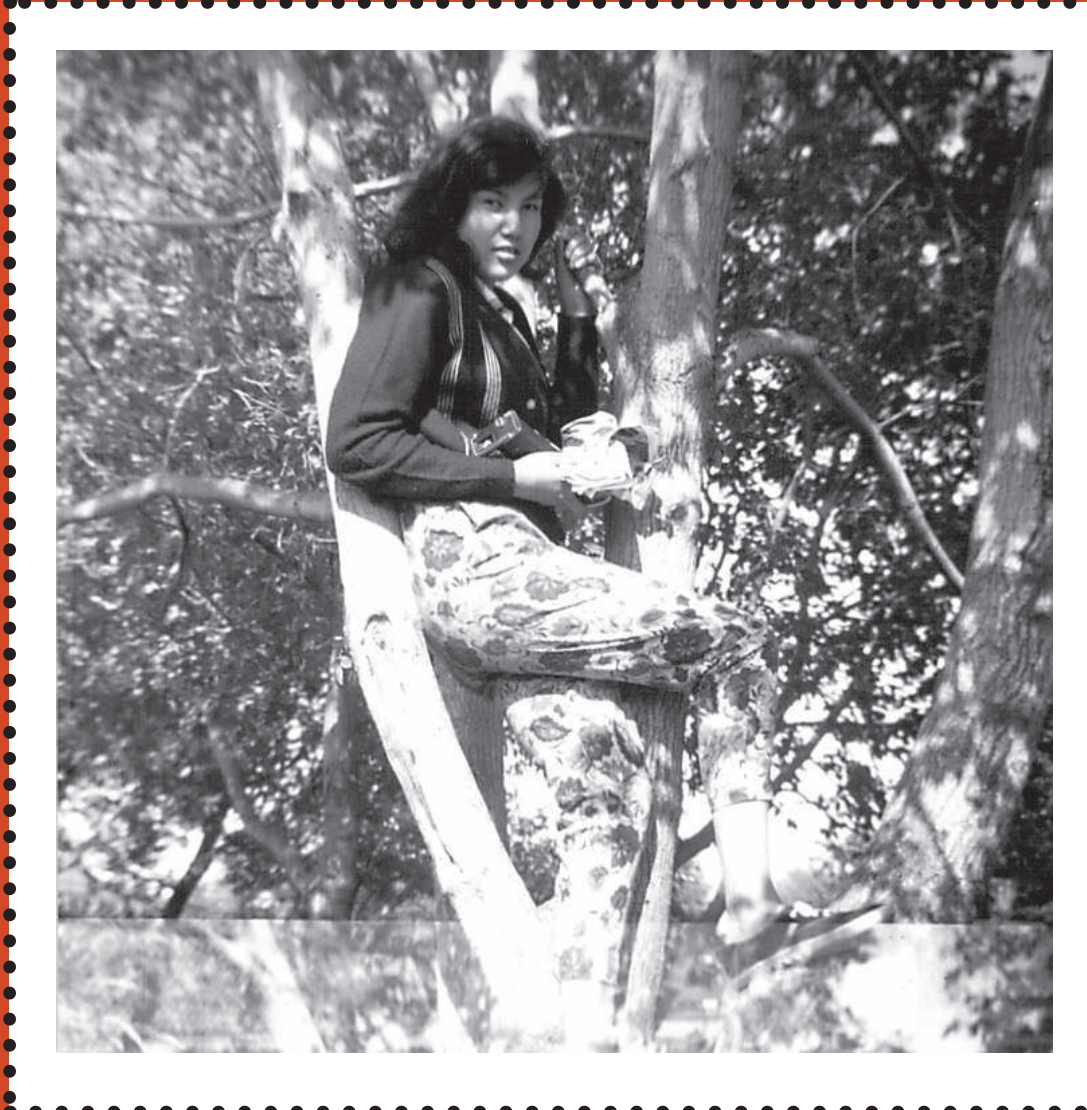
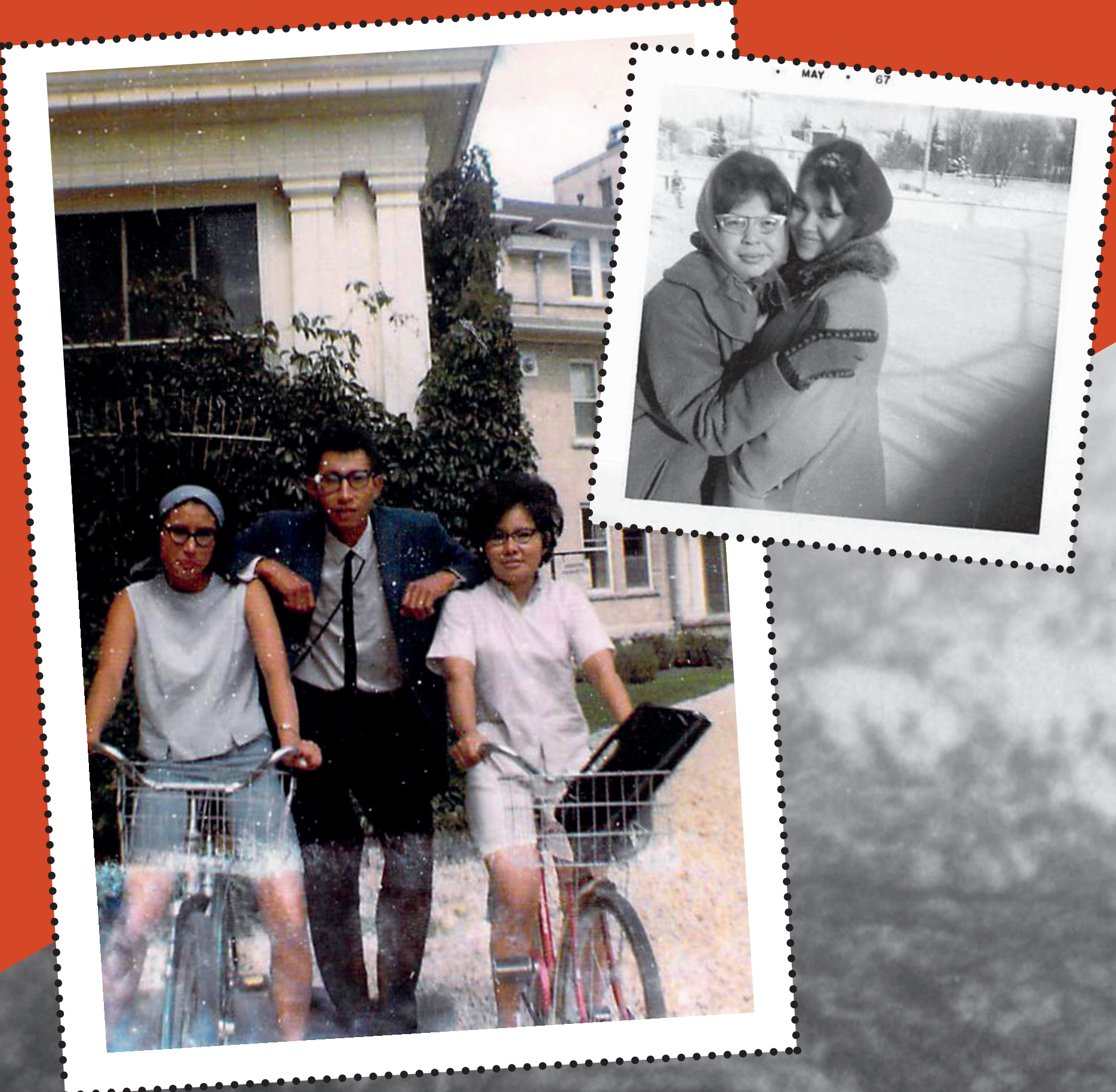
Early students at Assiniboia Residential School were completely cut off from their families and community, their River Heights neighbours, and from the larger Winnipeg society.



Teenagers experienced feelings of loneliness and detachment during their stay at Assiniboia.

This slowly changed. Sporting teams were allowed to participate in games, then tournaments, then leagues. Students were taken for downtown shopping trips and entered work-experience programs. After 1967, students attended classes in area high schools.

These difficult experiences forged closer bonds among the students.



GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

“Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence.”

— Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald,
bluntly describing the intention of the system, 1879

Winnipeg’s Assiniboia Residential School was part of the federal government’s educational system under the Indian Act based on the objective of assimilation to destroy the students’ culture, language and identity and to urbanize these young adults.

“A spruce tree taken while young from a low lying moist soil when transplanted into light soil dies in most cases.

If it lives, it will be but short and stunted, where it would have been tall and straight had it been left in its natural soil.

It will be like this despite the greatest of care. It is not because it has no capacity for growth, it is because it is taken out of its natural environment where it would have done well.”

— Chief Peyasiw-awasis,
describing the effects of Canada’s residential school system, 1910

“We should never forget, even once they have learned from it, because it’s part of who we are. It’s not just a part of who we are as survivors and children of survivors and relatives of survivors, it’s part of who we are as a nation.

And this nation must never forget what it once did to its most vulnerable people.”

— Senator Murray Sinclair,
Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2017

“Like me, most survivors waited a decade or more before going back to school. Some went back even 15, 20 or 25 years later to study the things that as children they’d dreamed of studying – law, medicine, education, etc.

But Canada lost many great contributions from its First Nations citizens because of the residential schools system.”

— Theodore Fontaine,
Assiniboia Residential School Survivor, 2017



They were sent to Winnipeg's Assiniboia Residential School to continue their education in an attempt to further assimilate them into the larger Canadian society.

These are the known home communities where Assiniboia Residential School students were taken from, some as far away as 800 KM.

Assiniboia Residential School



THE INSTITUTION

Assiniboine Residential school operated as a high school from September 1958 to 1967 and a hostel from 1967 to 1973 and was attended by more than 600 students.

The school was federally funded and operated by the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns. Students ranged in age from 15 to 20 with yearly enrolment averaging 100.

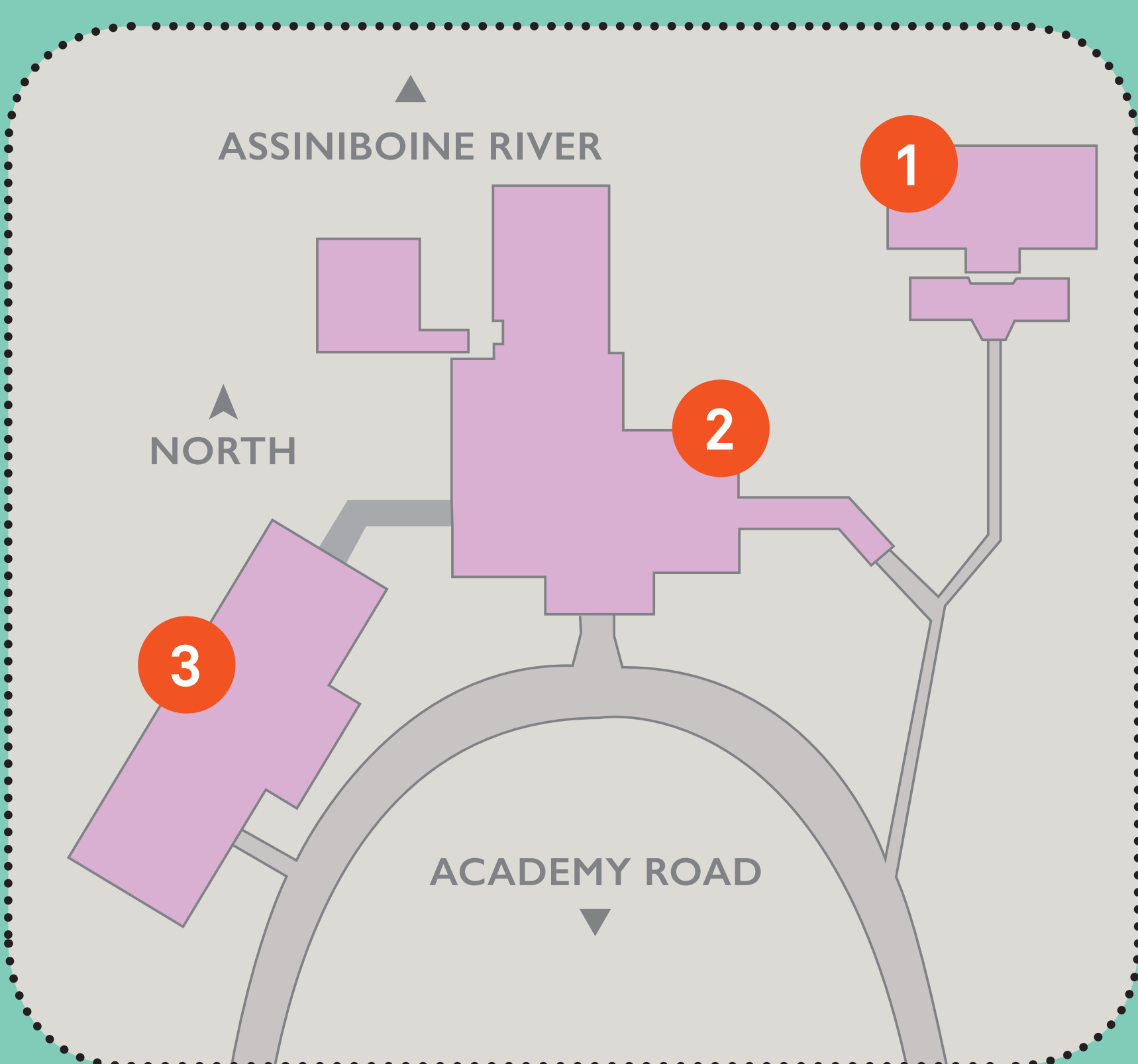
The school is now the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

- First group of students organized into four classes, Grades 8 to 10 (Grade 12 added in September 1960).
- In 1967 school became a hostel, with students living in the dormitories and attending classes at schools like St. Charles Academy, Daniel McIntyre Collegiate (Selkirk, MB), R.B. Russell, Gordon Bell, Earl Grey, J.B. Mitchell, Silver Heights, Grant Park, St. Mary's Academy and Kelvin High School.
- Special programming included Cadet Corps, sports teams that competed in regional tournaments, choirs, etc.
- Location was opened in 1915 as an abandoned and abused children's home and in the 1940s and 1950s was used as a veterans' convalescent hospital.
- A portion of the former school site was acquired by the City of Winnipeg in 1976 and the dormitory buildings were demolished a decade later. The school building (opened in 1918) and gymnasium/chapel (opened in 1966) remain standing today.



THE SITE PLAN

CIRCA 1960



1 Classroom Building
The building was originally known as the Julia Clark School when it was completed for the Children's Home of Winnipeg in 1918. In 1997, the City of Winnipeg designated it a Historic Building.



2 Main Building
The boy's Dormitory in 1974. The dining room, with girls on one side and boys on the other, was located on the main floor.



3 West Wing
The Girl's Dormitory, in 1969. The girls had a long walk to get to their classrooms.

Our School

Assiniboia, the first Indian Roman Catholic High School in Manitoba, opened its doors in September, 1906, with four teachers and one hundred students in the Grades 8, 9, and 10.

That same fall His Grace Archbishop Philip Pocock blessed the school and put it under the patronage of "Our Lady of the Holy Rosary".

After three years of operation the Grades IX- to XII are taught and the Grade Eight students remained in their respective schools. Since 1961, there have been a few graduates of whom Joe Guy wood and Oliver Nelson were the first.

Assiniboia participates with her flying colors in various extra curricular activities such as Public Speaking, Football, Hockey, Red Cross, Army Cadets, and Community Welfare Planning Council.

Assiniboia had many distinguished visitors such as their Excellencies Bishop Paul Duroche O.M.I., Bishop Paul Piche O.M.I., and Miss Helen Fairclough when she was Minister of Immigration and Dickie Duff of the (Toronto Maple Leafs).

These are a few historical facts about Assiniboia High.

