ASSINIBOIA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

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 influencers.

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.
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 isolated lifestyle, sporting teams were allowed to participate in games, tournaments, then escape. 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“Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence.”

— Ivan Spencer, in Alice S. Markle, 1949

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.
WHY THIS DISPLAY?

The City of Winnipeg declared 2016 its Year of Reconciliation.

Led by its Indigenous Relations Division, documents and stories continue to be identified and shared by its Archives and Library.

These panels represent just one way the City of Winnipeg is responding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action.

The TRC was established in June 2008 as part of the 2001 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. After six years travelling across Canada and listening to more than 6,500 witnesses, the Commission found:

- Canada’s Indian Residential School System operated between 1883 and 1996 with over 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children placed in schools across the country.
- The odds of a student dying while in the system were higher than the odds for Canadians serving in the Second World War.

It is estimated that over 6,000 children died at Residential schools in Canada.

“Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share.”

(From Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015)
Students from across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Northwest Ontario were taken from their families and communities. 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.
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 (St. Boniface), J.B. Mitchell, Silver Heights, Grant Park, St. Mary’s Academy and Neelin High School.

- Special programming included Cadet Corps, sports teams that competed in regional tournaments, choir, etc.

- Location was opened in 1913 as an abandoned and abused children’s home and in the 1940s and 1950s it was used as a veteran’s convalescent hospital.

- A portion of the former school site was acquired by the City of Winnipeg in 1978 and the dormitory buildings were demolished a decade later. The school building (opened in 1916) and gymnasium/chapel (opened in 1919) remain standing today.
**The Site Plan Circa 1960**

**Classroom Building**
The building was originally known as the John Clark School when it was completed for the Children's Home of Winnipeg in 1918. In 1937, the City of Winnipeg designated it a Historic Building.

**Main Building**
The boys' dormitory in 1974. The dining room, with girls on one side and boys on the other, was located on the main floor.

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