

# INVESTIGATING SIX NATIONS DAY SCHOOL RECORDS FROM 1879 TO 1953

## Project Description

From the 1860s to the 1990s, approximately 700 Indian Day Schools operated across Canada, with twelve being in Six Nations of the Grand River<sup>1</sup>. Day schools were intended to assimilate Indigenous children, to erase Indigenous cultures and languages. Children experienced physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

Library and Archives Canada have digitized, publicly accessible microfilm reels containing files from residential schools and day schools<sup>2</sup>. To make the information regarding the Six Nations and New Credit Day Schools more accessible, I catalogued the content in the files into a searchable database and summarized the notable findings.

Survivors and intergenerational survivors may seek information regarding themselves or family members for personal use or to support a claim in the Federal Indian Day School Class Action Lawsuit<sup>4</sup>. The database can also be used by others doing research on Six Nations and New Credit Day Schools.

## Discussion

Investigating, cataloguing, and summarizing the Six Nations and New Credit Indian Day School records provides survivors, intergenerational survivors, and community members with a deeper understanding of the experiences First Nations children had at these day schools. Interestingly, there were few references to student names in the files. The documents could have been purged of references to names, specific references may not have existed, or files including student names may be elsewhere. This creates challenges for those looking for references to themselves or family.

Another limitation to my work was the quality of the documents. While the majority of documents were high quality, legible images, some documents, specifically from the late 1800s and early 1900s, were handwritten, damaged, and/or illegible.

On June 13, 2022, the deadline to submit a claim in the Federal Indian Day School Class Action Lawsuit was extended to January 13, 2023<sup>6</sup>. Claimants are required to include evidence of school attendance, or complete a sworn declaration. Survivors may not have any documents regarding their attendance at an Indian Day School or they may not have the time or resources to locate such documents. The database created through this project, as well as through the work of organizations such as the Survivors' Secretariat, can provide survivors with easier access to documents and informations that may support their claim in the lawsuit.



Six Nations Day School No. 1<sup>3</sup>

## Summary of Notable Findings

### Students

- Ohsweken School was closed due to outbreaks of scarlet fever in 1903 and 1908 and measles and whooping cough in 1907
- New Credit School had an outbreak of measles (1911 and 1923), smallpox (1914), tuberculosis (1915), diphtheria (1922), whooping cough (1923), and flu (1933)
- In the 1910s, No. 2 school ran a night school for adult students in Six Nations
- Mention of student names limited to prize lists from the New Credit School and 3 students with irregular attendance who Indian Affairs had wanted sent to a residential school
- In 1911, of 39 children who were band members of Mississaugas of New Credit, 2 attended the Mohawk Institute and 14 attended schools away from the reserve
- New Credit School and Six Nations No. 9 School had white children attending
- Some School Trustees wanted white children and children who were not Band members to pay tuition

### School Conditions

- From 1899, water supply at Six Nations Day Schools were known to need improvement
- 8 schools had water contamination, with water unfit for drinking due to the poor conditions of drinking water wells, with 5 having recurring issues and 2 cases of dead rabbits found in a well
- 7 schools had unsanitary or unusable bathrooms, with five having recurring issues
- Overcrowding occurred in 7 schools
- Dangerous, unsafe conditions documented at 9 schools on 37 occasions
- Repairs to schools were often done for the lowest cost possible
- 3 cases in which Indian Affairs refused to repair schools or rebuild unsafe schools
- New Credit School burned down and was not rebuilt for 6 years due to a lack of funds, according to Indian Affairs
- One case in which students gathered around the stove with their coats on to keep warm because the school could not be sufficiently heated and snow was blowing inside



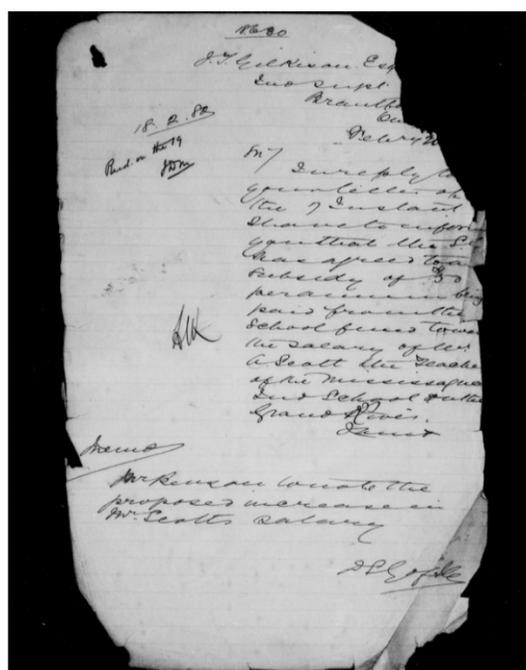
Six Nations Day School No. 5 Students - 1900<sup>5</sup>

### Treatment

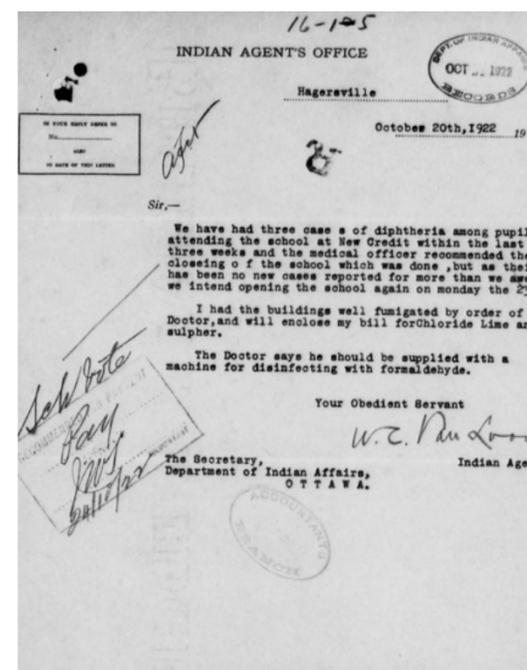
- One case of abuse explicitly noted, as a teacher used a strap to punish students at the New Credit School
- In 9 cases, there is mention of enforcing compulsory attendance laws and/or sending "truant" children to residential schools, including Shingwauk
- One case in which students cleaned dead rabbits from a well
- Racist comments, including "Indian blood", "negro blood", "a few Indians who know neither justice or mercy", "Indians should not have control, as they would use power for their own purpose", a teacher said she could not trust the Indian Agent because he was not white
- A fence was built at the New Credit School by "Indians without charge"
- Indian Affairs had to approve of any uses of Band funds

### Teachers

- A Mohawk teacher living in the U.S. (member of the St. Regis Band) was not hired due to her not being "Canadian Indian" and not having the same religious denomination as the majority of the Band
- Blood quantum was referred to when discussing teachers (eg. saying they have "Indian blood")
- 3 cases in which white teachers did not teach because there were no white families to board with
- A teacher was accused of selling liquor to members of the Reserve
- A white teacher married a member of the Mississaugas of the Credit Band and Indian Affairs would not allow her to continue teaching, despite the Council's desire to retain her services



Example of a poor quality LAC reel document<sup>2</sup>



Example of a high quality LAC reel document<sup>2</sup>

Poster by: Sarah Stavridis  
Supervisor: Professor Cody Groat  
Department of History, Western University



## References

---

1. McGill University. (n.d.). Learning about Indian Day Schools. Indigenous Initiatives. Retrieved July 22, 2022, from <https://www.mcgill.ca/indigenous/learning-about-indian-day-schools>
2. Library and Archives Canada. (2016, March 23). School Files Series—1879-1953 (RG10). <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/school-files-1879-1953/Pages/school-files-1879-1953.aspx>
3. Six Nations Public Library. (n.d.). (Former) Six Nations School House #1. Retrieved July 27, 2022, from <https://vitacollections.ca/sixnationsarchive/2688500/data>
4. About – Federal Indian Day School Class Action. (n.d.). Retrieved July 22, 2022, from <https://indiandayschools.com/en/about/>
5. Six Nations Public Library. (n.d.). No. 5 School—1900. Retrieved July 27, 2022, from <https://vitacollections.ca/sixnationsarchive/3195064/data>
6. Claims Process – Federal Indian Day School Class Action. (n.d.). Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://indiandayschools.com/en/claims/>