

B 36

St. Joseph's Boarding School fonds

Photocopies, 2 cm of textual records, 1894-1969

Scope and Content: Records produced by or relating to the St. Joseph's Boarding School in Fort William, Ontario. Includes material from National Archives of Canada (RGIO), newspaper clippings, and attendance records.

Series B 36/1/1: Records - 2 cm - 1894-1969 (photocopies).

Photocopies of correspondence, reports, lists, attendance records and clippings relating to the operative of the school.

Organizational Sketch: St. Joseph's Boarding School first began as an orphanage and school in 1870 under the direction of the Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1885 the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Toronto took over and then once again by the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Peterborough. The Sisters' convent was located on the Mission property and was made up of two separate buildings. One of the buildings was used as the school house and had two rooms that could hold between 23 and 72 students. At the time, the convent/school was a mixture of both white and Native orphans as well as white boarders. Unfortunately on April 10, 1895, a fire broke out in the convent bake oven and spread throughout and destroyed everything. Luckily no one was killed and the Sisters decided to use the First Nations Council House as a chapel and school house until reconstruction could take place. The convent/orphanage and the church had both been rebuilt by the end of November of 1895 and by 1903 the orphanage/boarding school was exactly as it had been before the unfortunate fire had struck. All was well until the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway decided to take part in an expansion programme where Fort William was chosen to be the Western terminal. The Sisters of St. Joseph had no other option than to move to Fort William, Ontario, from the Mission. The new site was situated at the corner of Arthur Street and Franklin Street and occupied 3.5 acres of land. This new location was the site of a boarding and industrial school mainly for Native children and was built during the spring and summer of 1908. The total cost for the new boarding school was \$30, 500. This new St. Joseph's boarding school was officially opened on February 14, 1909. The orphanage provided a safe place for white and Native children who were orphaned or whose parents were not fit to care for them. The boarding school/orphanage also provided these children with the essentials of life which they were not learning anywhere else, and which they needed to survive.

(Taken from "Hope and Charity: Diocese of Thunder Bay, An Illustrated History", by Roy Piovesana.)

Additional Information: Original copies at National Archives of Canada (RGIO).