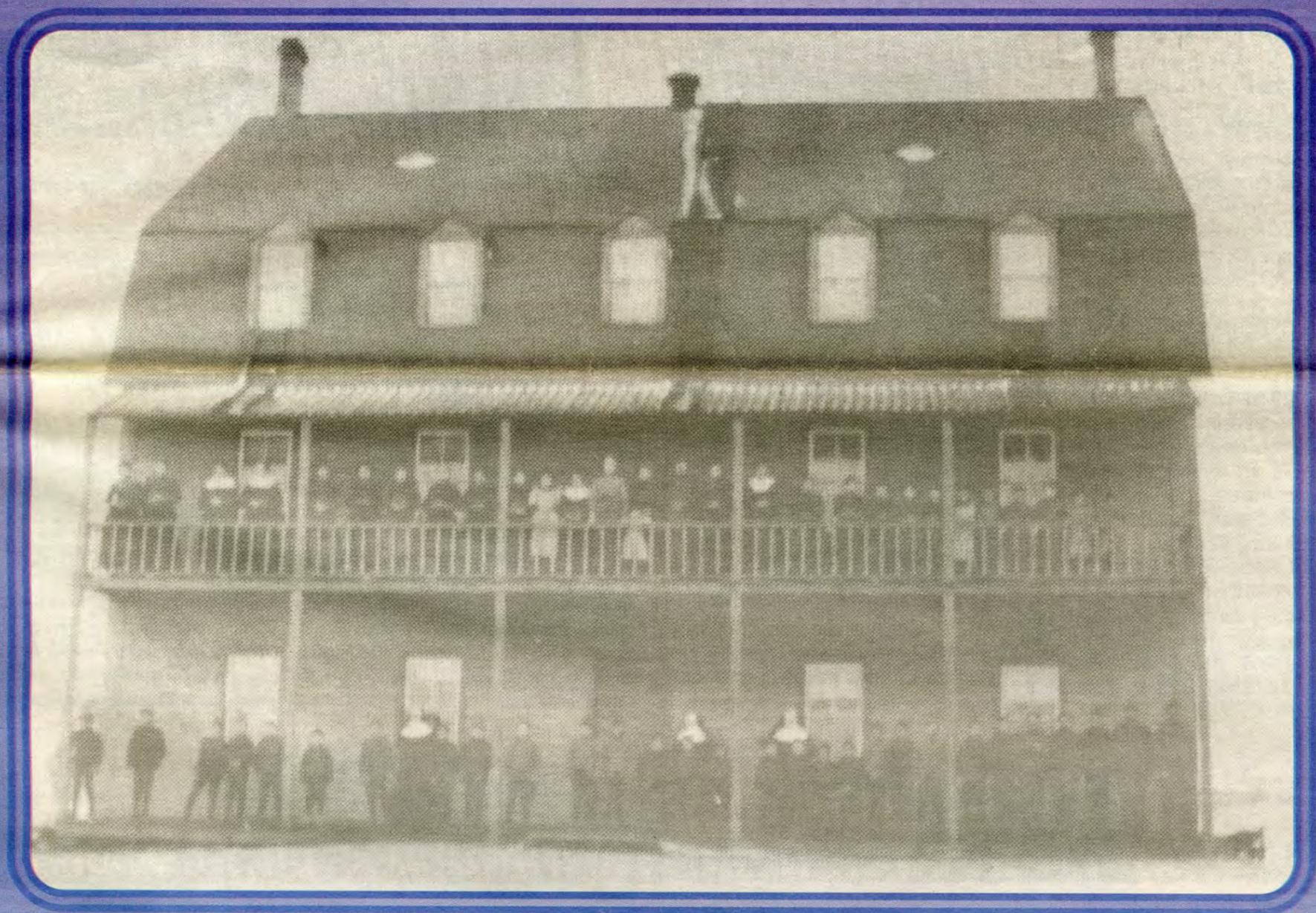


Blue Quills

Indian Residential School



DEDICATION

**To the people, our parents, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, who
attended the Residential Schools and to our people who have lost
their lives in these institutions.**

WE REMEMBER YOUR STRUGGLES.

1870 - 1970



BLUE QUILLS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

A HISTORY: 1870 - 1970

INTRODUCTION

"The philosophy according to which the residential schools operated was diametrically opposed to the traditional Indian philosophy of education. Before the arrival of the missionaries, Indian children learned by watching their parents and elders. Their family and their community were intimately involved in their education. The myths and stories told by their elders were an important part of the process of learning." (Ditcham in 1904, cited in Makokis, 2000:p.37). The historical path of our formal schooling starts as early as the 1870s. Our journey involves stories of cultural genocide as government sponsored atrocities documented in the literature are supported in the experiences of survivors of residential schools such as those shared by Joe P. Cardinal and Mike Steinhauer. They referred to Lacombe's ladder, a pictorial catechism, showing white people ascending road to heaven and Indians veering off on a road to hell. Students at residential schools were taught to despise their cultures and languages, as demonstrated in the words of Henry Bird Quinney: "The burning of sweet grass and tobacco was a 'heathen' ritual, but praying with their burning incense was supposedly the only sacred way. Songs with the Drum were 'barbaric,' but Latin chants were okay.

Dancing to honor the return of the birds in springtime was wrong, but kneeling in the dark confines of chapels with rosary beads was right." (cited in York, 1990, p. 42). Hence, the Blue Quills Indian Residential School years have been chronologically documented to familiarize the reader with this era of formal schooling. We start our story with the impacts of the Riel Resistance.

ROOTS AT LAC LA BICHE

In 1854, a permanent mission was founded at Lac La Biche. The Oblate Fathers asked for the help of the Grey Nuns to teach European languages and religion to Indian children. The Fathers began building the small day school there in 1857, named Notre Dame des Victories.

Around the 1870s, relations between Europeans and First Nations was under pressure. Surveyors ignored existing farm boundaries of the Metis. The Indians were faced with starvation as provisions promised by the Federal Government in the Treaties were not forthcoming. Raiding occurred. The Riel Resistance impacted the Frog Lake incident and it resulted in Nuns at Lac La Biche wintering on an island in 1885 to escape the uprising.

Church records show that by 1886 there were seven girls and eight boys in residence, but

attendance soon dropped because the children's parents disliked the school and withdrew their children. By 1892, the Canadian Government financed the construction of an Indian Industrial school to take in students from the entire district.

"The students went to school at Lac La Biche, and my father was one of those guys. When they went there, they never came back until they were 16 years old. At that time the road was very bad, all they could use

were dog teams. In the wintertime especially it was cold and they weren't able to see their families. So the people in Saddle Lake started to say they wanted to have a school close to home."

- STANLEY REDCROW, ELDER



(PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA P.200)

Father Lacombe, Jean L'Heureuse with Blackfoot chiefs.

CENTRE ROW Three Bulls, Crowfoot, Red Crow.

FRONT ROW North Axe, One Spot.

Father Lacombe founded the town of St. Paul, originally called St. Paul de Metis.



**THE MISSION SCHOOL AT SADDLE LAKE
WAS BUILT IN 1898. BLUE QUILL WAS
THE CHIEF WHO LENT THE
USE OF THE LAND**

(OB 8604 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

Sacred Heart Church, background, stood on Saddle Lake Reserve, until it burnt down in 1998.

THE MOVE TO SACRED HEART MISSION

By 1898 the Government was looking to move the school closer to Saddle Lake, to be closer to the population there. (Sacred Heart Mission had been founded there by Albert Lacombe in 1873). Two Oblate brothers built and dedicated a church and a school at the Mission. They called it Blue Quills after the Chief of the area. The wooden church, school and residence were impressive for the day. Until 1931 they were home to 140 young boys and girls, who boarded there for 10 months out of every year away from their families.

"The government said they could build a school at a site but when the Protestants saw those piles of lumber, they asked what we were doing. We said, 'We're going to build a school here.' They said, 'No you're not. After you pile the lumber we'll put a match to it and burn it up!' So what were the Catholics going to do? They didn't know exactly. They went to see the Chief of Blue Quills, (one of the small reserves which made up

Saddle Lake), whose name was Blue Quill, and told him they wanted to build a school. He said 'All right, you can build it on, my reserve. I'm not a Catholic. I have my own religion, but I'll let you build a school here.'"

STANLEY REDCROW, ELDER

The Federal Government gave the Oblate priests and the Grey Nuns the role of preparing the First Nations children for life on the reserves. In schools the children learned Christianity and agriculture. But life for the students was harsh. The government could not support the school with much funding, so the children worked to support themselves and the school. The students went to class in the morning and did chores in the afternoon. In the early 1900s residential students spent an average of one afternoon each week on schoolwork. Most of their time was spent working in the fields, or doing chores.

"They made us work 6 days a week. We had to milk 32 cows every morning before breakfast. And we never ate the eggs, cream or chickens. The number

one thing was prayer."

- Louis McGilvery, Elder

Indian schooling meant the four r's of reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and religion. The school housed school-aged children between 4 and 16 years old. Schooling meant basic literacy and practical skills. There was school in the morning and chores in the afternoon. The boys did the farm work, and the girls did the household duties like cooking and sewing.

The Role of Indian Residential School

The residential school served the aims of the Federal Government. The Government believed that the best way to deal with the First Nations was to isolate them, both on the reserves and in residential schools. The Government wanted to replace the First Nations' tribal and communal values with capitalist val-

ues. The bonds of family identify as part of a tribe were to be replaced by the school system. First Nation's students were treated as wards of the government.

"We were always hungry. We were called Pagans. And we always had to speak English, even though the nuns couldn't speak it very well themselves."

- Joe P. Cardinal, Elder

Attendance by Force

In the 1920's Canadian law made it mandatory for all children to attend school. Parents who refused to send their children to school faced jail terms.

"An RCMP and the Indian Agent came out to where we lived and threatened my father with incarceration if he did not send me to school; even though my father was a veteran of the first World War."

- Charles Wood

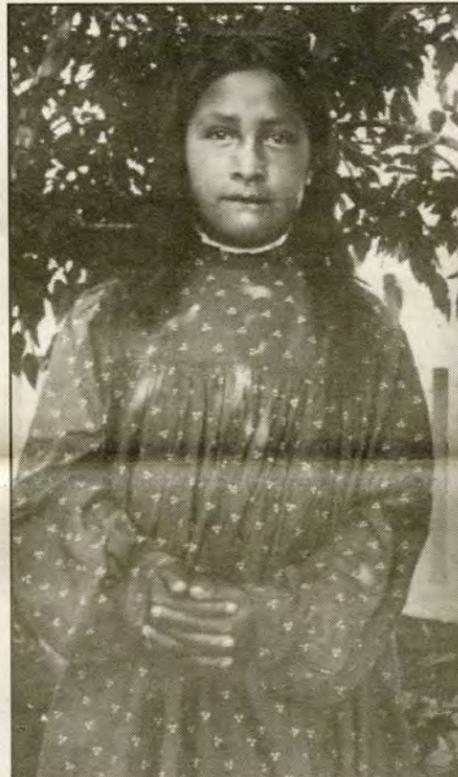
The Need for A Larger Building

The Government planned to build a larger school for the children of several reserves in the area. Approval for the building of the new school came in 1926 during Arthur Meighen's reign as Prime Minister, the era in which most of the Indian residential schools in Alberta were built. The Oblates wanted to erect a school with the capacity for 200 students to allow more young students into the system. The Nuns wanted a location closer to the Church there and the comforts of civilization and access to the railroad, hospital and electricity.



(OB 1674 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

The buildings seen here are the Sacred Heart Mission on the Saddle Lake Reserve, around 1905.



(A 5693 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

1910 Poka-ke-kum (Little girl) Maggie Stabbed Last. This young girl has clearly been living at residential school. Her dress and stance show the modesty so important to the nuns.



(SADDLE LAKE MUSEUM) **Blue Quills Boarding School Pupils 1920's**

IN 1929 -31 THE CURRENT BUILDING WE KNOW AS BLUE QUILLS WAS BUILT



In 1931 an Indian Residential School is built, and named Blue Quills to house and school the children from the surrounding reserves.

The New Brick Building

at Blue Quills, the move from the old wooden building to the new brick complex in 1931 was one of the biggest events of the decade.

To the 84 children who boarded The new brick building opened on

a cold day in 1931. People from the community can still remember the moment they moved into the school.

"It was December 8, the Blessed/Virgin Mary's Day. I remember how I ran up and down those stairs. It was the biggest building I had ever seen."

- A former student

The school was imposing to many young natives. The tall walls became symbolic of the unyielding discipline within them. It was excessive, many argue, as was the teachers desire to assimilate them into the European way of life.

The Reality of Residential School

The children soon fell into the daily routine of the school. It called for rising at 6 a.m., saying prayers, doing chores, attending school, eating meals and going to bed. Life was as regimented as a prison or army base is today. Children were often called by their number, which was put onto their clothing and utensils. The children's culture and language was not tolerated. It was replaced by strict morality and unyielding discipline. The priests taught the children that their language and culture were to be left behind.



(PRIVATE COLLECTION PRIEST & FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN FROM THE 1930'S AT BLUE QUILLS)

"If the boys ran away their heads were shaved right till they were bald. Some of them had to go barefoot for fear that they would run away again"

-former student, 1930's

Running Away

In the early years of the school, children often ran away to escape the abuses. Tragically they were almost always punished when they were returned to school, usually by getting the strap in front of the other children and/or getting their heads shaved bald. Many kids tried to escape from the residential school.

"Six boys did run away last night during 15 below weather and arrived on the Saddle Lake Reserve, two with badly frozen feet and one with slightly frozen feet, it was lucky that the two did not freeze to death."

- Indian Agent, 1943



Girl Students boarding at Blue Quills.
1938 - 1939



THE LEGACY OF INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Native Language

Children were punished if they spoke in their native language. This was especially difficult for the youngest children who could only speak Cree or Chipewyan

when they arrived at school. Often they were struck with a ruler or had their ears yanked for speaking their native language. Some young children thought they were struck for speaking at all, and consequently became silent. To make matters worse,

children were taught in English, even though the nuns spoke broken English.

"I think trying to kill off our language and culture was the worst thing they could do. They wouldn't even give us their lan-

guage. I don't think I would feel this way if they'd taught us French. The only thing I know in French is 'Sacre maudit sauvage' (Goddamned savage). Everytime the nun got mad, 'Sacre maudit sauvage.'

- A former student



(OB 2104 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

Bishop Maurice Baudoux at the confirmation at Blue Quills Indian Residential School, 1940's.



(SADDLE LAKE MUSEUM - PHOTO 25) **The Nuns that supervised at Blue Quills.**

IN 1951 THE NEW INDIAN ACT EMPHASIZED INTEGRATION

After WWII- Isolation To Integration

The end of the 2nd World War marked a change in the Governments view of Indians and education, from a philosophy of isolation to one integration. Native children began to attend provincial 'white' schools, and high school students faced a lot of racism. They were used to being surrounded by First Nations kids, with the only white people they knew were the priests and nuns. Sometimes public school was a hostile place.

"The community of St. Paul was not yet ready to receive us. We were a separate community, and we encountered a lot of racism. Many of our students opted out of the education system in those days."

- Leona Makokis

By 1946 there were 140 students at Blue Quills, and the staff of the school grew to include non-religious staff. A Federal law recognized residential schools as a school. Now all Indian children were to attend a full day of classes, just like their counterparts in white schools. It was at this time that some Blue Quills students began to take High School by living in residence and taking correspondence. These students were given special privileges, to encourage them to finish high school.

"The High School students were treated almost royally. They got privileges just to give the feeling, 'I want to be a high school student.'"

-a former student

In the 1950's Blue Quills students began to experience more contact and interaction with the surrounding communities. For example, 1948 was the first year that students were allowed to spend Christmas with their families. By the mid fifties, Easter weekend was also a holiday spent with family. The school became more open, by going to events in town and by holding open houses. The Blue Quills Boys Band marched down the streets of St. Paul during parades.

The Catholic Church had to change its role at the school, although it resisted this change, especially in religious matters. But there was more toleration of Native language. Some teachers tried to accommodate children who arrived at school speaking only Cree or Chipewyan. They used these languages during religious activities.

Native language was used to teach Catholic religion, and priests came to school to learn Cree. But the natives' own religion was not tolerated. In this way the Catholic Church resisted change, and tried to run the school as it always had. The students were taught a lot about religion, but not about real issues

that they would be facing when they left school.

"So much religion was drilled in that hardly anyone from my era has practiced it in a meaningful way, the R.C. faith. And even today I see some that probably aren't using any kind of religion. Our religion was more or less cast aside, and there was no way to practice it. They said it was a pagan religion and shouldn't be followed."

- a former student

Also at this time, academic standards were compromised by Nuns who did not have proper teaching certificates; not to mention those who focused too closely on European history and culture. Stories of Dukes and Duchesses often did not interest the Native students.

Some of the schools old authoritarian ways were still present. The principal read all mail coming and going and assigned all students a number to mark their possessions. The sexes were also kept segregated. The Church's attitude was to avoid dealing with problems, and to keep them hidden. As a consequence, some students came away knowing they were unprepared for adult life.

"In terms of dealing with interpersonal problems, for example dealing with stress or pressure, or alcoholism, or any social problems, there was totally no preparation. So therefore you were totally green if you stepped out from the reserve. Certainly many have succumbed and went under because they're unable to cope. Generally one was not prepared to face life."

- a former student



(SADDLE LAKE MUSEUM) Christmas School Concert, date unknown



(OB 10455 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

This picture shows the Blue Quills Boys Band during the 1950's. First Nations students from Blue Quills started having more contact with the rest of society.

Changes in the 1960's

While the Catholic Church remained committed to Indian residential schooling, its control over Blue Quills was increasingly undermined during the 1960s. This was caused by changing federal policy, the declining support of the Grey Nuns, and by growing consciousness of the First Nations.

The control and administration of Blue Quills was taken over by the Public Service Alliance. Just like in a regular public school, the PSA took over hiring, job descriptions, and decided the role of the Church in school. Church influence in Native education was decreasing. With fewer people entering into religious orders, Grey Nuns no longer staffed the school.

It was not until the 1960's that First Nations people were allowed to vote in Canada. Indian consciousness was growing during the 60's. There was a growing concern on reserves about the quality of education. The people wanted education to be more responsive to First Nations children's needs. Groups of First Nations people believed that poor administration was responsible for the high dropout rate in schools.

The school committee sought greater participation in Blue Quills, which was increasingly perceived as belonging to Indian people.

Band Members Stage A Sit-In

Once the Department of Indian Affairs had made its intention known of shutting down Blue Quills, local First Nation's commitment to the school became clear. At a meeting held in Saddle Lake in December 1969, the school committee requested that the department of Indian Affairs turn the operation of the school over to the local reserve communities and help the natives in replacing the non-teaching staff with Indian people. The department did not respond to this request, and on July 14, 1970, a sit-in began at the Blue Quills to take control of the school.

"The reason we had the sit-in was so we could take over the school ourselves and run it the way we want. It was our school."

- protester

1970

The sit-in began with about 60 people, and it peaked at about 300, and there were people there for three weeks steady. There were people from other provinces and non-Native supporters. The people at the sit-in used the residence facilities to stay in, while 20 of them went to Ottawa to convince the government.

"There was all sorts of things going on at the sit-in, like entertainment, singing, dancing, and we'd stay awake all night telling jokes, especially the old men. I think they brought in all the old men in

the area into the big gym. We had blankets spread out and all sorts of Indian entertainment, jokes and dancing and our own way of praying. Most of the time nobody gave a bad time to anybody and the odd time there would be big shots coming around flashing cameras. We weren't hurting anybody, just sitting there saying what we wanted and what's been lacking."

- protester

"Education is a Treaty Right. The Government promised that schools and education would be provided. These people and Government owe us a lot, we should not worry about money to run and operate the school."

- Margaret Quinney

The sit-in resulted in meetings in Ottawa between a committee representing the eleven reserves and representatives from the Department of Indian Affairs. 25 representatives, including a lawyer, two MP's, the President of the Indian Association of Alberta, and a group of protesters boarded a plane in Edmonton and flew to the capital. They stayed for 3 days and met repeatedly with Chretien, Minister of Indian Affairs.

The result of these meetings was the transfer of the operation of the school to the council.

On September 1, 1970, Blue Quills became the first school in Canada to be officially administered by First Nation's people.



1965 First Communion



(PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE, COURTESY OF SADDLE LAKE MUSEUM)

Leona's Residential School Narrative

I attended school from 1952 - 1965, nine of those years I spent in a residential school. I will share a few clips of my story with the intention of bringing to reality of the processes by which our people were handled as "wards of the government." My story starts in 1952, on a very sunny August morning, I was brought to the churchyard in a wagon.

The yard was filled with horses and wagons, parents stood around conversing and children ranging from 5 to 18 years old waited.

I didn't know what I was waiting for. My parents had informed me that I was going to school. School had no meaning to me, I was only seven years old.

The wait wasn't too long. A farm truck pulled up. All the community members and children gathered around it. The Indian agent had a list from which he began calling names. As each child's name was called out, he or she was lifted into a small door at the back of the truck. The screaming and crying started. I saw children kicking and waving their arms as they tried to struggle free.

My brother's name was called out, and I walked with him and my parents to the truck. I heard my name called. He was lifted into the door, and I also found myself being lifted by my father. As he placed me in, I turned to look for my mom. My dad said, "my girl don't cry" and he walked away. I was obedient, I did not cry. I tried to peek from inside the walls of the grain truck but I couldn't find any holes, so I looked up, there was no where else to look. The crying did not stop, as more children were lifted into the truck, the screams got louder. It seemed to take forever.

Eventually, the truck started moving, the chains on the side of the truck started rattling, and we had to grab for them so that we could maintain our balance. The school was located 20 miles from our reserve.

We finally arrived, the truck had parked in front of this massive four story brick building. As we were lifted out of the truck we were instructed to walk up the front stairs. We had a welcoming commit-

tee of nuns standing on the stairwell; they directed us into the building. As we walked in, I observed the sterility of the long hallways; we could hear the echoes as we marched down this long hallway. The boys were directed to one side and the girls were direct to the opposite side. That was the last time I spoke to my brother. The only time I saw him was at mealtime.

We had no sooner gathered into a large room, when we were asked to stand in line. Clothes were distributed to us; a brown cotton print dress, a broad cloth petticoat, with a pocket sewn in front, an undershirt, a bloomer, brown woolen stockings, a pair of elastics for garters and a bathing gown. All items had each child's number on them. My number was 78, two years later I became number 45. Our personal clothes were bagged and removed.

After all clothes were issued, we were asked to put on our flannelette bathing gowns. We were again stood in line, but now according to number. I couldn't read so the nun placed me according to my size and number in line.

We were again marched into a bathroom area, where there was a nun with a scissors.

Many of the girls had braids. As they went ahead, I saw the nun take one braid at a time and chop each braid off. Then we proceeded to the next station, where a nun stood in front of a very large basin. I remember the whole room stunk from medicine. It was delousing medicine. The process began again; a number was called, we marched forward, got deloused. When we looked at each other, the only way I can describe it was "the Vidal Sassoon look bush style". We had to keep this medicine on our heads until the next morning.

Upon completion of this task, we were issued a towel, a toothbrush, and a comb with our number engraved. We then hung them up on hooks with our marked number.

By the first evening, I looked around, there was a replication of me, in various sizes and forms, same brown print dresses, same brown woolen stockings, even at this point, since we had some very fashion conscious girls they had designed

their stockings; some rolled up to their ankles, some neatly folded, some designed the slouched stocking look. Those stylish looks were quickly discouraged, and once again we were the same.

The meaning for anything we did in residential school did not represent anything that we brought with us from our reserve.

Instead, I quickly learned that "silence was golden". From that first day we lost our voices. Lost is probably not the right term, because when you lose something one may assume that you might have misplaced it and you may eventually find it.

Our voices were silenced. We spoke when we were spoken to, we never had an opinion, there was never an argument, and creativity was discouraged.

Lining up single file, or two by two, and marching was to be the order of the day. This was always done in silence. We lined up for prayers, we lined up for mass, we lined up for classes, we lined up for meals, we lined up for chores, we lined up to use the washrooms, we lined up for walks, we lined up to go to the dorms. Silence, order and control were very important for the nuns.

The times we were allowed to play in the yard gave us moments of freedom. We made sure we were far from the building, from where the nuns supervised us. We teased, giggled, played and the very brave ones spoke the Cree language.

Our schooling was made up of rote memory, spelling bees, and multiplication tables. The nuns taught. We listened. We remembered. We read, "Dick and Jane" and learned about their dog, Spot. They lived in a white house with a picket fence, they had an immaculately kept yard, they didn't have a kokum or mosum, they did not have a large family. What we read had no meaning to our experiences.



(OB 11212 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA)

Pictured, A Father with school children.

Blue Quills Residential School used a truck just like this one used to round up all the school aged children from surrounding communities.



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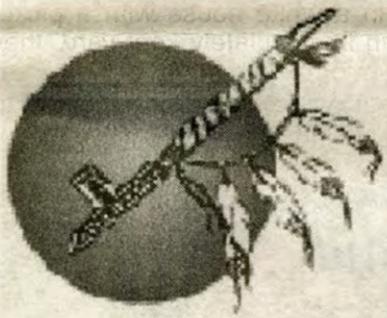
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*The development of this precedent setting educational institute has
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We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Mayor John Trefanenko

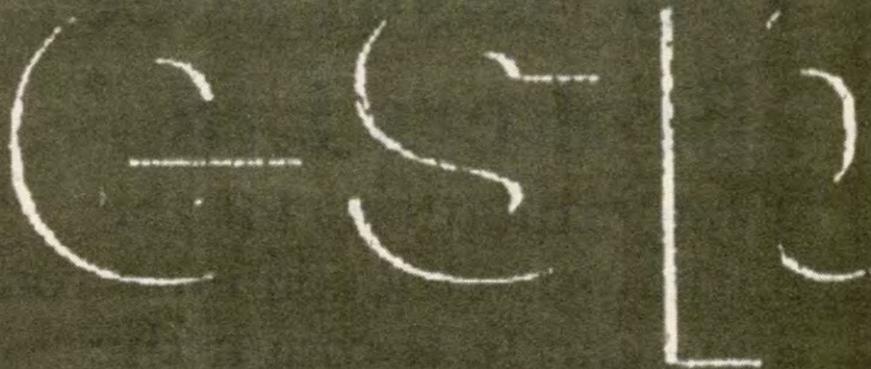


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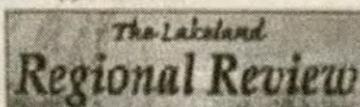
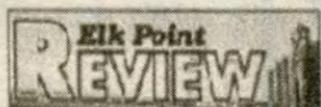
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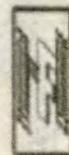
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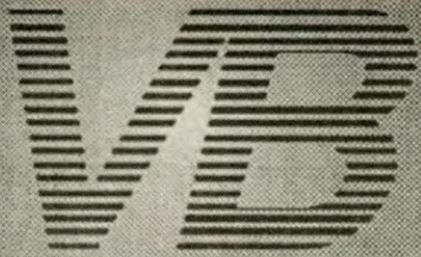
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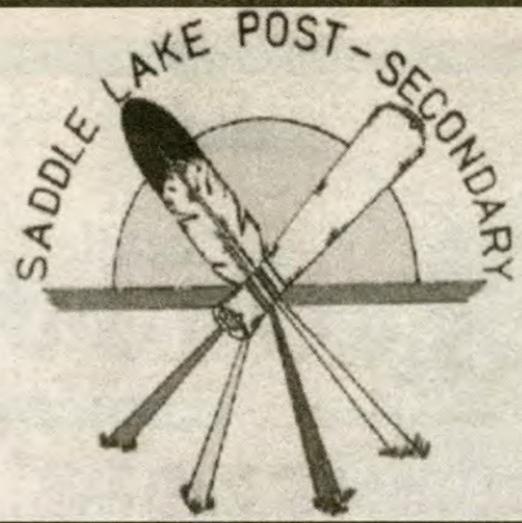


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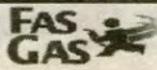


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On behalf of the Saddle Lake Education Authority staff and students, we are delighted to congratulate Blue Quills First Nations College on their 30th Anniversary. We wish you success in all of your educational endeavours. Thank you for supporting our students and for the wisdom and the guidance that you have shown in promoting Education for all First Nation members. We look forward to a continued partnership with you!



On behalf of Fas Gas Oil Ltd. we would like to say Congratulations Blue Quills First Nations College on your outstanding success. Happy 30th Anniversary!



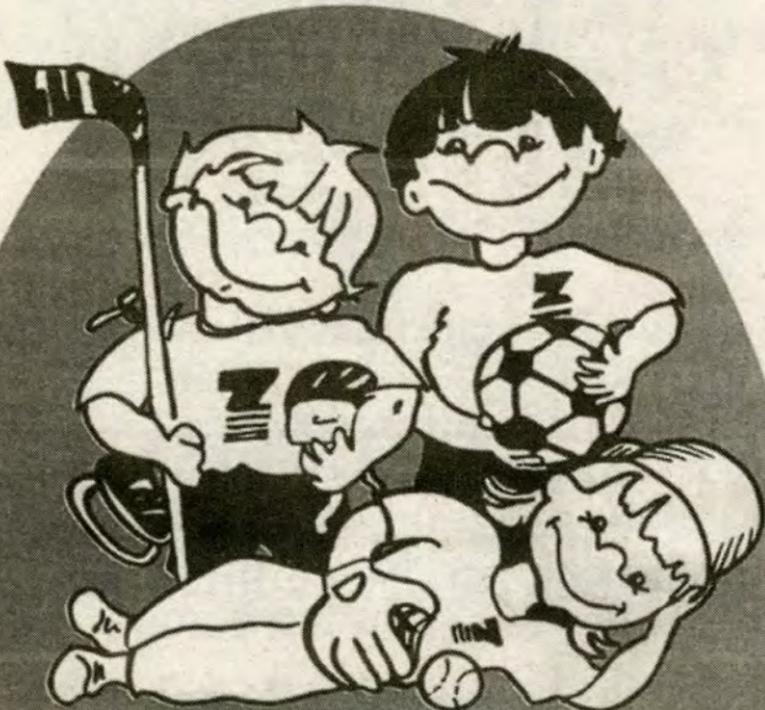
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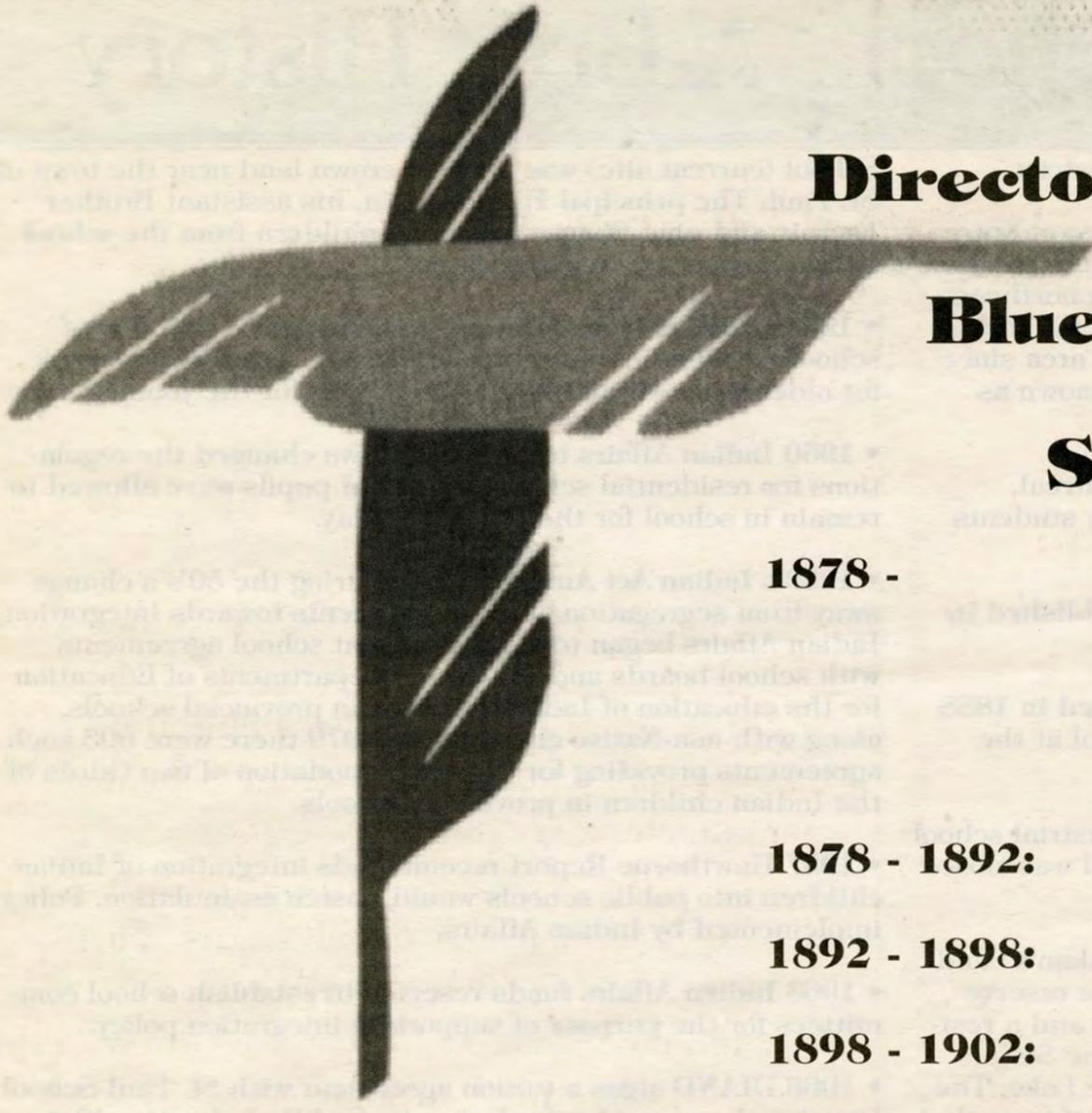
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Directors and Principals of the Blue Quills School At Saddle Lake



- 1878 -** **Father Albert Lacombe was in the Saddle Lake Territory from 1873 to 1878 periodically. He was also the first resident priest in 1878.**
- 1878 - 1892:** **P. Michel Merer**
- 1892 - 1898:** **P. Cyprien Blouenc**
- 1898 - 1902:** **P. Henry Grandin**
- 1902 - 1914:** **P. Leon Balter**
- 1914 - 1923:** **P. Auguste Husson, P. Leon Balter, P. Louis Dauphin**
- 1923 - 1929** **Oct. 16: P. Victorin-Prosper Gabillon.**
- 1929 - 1930:** **P. Victor Legoff**
- 1930 - 1936:** **P. Joseph Angin
Moved and Relocated to 2 miles west of the town of St. Paul in 1931.**
- 1936 - 1942:** **P. Leon Balter**
- 1942 - 1947:** **P. Louis-Clement Latour**
- 1947 - 1947:** **P. Bidault Jules**
- 1947 - 1957:** **P. Etienne Bernet-Rollande**
- 1957 - 1962:** **P. Georges-Marie Latour**
- 1962 - 1966:** **P. Paul Lyonnais**



Father Balter and Colleagues, 1930's

Blue Quills School - A Brief History

- **1853** Lac La Biche was designated a mission district.
- **1857 - 1898** The Lac La Biche Mission, "La Mission Notre Same des Victoires" (Our Lady of Victories), was the location of the first boarding school for Indian students in northeastern Alberta. The Order of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), the Oblate Fathers, had worked intermittently in the area since 1844. This boarding school would later become known as Blue Quills School.
- **1862** The Grey Nuns, Les Soeurs Grises de Montreal, arrived; they opened the first school for a few day students and boarders in 1863.
- **1873** The first mission at Saddle Lake was established by Father Albert Lacombe, an Oblate priest.
- **1888 - 1890** Father Michel Merer - O.M.I., arrived in 1888 and in 1890 built a house, chapel and a day school at the Saddle Lake mission.
- **1893** The Federal government provided an Industrial school at Lac La Biche Mission however; 1898 the school was closed and transferred to Saddle Lake.
- **1899** The government obtained consent from Pakan's band for the Catholic Church to build on the part of the reserve occupied by the Blue Quills band. Thus, a church and a residential school were completed to accommodate the Sisters and staff transferred from Lac La Biche to Saddle Lake. The school was named Blue Quills in honor of the Chief from that area.
- **1922** the Blue Quills school principal, Father Gabilion, suggested to the Indian Affairs department that a new school be built. He proposed that the school have capacity to house 200 students allowing for younger students and boys to the age of 18 to be admitted. The site would also be closer to the railroad station for transportation of food, fuel and merchandise; as well, proximity to St. Paul would allow access to the hospital and other conveniences. In addition, Chipewyan students from Cold Lake would also be able to attend school.
- **1926** during Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighen's time the decision to build a new school near St. Paul was made. This time is considered by some, as an important time for Indian education in Alberta as it was during this time that most of the Indian Residential schools in Alberta were built.
- **October 9, 1928** the Department of Indian Affairs decided to acquire a site located five kilometers from the town of St. Paul and about half a kilometer from the railway tracks. The government gave the land and built the school and adjoining buildings of the new residential school.
- **1931** Blue Quills School in Saddle Lake, closed it's doors.
- **December 7, 1931** the new Blue Quills Indian Residential School (current site) was built on crown land near the town of St. Paul. The principal Father Angin, his assistant Brother Lacroix and nine Sisters moved 84 children from the school on the reserve to the new school.
- **1931 - 1950** A typical day for students was a half day of school for all students with a half a day of chores and work for older students and half a day of play for the younger ones.
- **1950** Indian Affairs branch in Ottawa changed the regulations for residential schools such that pupils were allowed to remain in school for the full school day.
- **1950's Indian Act Amendments.** During the 50's a change away from segregation of Indian students towards integration. Indian Affairs began to enter into joint school agreements with school boards and Provincial Departments of Education for the education of Indian children in provincial schools, along with non-Native children. By 1979 there were 693 such agreements providing for the accommodation of two thirds of the Indian children in provincial schools.
- **1957** Hawthorne Report recommends integration of Indian children into public schools would hasten assimilation. Policy implemented by Indian Affairs.
- **1963** Indian Affairs funds reserves to establish school committees for the purpose of supporting integration policy.
- **1966** DIAND signs a tuition agreement with St. Paul School Division that provides for Kehewin, Saddle Lake, Goodfish Lake, and Frog Lake reserves. Capital is provided to the proposed St. Paul Regional High School, which reserves 100 seats for Indian high school students.
- **1969** St. Paul School Board reports a 94 percent drop out rate of Indian students from Provincial schools.
- **1969** Contracts with the churches to provide Residential Schools are dissolved by the Federal Government.
- **1969** "White Paper" on Indian Policy is released by the Liberal Government. Education for Indians was to be turned over to the province and DIAND would be dissolved in 5 years among many other acts of assimilating Indians.
- **June 4 - Citizen's Plus**, known as the Red Paper presented to the Parliament by Indian Chiefs of Alberta, a Treaty Rights position to refute the federal government's assimilation agenda.
- **1970** Peaceful occupation of Blue Quills concludes in the Blue Quills Native Education Council takeover of the facilities effective January 1, 1971.
- **1971** Blue Quills Native Education Council becomes the first to manage and operate a school, July 31, 1971, by Indian people of the Saddle Lake/Athabasca Reserves.



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF SADDLE LAKE MUSEUM)



**THE MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE
AN APOLOGY TO THE FIRST NATIONS OF CANADA
BY THE OBLATE CONFERENCE OF CANADA**

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada wish, after one hundred and fifty years of being with and ministering to the Native peoples of Canada, to offer an apology for certain aspects of that presence and ministry.

A number of historical circumstances make this moment in history most opportune for this.

First, there is a symbolic reason. Next year, 1992, marks the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Europeans on the shores of America. As large-scale celebrations are being prepared to mark this occasion, the Oblates of Canada wish, through this apology, to show solidarity with many Native people in Canada whose history has been adversely affected by this event. Anthropological and sociological insights of the late 20th century have shown how deep, unchallenged, and damaging was the naive cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious superiority complex of Christian Europe when its peoples met and interrelated with the aboriginal peoples of North America.

As well, recent criticisms of Indian residential schools and the exposure of instances of physical and sexual abuse within these schools call for such an apology.

Given this history, Native peoples and other groups alike are realizing that a certain healing needs to take place before a new and more truly cooperative phase of history can occur. This healing cannot however happen until some very complex, long-standing, and deep historical issues have been addressed.

It is in this context, and with a renewed pledge to be in solidarity with Native peoples in a common struggle for justice, that we, the Oblates of Canada, offer this apology:

We apologize for the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious imperialism that was part of the mentality with which the peoples of Europe first met the aboriginal peoples and which consistently has lurked behind the way the Native peoples of Canada have been treated by civil governments and by the churches. We were, naively, part of this mentality and were, in fact, often a key player in its implementation. We recognize that this mentality has, from the beginning, and ever since, continually threatened the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of the Native peoples.

We recognize that many of the problems that beset Native communities today - high unemployment, alcoholism, family breakdown, domestic violence, spiraling suicide rates, lack of healthy self-esteem - are not so much the result of failure as they are the result of centuries of systemic imperialism. Any people stripped of its traditions as well as of its pride falls victim to precisely these social ills. For the part that we played, however inadvertent and naive that participation might have been, in the setting up and maintaining of a system that stripped others of not only their lands but also of their cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions we sincerely apologize.

Beyond this regret for having been part of a system which, because of its historical privilege and assumed superiority did great damage to the Native peoples of Canada, we wish to apologize more specifically for the following:

In sympathy with recent criticisms of Native Residential Schools, we wish to apologize for the part we played in the setting up and the maintaining of those schools. We apologize for the existence of the schools themselves, recognizing that the biggest abuse was not what happened in the schools, but the schools themselves happened ... that the primal bond inherent within families was violated as a matter of policy, that children were usurped from their natural communities, and that, implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to the native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design. For this we sincerely apologize.

We wish to apologize in a very particular way for the instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in those schools. We reiterate that the bigger issue of abuse was the existence of the schools themselves but we wish to publicly acknowledge that their were instances of individual physical and sexual abuse. Far from attempting to defend or rationalize these cases of abuse in any way, we wish to state publicly that we acknowledge that they were inexcusable, intolerable, and a betrayal of trust in one of its most serious forms. We deeply, and very specifically, apologize to every victim of such abuse and we seek help in searching for means to bring about healing.

Finally, we wish to apologize as well for our past dismissal of many of the riches of native religious tradition. We broke some of your peace pipes and we considered some of your sacred practices as pagan and superstitious. This, too, had its origins in the colonial mentality, our European superiority complex which was grounded in a particular view of history. We apologize for this blindness and disrespect.

One qualification is, however, in order. As we publicly acknowledge a certain blindness in our past, we wish, too, to publicly point to some of the salient reasons for this. We do this, not as a way of subtly excusing ourselves or of rationalizing in any way so as to denigrate this apology, but as a way of more fully exposing the reasons for our past blindness and, especially, as way of honoring, despite their mistakes, those many men and women, Native and white alike, who gave their lives and their very blood in a dedication that was most sincere and heroic.

Hindsight makes for 20-20 vision and judging the past from the insights of the present is an exact and often cruel science. When Christopher Columbus set sail for the Americas, with the blessing of the Christian Church, Western civilization lacked the insights it needed to appreciate what Columbus met upon the shores of America. The cultural, linguistic, and ethical traditions of Europe were caught up in the naive belief that they were inherently superior to those found in other parts of the world. Without excusing this superiority complex, it is necessary to name it. Sincerity alone does not set people above their place in history. Thousands of persons operated out of this mentality and gave their lives in dedication to an ideal that while sincere in its intent, was, at one point, naively linked to a certain cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic superiority complex. These men and women sincerely believed that their vocations and actions were serving both God and the best interests of the Native peoples to whom they were ministering. History has, partially, rendered a cruel judgement on their efforts, showing how, despite much sincerity and genuine dedication, their actions were sometimes naive and disrespectful in that they violated the sacred and cherished traditions of others. Hence, even as we apologize for some of the effects of their actions, we want at the same time to affirm their sincerity, the goodness of their intent, and the goodness, in many cases, of their actions.

Recognizing that within every sincere apology there is implicit the promise of conversation to a new way of acting. We, the Oblates of Canada, wish to pledge ourselves to a renewed relationship with Native peoples which, while very much in line with the sincerity and intent of our past relationship, seeks to move beyond past mistakes to a new level of respect and mutuality. Hence ...

We renew the commitment we made 150 years ago to work with and for Native peoples. In the spirit of our fonder, Blessed Eugene De Mazenod, and the many dedicated missionaries who have served in native communities during these 150 years. We again pledge to Native peoples our service. We ask help in more judiciously discerning what forms that service might take today.

More specifically, we pledge ourselves to the following:

*We want to support an effective process of the disclosure vis-a-vis Residential Schools. We offer to collaborate in any way we can so that the full story of the Indian Residential Schools may be written, that their positive and negative features may be recognized, and that an effective healing process might take place.

*We want to proclaim as inviolable the natural rights of Indian families, parents and children so that never again will Indian communities and Indian parents see their children forcibly removed from them by other authorities.

*We want to denounce imperialism in all its forms and, concomitantly, pledge ourselves to work with Native peoples in their efforts to recover their lands, their languages, their sacred traditions, and their rightful pride.

*We want, as Oblates, to meet with Native peoples and together help forge a template for a renewed covenant of solidarity. Despite past mistakes and many present tensions, the Oblates have felt all along as if the Native peoples and we belonged to the same family. As members of the same family it is imperative that we come again to the deep trust and solidarity that constitutes family. We recognize that the road beyond past hurt may be long and steep but we pledge ourselves anew to journey with Native peoples on that road.

Reverend Doug Crosby O.M.I.

President of the Oblate Conference of Canada

On behalf of the 1200 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate living and ministering in Canada.

Note: Many churches involved in running the schools publicly apologized. The first to apologize was the United Church of Canada in 1986. The Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic) in 1991; the Anglican church in 1993; and the Presbyterian Church in 1994.

THE ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

On January 7, 1998, the federal government announced a new policy in response to the RCAP Final Report. It was called, **Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan**, a strategy to begin a process of reconciliation and renewal with Aboriginal Peoples.

A cornerstone of Gathering Strength was the Canadian government's commitment of \$350 million to support community-based healing initiatives for Aboriginal people who were affected by the Legacy of Physical and Sexual Abuse in Residential Schools and its Intergenerational Impacts.

On March 30, 1998, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created following discussions with Survivors, members of the healing community, the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the Metis National Council, and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is an Aboriginal-run, not-for-profit corporation that is independent of Governments and the representative Aboriginal organizations.

The Foundation was established with a ten-year mandate which breaks down as follows:

- One year, beginning April 1, 1998, to get organized, hire staff and begin operations;
- Four years (April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2003) to spend or commit the full \$350 million plus any interest generated; and
- Five years (April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2008) to pay out multi-year commitments, do ongoing monitoring and write a final report.

Because some of us are Survivors and the vast majority of us have suffered intergenerational impacts in one form or another, the healing process is close to our hearts.

Our approach to healing is holistic. We support full participation of all Aboriginal peoples, including Metis, Inuit and First Nations regardless of where they live in Canada and regardless of whether they are "registered" under the Indian Act of Canada.

We know that healing may mean different things to different groups. We support ways of healing that will meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal Peoples.

We want to make it possible for Aboriginal people affected by the Legacy to deal with their trauma in a meaningful way, for them to break the cycle of abuse and heal at many levels, both now and in the future.

By encouraging the creation and support of linkages, partnerships and networks, the Foundation is:

- A catalyst for sustainable and healthy communities;
- A bridge builder between individuals, families, communities and organizations;
- A supporter of innovation;
- A centre for the collection and exchange of ideas and resources; and
- A public educator on healing issues and reconciliation between Aboriginal people and Canadians.

OUR STATEMENT OF VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Our vision is one where those affected by the legacy of Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse experienced in Residential School have addressed the effects of unresolved trauma in meaningful terms, have broken the cycle of abuse, and have enhanced their capacity as individuals, families, communities and nations to sustain their well being and that of future generations.

Our mission is to encourage and support Aboriginal people in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the legacy of Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse in the Residential School system, including intergenerational impacts.

We see our role as facilitators in the healing process by helping Aboriginal people help themselves, by providing resources for healing initiatives, by promoting awareness of healing issues and needs, and by nurturing a supportive public environment. We also work to engage Canadians in this healing process by encouraging them to walk with us on the path of reconciliation.

Ours is a holistic approach. Our goal is to help create, reinforce and sustain conditions conducive to healing, reconciliation and self determination. We are committed to addressing the legacy of abuse in all its forms and manifestations, direct, indirect and intergenerational, by building on the strengths and resiliency of Aboriginal people.

We emphasize approaches that address the needs of Aboriginal individuals, families and the broader community. We view prevention of future abuse, and the process of reconciliation between victims and offenders, and between Aboriginal people and Canadians as vital elements in building healthy, sustainable communities.

By making strategic investments of the resources entrusted to us, and by contributing to a climate of care, safety, good will and understanding, we can support the full participation of all Aboriginal people, including Metis, Inuit and First Nations,

Blue Quills AHF PROJECT 2001 The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Project

entitled, "Restoring Balance: Moving Full Circle from Trauma to Celebration", was initiated to facilitate the healing of abuse encountered at Blue Quills Indian Residential School. Workshop training modules for delivery to members of the seven communities are being developed. The 9 modules are: Communication, Family of Origin, Colonization/Decolonization, Aboriginal Parenting/Family Self Esteem, Inner Child Journey, Choosing Healthy Lifestyles, Community Wellness Leadership and Facilitation, Genocide, and Celebrating Ourselves. Through participation in the modules, participants will examine the community and family legacies that are harmful and explore how these legacies can be transformed to be helpful. Blue Quills College will train facilitators so that each community can rely on its own resources to deliver the workshops. This project is designed to enhance the integrity of the communities to be self-sustaining in the long term healing process; by acquiring the skills to help one another, reliance on outside professionals decreases. The AHF Project intends to serve as a bridge to engage in partnerships that have been neglected in the past. Hence, Blue Quills is reaching out to establish and create supportive partnerships with the religious communities that serve the First Nations, curators and archivists in public facilities, and public schools. The consequence of opening up dialogue with these connections will determine the success of this long-term healing strategy.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Excerpts of a letter Addressing Blue Quills First Nation's College Aboriginal Healing Project

As people are becoming more aware of the effects of colonization and stories of the hurts experienced by many former residential school students emerge, so does the need for forgiveness and healing. I reiterate the stance that I have personally taken and which I invite our members to adopt, that at this time when both the aboriginal people and the Oblates are hurting, it is necessary more than ever for us to continue our journey together. We both need to be healed and helped by one another.

In the apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate conference of Canada that was delivered at Lac Ste Anne in July, 1991, Oblates acknowledged "the part we play in the cultural ethnic, linguistic and religious imperialism that was part of the mentality with which the peoples of Europe first met the Aboriginal peoples and which consistently has lurked behind the way the Native peoples of Canada have been treated by civil governments and by the churches."

The document mentions that healing needs to take place "before a more truly cooperative phase of history can occur". It also contains a pledge made by the Oblates to meet with Native peoples and together forge a template for a renewed covenant of solidarity, stating that "despite past mistakes and many present tensions, the Oblates have felt all along as if the Native peoples and we belonged to the same family 'and that' as members of the same family it is imperative that we come again to that deep trust and solidarity that constitutes family."

Significant statements from this Apology were again repeated in a brief presented to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples (RCAP). The Catholic Bishops of Canada in their brief to the RCAP "Let Justice Flow Like a Mighty River." "To our aboriginal brothers and sisters we say that we want to continue to journey with you. Let us strengthen one another in the process of discovering a new way of being partners together."

Grandin Province is also involved with Aboriginal people from different First Nations and with the Metis in the exciting venture of building together a new partnership, developing together a new governance structure for administration and programming at Lac Ste Anne.

I sincerely welcome then the invitation extended to the Oblates to enter into a new partnership with Blue Quills First Nations College, developing with you ways in which this partnership may bring healing and reconciliation and be life-giving for us all.

I accept your invitation to attend the 30th anniversary of Blue Quills First Nations College on October 26th, 2001 which will give me a more wonderful opportunity to meet some of your people and celebrate 30 years of success in offering top-notch educational opportunities to meet the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental needs of the seven member First Nations reflecting and strengthening the cultures, values, ancestral knowledge and traditions of your people.

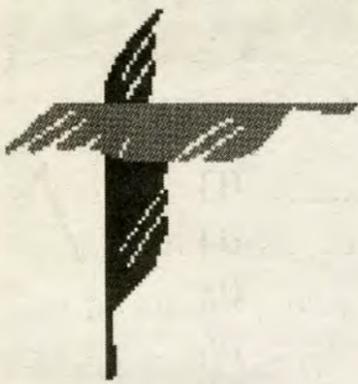
In these troubling times of aggravated assaults, let us take to heart the entreaty of our God as expressed in the words of the prophet, Micah: "This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6, 8) which resembles so much the sacred teachings of your people: "Ahcahkawiyasowewina".

Kindest regards,
Camille Piche, OMI Provincial



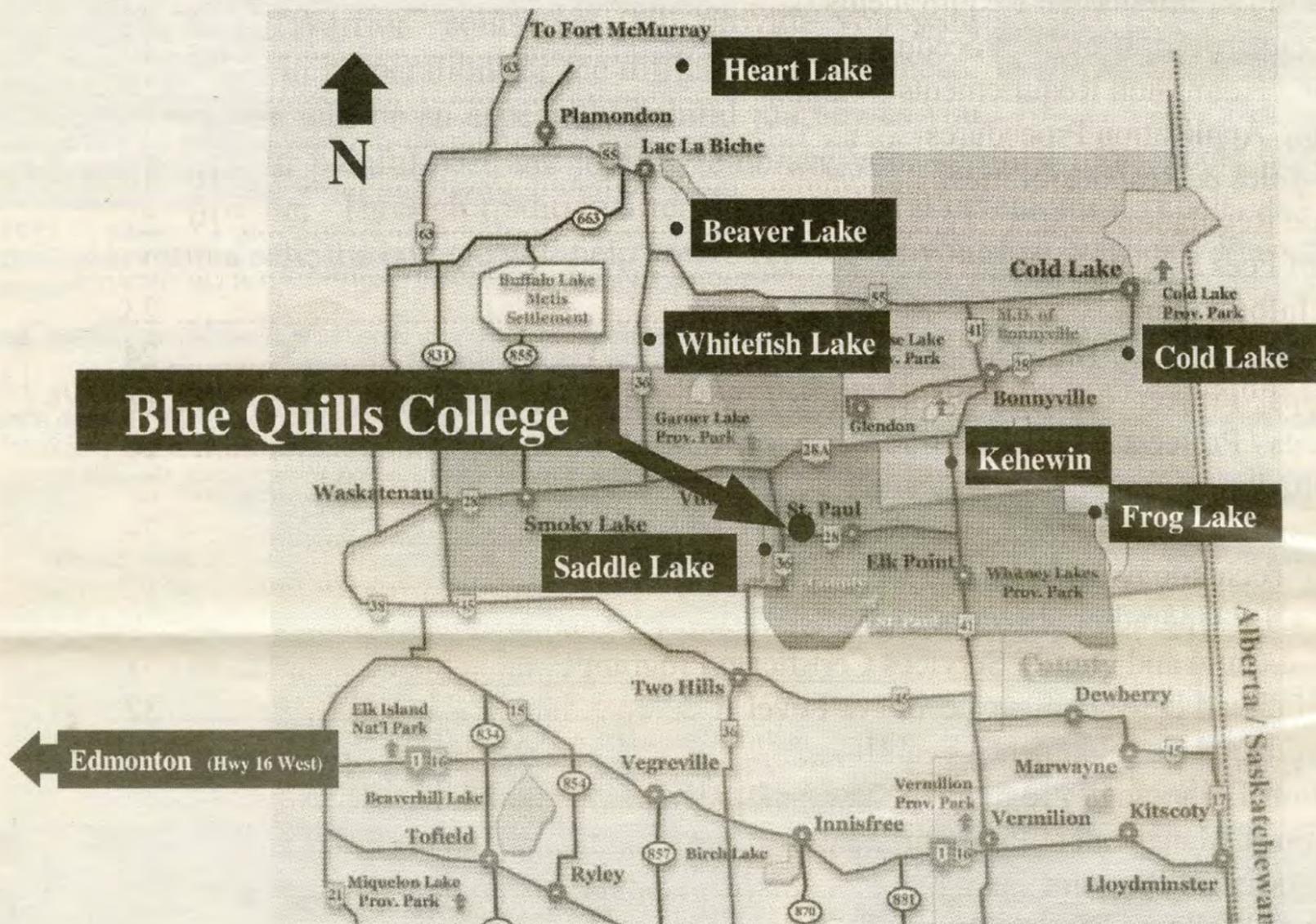
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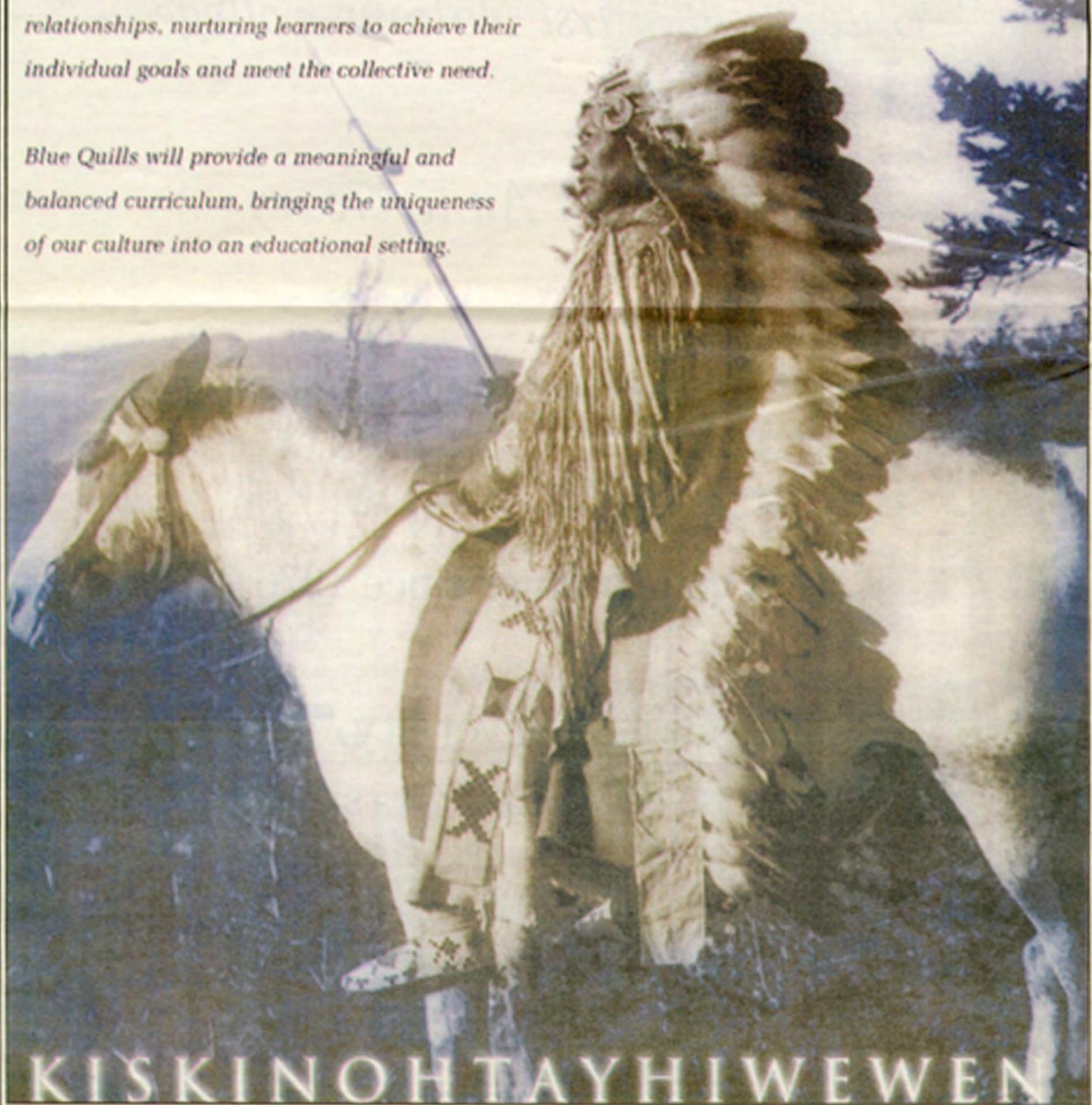
BLUE QUILLS FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE VISION STATEMENT

Blue Quills First Nations College will continue to honor the Nistameymahkanak dreams and visions for generations yet unborn.

OUR SPIRIT...
OUR LIFE... OUR WAY...

Blue Quills, guided by the seven member First Nations, will facilitate the process of proactive change in learning. The College environment will reflect our cultures, values, ancestral knowledge, traditions and relationships, nurturing learners to achieve their individual goals and meet the collective need.

Blue Quills will provide a meaningful and balanced curriculum, bringing the uniqueness of our culture into an educational setting.



KISKINOHTAYHIWEN