

“Betwixt and Between”: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross (Choooutla) Residential School, 1911-1954

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From 1891, when William Carpenter Bompas of the Church Missionary Society first opened his Forty-Mile mission to child boarders, the residential school was an important component in the Anglican clergy's program for the moral and cultural improvement of the Indians of the Yukon district.¹ Though the Church of England missionaries continued their itinerant efforts among the nomadic bands and offered regular missions and day schools at central meeting places, most believed their greatest hope for the native children of the north lay in residential schools. Through repeated appeals to the Canadian government, the church secured the funds necessary to erect a sizeable facility at Carcross in the southern Yukon. Money and commitment, however, were not enough, for the boarding school concept proved at best a mixed blessing. An examination of clerical and government intentions and a consideration of the school children's experiences during their stay and after their departure illustrates the weaknesses of the residential format in the Yukon.

The suggestion that the missionaries' efforts were of dubious or negative benefit to the Yukon Indians, in this case the residential school children, is not made in order to belittle the clergy's efforts or, even less, to challenge their sincerity. Instead, like much of the recent literature on native-missionary activities, this article is designed to move beyond hagiographic descriptions of the work of these wilderness saints which have so dominated the historiography in past generations. Writing on missionary activities, long the preserve of the religious community,² has attracted an increasing number of secular scholars. The simultaneous expansion of work on native-white relations, both polemical and analytical, has resulted in a decidedly less favourable, though unquestionably more comprehensive, treatment of missionary activities.

¹ For a summary of Anglican activities in the north, see T. C. B. Boon, *The Anglican Church From the Bay to the Rockies* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1962).

² See the discussion on missionaries by Morris Zaslow in J. L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens, *A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 2: Confederation to the Present* (Toronto: UTP, 1982), pp. 306-07.

Contemporary historians have shifted the focus from the missionaries to the impact of proselytizing on native populations. The missionaries clearly wished to recast Indian values and customs. Their efforts to undermine native spirituality, supplant indigenous leadership and denigrate long-standing customs represented a major challenge to native societies. Whereas earlier work lauded the efforts of the back-country clerics, most recent studies are concerned more with the meeting of cultural systems and the identifiable ramifications of the introduction of Euro-Canadian religious leadership.³ In the often used parlance of Ralph Linton, the clergy were agents of directed culture change, representatives of an expansive, ethno-centric Euro-Canadian culture determined to leave their imprint on the less advanced, "heathen" societies of the undeveloped world.⁴

Through the boarding school program, the missionaries and the government hoped to transform the children into "better" Canadians, offering the intellectual and technical skills deemed necessary for fuller participation in the larger Euro-Canadian society and the Christian values required to separate the students from their "heathen" past. In so doing, of course, the residential schools called into question existing native habits and values, setting the children against the standards of their parents and home communities. Though recent studies in Canada and the United States suggest that the program failed to achieve the desired results, most agree that the institution represented a systematic attempt to supplant native cultural forms.⁵ The experience of the Carcross Residential School illustrates both the founders' enthusiastic if unrealistic expectations and the rather serious cultural and social impact on many of the children passing through its portals.

Bompas' first institution at Forty-Mile on the Yukon River could hardly be called a true boarding school. His students were primarily orphaned or abandoned native children, although several mixed-blood

³ Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1974) and Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), chapter 6, offer useful assessments of missionary activity in British Columbia.

⁴ Ralph Linton, *Acculturation in Seven Indian Tribes* (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1940). This approach is applied directly in Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*.

⁵ J. Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1920," in D. Jones, N. Sheehan and R. Stamp, *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West* (Calgary: Detselig, 1979), pp. 84-106; D. W. Adams, "Schooling the Hopi: Federal Indian Policy Writ Small, 1887-1917," in L. Dinnerstein and K. Jackson, *American Vistas: 1877 to the Present* (New York: Oxford, 1983), pp. 3-20.

students came to live at the mission as well.⁶ To Bompas, education, and particularly a residential school, was essential even in the 1890s. Though he repeatedly argued that "schooling is the most hopeful branch of mission work," the London office of the Church Missionary Society refused his requests for extra money. Bompas' difficulties with the funding agency originated in his insistence that priority be given to educating mixed-blood children, an acknowledged departure from CMS practice. Bompas declared that "such half-breed children are liable to become if untrained and left wild, the bitterest enemies and most formidable obstacles to our mission, whereas if trained in the mission schools they may become our foremost and most useful friends."⁷ Clearly, Bompas feared that such children, if not provided a viable option, would remain with their native mothers. To the missionary, the loss of their "whiteness" would significantly harm the mixed bloods' adaptation to an evolving Yukon society. His requests brushed aside, Bompas proceeded without assistance. In 1894 his small boarding school contained four mixed-blood girls and two Indian girls.⁸

When Bompas transferred his diocesan headquarters to Carcross in 1900, he initially left his small, unofficial school behind. He would not, however, permit the project to die. Convinced of the need for a permanent boarding facility, he appealed directly to the Department of Indian Affairs:

I am wishing now to apply to the Government to open a new Indian Boarding School for orphaned and other destitute Indian children either at Whitehorse or here at Caribou Crossing (Carcross) and to maintain it themselves. I think this the only way to make the remnant of the Indian race in the next generation useful members of society.⁹

His request rejected, Bompas nonetheless transferred the Forty-Mile students to Carcross, opening in larger quarters and expanding his foster home to accommodate approximately two dozen children. When Bompas died in 1906, resident Anglican clergyman John Hawksley assumed

⁶ T. C. B. Boon, *From the Bay to the Rockies*. Additional information can be found in H. A. Cody, *An Apostle of the North* (New York: E. P. Dalton, 1908); A. S. Archer, *A Heroine of the North* (London: Macmillan, 1929).

⁷ Church Missionary Society (CMS), Bompas to CMS, 3 January 1894.

⁸ Cody, pp. 253-72; Boon, pp. 222-23; Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Bowen Papers, "Incidents in the Life of R. J. Bowen," p. 100.

⁹ PAC, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), vol. 3962, file 147, 654-1, pt. 2, Bompas to Hon. J. H. Ross, 7 March 1903.

responsibility for the school. The new bishop, Isaac O. Stringer, continued his predecessor's campaign for permanent government assistance.¹⁰

The Anglican Church's appeal for a boarding school came at a most inappropriate juncture. From 1871, when the federal government signed its first treaty with the Indians of western Canada, education and negotiated settlements went hand in hand. Modelling its western policy on eastern programs, the government organized boarding schools on reserves and, in 1883, opened an industrial school at Battleford. "It is self-evident," the government confidently declared, "that the prime purpose of Indian education is to assist in solving what may be called the Indian problem, to elevate the Indian from his condition of savagery, to make him a self-supporting member of the state and eventually a citizen in good standing."¹¹ Though the goals remained intact, by the early twentieth century many educators and bureaucrats had come to acknowledge the apparent failure of the boarding-industrial school format.

Typically wary of increased expenditures, the government especially feared further involvement in an allegedly flawed and costly experiment. Frank Pedley, a senior official in the Department of Indian Affairs, argued for a more flexible program. "It would seem to be good policy at this juncture," he wrote, "to attempt to devise a better system of Indian education, applying to each locality methods which would best achieve the desired result."¹² Pedley was alluding to the failure of the boarding school format to prepare the students adequately for their "after life." Advanced technical training or literary skills served little purpose for native children destined for life on a reserve or a trapline. The Anglican Church agreed with the government's assessment of the institutional deficiencies. A Special Committee of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) recommended that teaching be limited to basic literary and computational skills, plus "additional work as will fit the child to take his place as a workman in the locality in which he is to live."¹³

¹⁰ Cody, pp. 310-36; M. Gibbs, "History of Choooutla School," Yukon Territorial Archives (YTA), AC #82/77; David Greig, "The Anglican Mission Schools and the Beginning of the Carcross Residential School from 1890 to 1907," in J. D. Wilson, "Schooling on a Distant Frontier," (unpublished manuscript), YTA, AC #82/526.

¹¹ Anglican Church General Synod Archives (GSA), 75-103, Series 2-14, Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC), F. Pedley, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to Reverend L. Norman Tucker, 21 March 1906.

¹² Pedley to Tucker, 21 March 1906.

¹³ GSA, *Memorandum on Indian Missions and Indian Schools*, submitted on behalf of the Special Indian Committee of the MSCC, 14 March 1906. The concurrence

Frank Oliver, the Minister of the Interior, offered more explicit criticism. The residential school was flawed not only from an educational perspective; in addition, the cultural restructuring attending the rending apart of families had to be taken into account. Defending the less expensive day school program, Oliver argued:

My belief is that the attempt to elevate the Indian by separating the child from his parents and educating him as a white man has turned out to be a deplorable failure. . . . The mutual love between parent and child is the strongest influence for the betterment of the world, and when that influence is absolutely cut apart or is deliberately intended to be cut apart as in the education of Indian children in industrial schools the means taken defeats itself.¹⁴

Despite the fact that both the federal government and the MSCC viewed boarding schools with increasing disfavour, Bishop Stringer proceeded with his appeal. The main reason for this apparent obstinance was that the Roman Catholic Church continued its efforts to secure government funding for a similar school in Atlin, British Columbia. In the continuing "rush for souls" in the north, the Anglicans could not afford to allow the Catholics to gain the upper hand in this key area. Under Stringer's direction, the 1907 Synod of the Diocese of the Yukon endorsed the need for a new residential school,¹⁵ as did T. G. Bragg, superintendent of schools for the Yukon Territory.¹⁶ Resistance at the national level, however, persisted.¹⁷

In part to quiet the persistent appeals from Bishop Stringer, McLean in 1908 directed British Columbia Indian school inspectors A. W. Vowell and A. E. Green to assess the need for a facility in the Yukon. As McLean noted in passing on his instructions,

it would seem necessary before establishing a system of education which would entail considerable expense to ascertain how the Indians of the Yukon maintain themselves and what kind of education could be imparted to them in a Boarding School which would improve their condition and

of Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists with Pedley's comments is found in GSA 75-103, MSCC, Memorandum of a Conference, 24-27 March 1908, by S. H. Blake.

¹⁴ GSA 75-103, Series 2-14, Frank Oliver to A.C.C., 28 January 1908.

¹⁵ Vancouver School of Theology, Anglican Church Archives, Journal of the Synod of the Diocese of the Yukon, Whitehorse, 1907.

¹⁶ YTA, YRG1, Series 4, vol. 13, file 308. T. G. Bragg to Hon. Alexander Henderson, 14 December 1907.

¹⁷ DIA, vol. 3962, file 147, 654-1, J. D. McLean to A. W. Vowell, 4 April 1908. The comments came directly from a subordinate's letter. *Ibid.*, Accountant to Deputy Superintendent General, 20 February 1908.

render them better able to fight the battles of life in their peculiar environment.¹⁸

During the summer of 1908, Vowell and Green travelled through the southern Yukon, discussing the matter with resident clergy, visiting accessible native villages and commissioning reports on distant Indian bands.¹⁹ Their final report staunchly supported the Anglican position. Their submission to the Department of Indian Affairs cautiously noted:

We would, in all due deference to the opinion of the Department, state that, in our opinion, the Boarding Schools are, under the conditions prevailing, the most suitable for the education of the Indians. At these institutions can be taught everything that at the present time is needful for the advancement of the Indian so as to enable him to continue to be self-supporting and to meet on equal terms, from an educational point of view, those persons with whom he may be thrown in contact in his efforts to obtain a living for himself and his family.²⁰

Their enthusiasm was muted by a pessimistic assessment of the prospects for further development in the territory. Noting that hunting and trapping would likely remain as the mainstays of the native economy, the school inspectors recommended that educational programs be restricted to basic literacy, computational skills, health care and carpentry. Vowell and Green tempered their recommendations by echoing their superiors' concerns that "to go beyond that would be rather to unfit them for their condition in life."

Although personally unconvinced, Minister Oliver reluctantly complied with his agents' recommendations.²¹ As the Anglican church requested, a suitable facility was constructed near Carcross, the site of Bishop Bompas' small school. Built in 1911, the school initially housed thirty students. The new structure, complete with dormitory and educational facilities, was enlarged several times and remained in operation until destroyed by fire in 1939. The school operated out of temporary quarters until 1954 when, after protracted debate about the possibility of relocating the institution, the government decided to erect a structure big enough for 150 students on the old site.²² Beginning in 1911, then, the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The supporting reports can be found in the YTA, Anglican Church, New (1983) Series.

²⁰ YTA, AC, New Series, file 2, Report of Messrs. Vowell and Green, 14 August 1908.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Notes of Interview with 7. Oliver, 26 February 1909.

²² Gibbs, "History of Choooutla School"; Church of England in Canada, *Choooutla Indian School* (Missionary Society, Indian Residential School Commission, n.d.); A. King, *The School at Mopass* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967),

Anglican Church had the facility it had long demanded and had guarantees of sufficient funds to operate the school. It did not, moreover, have much difficulty developing a school curriculum, for the missionaries had a clear and comparatively consistent view of their educational goals.

The Anglican missionaries greeted their new responsibility with enthusiasm. To them, the school held out the best prospect for "elevating" the Yukon Indians. Their idealism was tempered, however, by the pessimism of the federal government and their own assessments of the prospects for northern development. Accepting the cautionary note offered by inspectors Vowell and Green, the missionaries limited their educational goals. Recognizing that most would return to their families and a hunting lifestyle, the teachers adopted special northern priorities. Instead of "white" Indians, versed in the techniques and routines of the industrial plant, the school sought to make "better" Indians, schooled in the necessities of health, hygiene, motivation, Christian social mores and the Protestant work ethic, yet armed with the requisite skills of the northern harvester.²³

The scholastic program, featuring an amalgam of education and practical training, changed little from 1911 to 1954.²⁴ Different principals, of course, had their own particular emphasis. With the exception of H. G. M. Grant in the late 1930s, however, most stayed away from specific industrial training. Instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic typically occupied the morning, with the remainder of the day allocated

36-38. On the debate to relocate the school, see DIA, vol. 8762, file 906/25-1-001, C. Clark, "An Educational Survey with Reference to the Relocation of Carcross Indian Residential School," 8 September 1950.

²³ On the general Anglican mission to Canadian Indians, see Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, vol. 7 (April 1971), pp. 28-52. For reports of the program in action at Carcross, see YTA, AC, Carcross School file #2, Report of E. D. Evans, 29 April 1921, Report of W. T. Townsend, 31 March 1914; AC, C. F. Johnson file #2, Report of Chas. Johnson, 31 March 1918; Also useful are the regular summaries in *Northern Lights*, the journal of the Yukon diocese.

²⁴ The summary is based on *ibid.*; "Report of the Supt. of Indian Education," DIA, *Annual Report 1909-1910*, 351; DIA, vol. 3962, file 147, 654-1 pt. 2, Ross to Congdon, 16 April 1904, Ross to DIA, 2 April 1906, T. G. Bragg to McLean, 1 May 1907, Bragg to Secretary, DIA, 21 April 1910; DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 1, Stockton to Deputy Supt. General, 29 November 1912, Stringer to Secretary, DIA, 31 March 1913 (a reply to Stockton's criticism); Hawksley to J. D. McLean, 7 January 1915; *ibid.*, pt. 2, Hawksley to A. F. Mackenzie, 25 March 1931; H. C. M. Grant to Supt. Indian Affairs, 5 February 1940; YTA, AC, Carcross School file #1, E. D. Evans to J. D. McLean, 29 April 1912; DIA, *Annual Report 1912/13*, Report of Venerable Archdeacon T. H. Canham, 31 March 1913; GSA, 75-103, Series 2-14, MSCC, Collins to Blake, 27 April 1904, 13 March 1909, 11 February 1909. *Northern Lights* is the best source, covering the entire period in question.

to work around the school and occupational lessons. Boys chopped wood, fished, and worked in the carpentry shop and garden. Girls assisted in the kitchen and with household chores throughout the facility. Teachers expanded their lessons beyond basic instruction, offering the girls training in moccasin making and beadwork, pursuits which would "be useful and profitable to them in after life." There were deviations from the pattern, including the installation of a student-run printing press, which was used to print the church quarterly *Northern Lights* for several years, and an expanded industrial workshop.

From 1911, school officials repeatedly reiterated their concern that the instruction "be useful in the kind of life that the children will likely lead."²⁵ Despite the fact that the school included such programs as agriculture, blacksmithing, carpentry and mechanical skills for the boys and industrial cooking for the girls, administrators repeatedly stated that it was their intention to prepare their charges for re-entry to the native village. In 1939, for example, school principal Rev. H. C. M. Grant noted: "I am convinced that the best way to fit the Indian children for the life they will have to live when they leave school is to have their life in school as similar as possible to the life they will have to live at home." How then did he justify his personal emphasis on an expanded industrial education program and strict social control? Grant simply assumed that "hunting and trapping, the natural life of the Indian," would soon be "a thing of the past." The Indians would then "have to turn to some other means of livelihood."²⁶ Grant's incorrect assessment of the future of the north was to cause hardship for many of his students. The missionaries sought, however, to provide necessary skills (albeit as defined for the natives by a clergy who, had regional realities supported a more industrial or agricultural economy, would have preferred an end to the harvesting lifestyle) for a successful return to Yukon native society.

Whereas work-related instruction did not explicitly seek to disrupt existing skills, the school's social program proved more difficult to accommodate within standard native child-rearing practices. The key was a repeated insistence upon a strict, often authoritarian code of discipline. Administrators severely restricted socialization in the schools. Under most principals, boys and girls came in contact only in formal and strictly supervised settings. As principal from 1918 to 1920, Dr. Grasset-Smith allowed virtually no interaction between the sexes, a level of control even other

²⁵ *Northern Lights*, vol. 15, no. 1 (February 1927), p. 1.

²⁶ *Northern Lights*, vol. 28, no. 2 (May 1939), p. 5.

missionaries found objectionable.²⁷ Most agreed, however, that extended contact between the students and the Carcross community, a predominantly native settlement, had to be curtailed.²⁸ To enforce these and other regulations, educators established firm disciplinary procedures. Breaches of school regulations, especially regarding theft, malicious damage or unauthorized socialization, were dealt with firmly. Facing a rash of thefts in 1940, H. C. M. Grant cut all the hair off any child caught breaking school ethics. As he succinctly noted, "It checked stealing at once."²⁹ Programming varied as principals and staff passed swiftly through the school. Throughout, however, a rigid work schedule, limited socialization, firm discipline and forced adherence to the teachers' guidance characterized school life.³⁰

The combination of an apparently flexible instructional program and rigid behavioural control was fraught with contradictions. Concern for the students' "after life," so evident in occupational programs, was not a major part of the residential school social environment. Interpersonal skills were, at best, not taught. At worst, they were actively repressed. The firm discipline and work schedules, both designed to instil appropriate Euro-Canadian work values, lacked relevance to the native way of life. Most importantly, the concerted effort to improve native hygiene and to inculcate different work habits of necessity called into disrepute the mannerisms and standards of the children's parents. The children were taught new practices of personal and home care — practices notably different from those of the native village. This, of course, was perfectly consistent with the school's general purpose: to prepare students so that they could return and reform their own villages. Ironically, though supposedly educationally prepared to re-enter native society, the students were taught through the residential school to abhor that environment, to look with disrespect if not disgust upon their families' customs. Before the Carcross School was constructed, Frank Oliver had noted:

To teach an Indian child that his parents are degraded beyond measure and that whatever they did or thought was wrong could only result in the child

²⁷ YTA, AC, Carcross file, C. E. Whittaker to Dr. Smith, 2 July 1919.

²⁸ There are numerous examples of school restrictions on socialization with members of the Carcross community. With few exceptions, principals refused to allow the children to visit the town without direct adult supervision. DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 1, Hawksley to Mackenzie, 25 March 1931.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pt. 2, Grant to Supt. Indian Affairs, 5 February 1940.

³⁰ The limits on socialization characterized industrial schools generally. See J. D. Wilson, "A Note on the Shingwauk Industrial Home for Indians [Sault Ste. Marie]," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, vol. 16, no. 4 (December 1974), 66-71.

becoming . . . admittedly and unquestionably very much less desirable a member of society than their parents who never saw the schools.³¹

The Anglican clergy in the Yukon now faced the consequences of failing to heed his prescient advice.

Once released from school, the graduates were to be harbingers of a new social order, missionaries assisting with the further "modernization" of native society. The experiment was, however, far less successful with the natives of the Yukon than the founders had hoped. From the beginning, the Anglican clergy encountered difficulty securing recruits, battled with the school's decidedly negative image among the Yukon's Indian population and, the ultimate irony, had to ease the difficult, often painful transition of the graduates back into native society.

The first problem facing the church was locating suitable students. In attempting to fill out enrolment, the clergy sought to satisfy two different, often conflicting goals. Administrators wished to maintain Bompas' original purpose of providing a home for the destitute and orphaned. More importantly, they also hoped to use the school as a training centre for a new generation of native leaders. Removed from the baneful influence of an allegedly "backward" home environment and cloistered from the insidious depredations of avaricious whites, boarders would be educationally and morally prepared to return to their villages as disciples of the Church's social and moral message. The school would help more than just the students, for they in turn would serve as instruments of "civilization" for the dispersed native population. The missionaries, therefore, attempted to identify the poor and deprived, but sought in particular to recruit "the best both in health and intellect, so that the graduates of the School may form in their several camps a foundation on which the missionaries can build, in their endeavours for the physical and spiritual benefit of the natives."³²

Finding students for the school proved more difficult than initially anticipated. Ongoing efforts to "procure" children were directed specifically at the offspring of well-placed Indians. Bishop Stringer was understandably distressed that "some of our best and most influential Indians object to sending their children away to school."³³ Stringer carefully cultivated his territory-wide contacts, often offering special arrangements to attract prized students. Administrators allowed the mixed-blood

³¹ GSA, 75-105, Series 2-14, MSCC, Oliver to A.C.C., 28 January 1908.

³² *Northern Lights*, vol. 15, no. 1 (February 1927), p. 1.

³³ YTA, AC, Westgate file, Stringer to Dr. Westgate, 19 April 1923.

daughter of trader Poole Field to enrol in 1918 because, as Stringer wrote, her father had "an immense influence over the Liard and Pelly Indians, and can do a great deal in getting children for our school."³⁴ Despite these extensive efforts, the clergy often found parents unwilling to part with their children.

Evidence from registration records before 1945 suggest that the goal of drawing students equally from around the territory was far from realized. The southern districts accounted for more than 70 percent of the registrants. It is significant that children from these areas typically returned to their families each summer, maintaining at least some semblance of contact while enrolled in school. (Occasionally parents resisted when the students were scheduled to return in the fall. School administrators, supported by the government, refused to condone such absences for fear of setting a damaging precedent. The students were forced to return.) (See table 1.)

TABLE 1

Origins of New Registrants, Carcross Residential School, 1930-1950

	<i>South^a</i>	<i>Central^b</i>	<i>North^c</i>
1930-1944	81	17	12
1945-1950	41	16	35

^a Includes Carcross, Tahltan, Tagish, Atlin, Whitehorse, Kluane, Champagne, Teslin.

^b Big Salmon, Carmacks, Pelly, Selkirk.

^c Peel River, Mayo, Moosehide, Old Crow.

SOURCE: Registration documents, Carcross School, RG10, vol. 6481, file 940-10, pt. 4 to pt. 6. The collection of registration forms does not appear to be complete.

The missionaries' efforts succeeded to a limited degree, for they managed to keep enrolment close to capacity. A number of parents accepted the clergy's argument that their children's future lay with literacy, advanced training and religious guidance. Many native catechists, already strongly influenced by the church's teachings, sent their children to the school.³⁵ The attempt to attract what the missionaries viewed as the "better class" of Indians, however, fell far short of its goal.

³⁴ YTA, AC, #79/52, Stringer to Johnson, 24 August 1918. He made similar arrangements for the entry of mixed-blood Jeff van Dorder from Ross River at the same time.

³⁵ Regarding the children of A. Njootli, one of several catechists to send his children to the school, see YTA, AC, Amos Njootli file, Stringer to Njootli, 26 January 1947.

A more detailed examination of registration records reveals the church's difficulties in attracting suitable candidates. Ideally, educators wanted children as young as legally possible and sought to draw them equally from around the territory. Such a policy, they hoped, would have the greatest possible impact by dispersing trained graduates throughout the district. The church had as much difficulty securing young children as they did in maintaining a regional balance. Although students as young as 6 (and occasionally younger in the case of orphans)³⁶ came to the school, the average age at entry ranged from nine to eleven years. Despite their comparatively advanced age, most came to Carcross with little educational background, except for temporary sessions at Anglican day schools (table 2).

The Carcross School did considerably better as a home for destitute and orphaned children. Between 1930 and 1950, a minimum of 30 percent of all new students came from identifiable situations of family distress (table 3). Missionaries, government agents and police officers readily noted children in need of special care and ensured that they were sent to the school.³⁷ The facility continued to meet Bompas' original purpose, providing a home for children who otherwise might have suffered. It was noticeably less successful in attracting those selected children whom the clergy hoped would serve as the future leaders of the Yukon Indians.³⁸

The natives' reluctance to send their children stemmed, in part, from the school's very poor public image. Epidemics, including an outbreak of influenza in 1920 which claimed four lives, frequently hit the school. The death of children at the institution was not uncommon, although they typically succumbed to tuberculosis or other diseases contracted before their arrival. The school soon earned a reputation as a dangerous place for children, an image that gained currency with each death or serious illness.³⁹ The already tarnished image was further worsened by a seemingly endless series of rumours concerning the school. Repeated tales of

³⁶ DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-19, pt. 6, B. Neary to R. Meek, 19 August 1949.

³⁷ See various sets of correspondence in DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-10. Re: the Chitzi children of Old Crow, sent to the school following their parents' separation, see *ibid.*, pt. 5, J. E. Gibbon to Secretary, J. A. B., 23 May 1945, 16 July 1946.

³⁸ DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 1, Hawksley to McLean, 16 April 1923; PAC, RG91, vol. 9, file 1491, pt. 4, Hawksley to McLean, 15 October 1929; DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-10, pt. 5, Meek to Welfare and Training, 17 January 1947. On one occasion, agents were instructed to attempt to recruit students from close to Carcross to reduce expenditures, *ibid.*, pt. 4, Phelan to Commissioner, RCMP, 9 September 1940.

³⁹ "History of the Choooutla School," p. 11; DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 1, Stockton to Deputy Supt. General, 29 November 1912; King, *The School at Mopass*.

TABLE 2
Characteristics of Students, Carcross School Enrolments, 1930-1950

	<i>Recorded Registrations</i>	<i>Average Age^a</i>	<i>None^b</i>	<i>Previous Schooling</i>		
				<i>Less Than One Year</i>	<i>More Than One Year</i>	<i>Previous Residential</i>
1930-34	40	9.1	25	7	5	3
1935-39	30	9.2	14	11	5	0
1940-44	51	10.8	29	10	4	8
1945-50	99	9.3	67	0	28	4

^a At admission.

^b Either identified as no previous schooling or simply no entry in the relevant blank on the registration form.

SOURCE: See table 1.

TABLE 3
Status of Parents, New Registrants, Carcross Residential School, 1930-1950

	<i>Both Alive</i>	<i>Both Alive Destitute^a</i>	<i>Mother Dead</i>	<i>Father Dead</i>	<i>Both Dead</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% Family Distress</i>
1930-44	70	4	8	18	7	107	34.6
1945-50	69	2	8	18	2	99	30.3

^a Destitution as can be ascertained from supporting documents. The number is likely understated considerably.

SOURCE: See table 1.

poor food, harsh discipline and cramped quarters found a ready audience among natives who already looked upon the school with suspicion. Though many of the rumours had some basis (if only tenuous) in fact, others, like the 1938 allegation that the students were being fed "floor sweepings" and "dog rice" represented more slanderous assaults on an already vulnerable institution.⁴⁰ The clergy had great difficulty overcoming parental reticence constantly reinforced through rumours and news of more student deaths.

⁴⁰ DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-10, pt. 4, Grant to Capt. Binning, 12 May 1938; Roth to Gibben, 30 September 1942, DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 2. For Bishop Stringer's response to a series of allegations (see Stockton's letter above) that reached federal officials, see Stringer to Secretary, DIA, 31 March 1913.

Recruitment efforts continued in an ongoing attempt to overcome parental hesitations. The notable increase in attendance after 1940 illustrates changing economic conditions, extended government and missionary recruitment efforts, and, after 1945, the introduction of compulsory education measures by the federal government. (See table 4.) It was also only after the imposition of government enforced education that the geographic distribution of students shifted. Between 1945 and 1950,

TABLE 4
Carcross School Enrolment, 1910-1950 (Yearly Averages)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1910-14	15	14	29
1915-19	17	16	33
1920-24	17	19	36
1925-29	18	20	38
1930-34	17	18	35
1935-39	22	24	46
1940-44	32	31	63
1945-50	28	28	56

SOURCE: Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports*.

fewer than half (45 percent) came from the south. The Old Crow district, which had provided no children for the school in the preceding fifteen years (at least according to extant records), sent twenty-two, or almost one-quarter of all new registrants. Government legislative intervention, and not relentless church appeals, provided the impetus for wider enrolment. It was only after 1945 that the school consistently attracted the number and range of students administrators had long anticipated. (See table 1.)

Recruiting students proved only the beginning of the school's difficulties. The clergy's greatest — and certainly most unexpected — problem came with the return of students to their villages. Children left the school at different ages and for a variety of reasons. Many stayed until graduation, leaving at age 16. Others departed much earlier. Several students were deemed incapable of learning, often because they entered the school at an advanced age or maintained regular contact with their families. Such students were returned to their parents. Similarly, students who could not be contained by the institution's strict disciplinary standards

were hurriedly shipped out for fear they would set a bad example for other potential malcontents. A sizeable number of parents attempted to pull their children out of school, either because they had heard and believed several of the rumours circulating about the institution or because the children were needed at home. The school's administrators and the government typically rejected the first reason, believing that they were acting in the child's best interest by keeping him or her in school. Those requests involving demonstrable need were more often accepted, particularly if the children were needed to assist an invalid or ailing parent.⁴¹ Students leaving before graduation were in the minority, however, as most returned home only after completing their schooling.

Removed from nomadism at a young age, the students faced a difficult, often traumatic transition when they attempted to return to their native villages. Initially, the clergy enthusiastically welcomed the students' departure. To them, it represented the end of their work, each child a new mission worker assisting in the general improvement of the Yukon Indians. Expectations shortly turned to despair, as missionaries came to realize the serious consequences of the students' return to village life. An Old Crow commentator wrote pleadingly to Bishop Stringer in 1926:

If Caroline Moses' girl comes back, she is going into the filthiest hovel in the country. . . . A dirt floor, two tiny windows which cannot be seen for the flies, stinking meat and fish hung all over the cabin, the stench unspeakable, six people already living there, and now a seventh, and under the willows on the dirt floor, all the filth of a long winter throwing off a deadly effluvia, in a stifling heat. . . . Bishop, I plead with you not for humanity's sake, but for the sake of the Dear Lord who redeemed us, not to send a decent girl back to untold misery and evil, where she cannot help but curse the very day she was born.⁴²

Allowing for morally inspired excess, the writer makes an important point. Village life for many children was far removed both geographically and culturally from the Carcross dormitory. Even at this early date, there was general concern as to whether the students were adequately prepared for the transition.

⁴¹ For specific cases, see YTA, AC, Moosehide file, Sarah Jane Essau to Bishop, 31 August 1919; DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-10, pt. 4, Grant to Dewdney, 17 November 1941, Phelan to Grant, 8 August 1938, Grant to Phelan, 24 August 1938, Binning to Secretary, DIA, 11 April 1938, Grant to O.C., RCMP, 2 March 1934, Meek to I.A.B., 18 August 1947, T. B. Caulkin to Principal, 16 March 1935, Binning to Secretary, DIA, 15 December 1937; *ibid.*, pt. 6, Meek to J.A.B., 29 August 1947, 4 April 1949. Many more students were removed from school for disciplinary or academic reasons than were returned at their parents' requests.

⁴² YTA, AC, McCullum file, Wood to Stringer, 14 April 1926.

It is easy to identify those who made a "successful" adaptation, particularly in the early years when comments on graduates filled the church's reports. These young adults, products of Bompas' closely-knit boarding home rather than the more impersonal Choooutla institution, often secured adequate placements upon graduation. Frequently orphans, the students struck out on their own, the girls seeking positions as domestic helpers, the boys attempting to find manual work. The girls enjoyed greater success as the church secured jobs for them from Dawson City to Victoria, British Columbia. Facing a more competitive, and often exclusionist job market, the boys encountered difficulty finding anything other than short-term positions.⁴³ In later years, the clergy offered frequent reminders of the exploits of the more notable graduates.⁴⁴ James Wood, Jacob Njootli and Maggie Daniels, for example, served the church as day school teachers or native catechists, conforming closely to the church's expectations for the graduates. Johnny Johns demonstrated the utility of a residential school education in another way. He established himself as a businessman of note in the Carcross area and later became widely regarded as the best (and only native) big game guide in the territory.⁴⁵ Several others utilized their school skills to make a more complete entry into white society. Two boys, trained on the school's printing press, found employment with a Whitehorse printing firm. Others settled near Whitehorse or Dawson City, sought employment and in several instances even applied for enfranchisement.⁴⁶ Others attempted to build on their school experience in less noticeable but perhaps more important ways. The church took particular pride in the efforts of one female graduate who, upon returning to Selkirk in 1939, effected a radical change in her family's habits and manners.⁴⁷ Such successes were few, however, and noted by the church all the more for their uniqueness.

Most of the children found themselves trapped upon returning to their

⁴³ YTA, AC, Carcross School, Report of Rev. W. T. Townsend, 31 March 1914; *ibid.*, Report of E. D. Evans, 31 March 1912; DIA, *Annual Report 1909-1910*, p. 341, *Annual Report 1912/13*, p. 618. Finding jobs for graduates became progressively more difficult due to territorial economic problems and entrenched segregationist attitudes.

⁴⁴ "History of Choooutla School," pp. 13-14. *Northern Lights* provided regular updates on the progress of noted graduates.

⁴⁵ Johns' career is discussed at length in Robert McCandless, "Yukon Wildlife: A Social History" (unpublished manuscript), YTA, #79/13.

⁴⁶ PAC, RG91, vol. 1490, pt. 5, Hawksley to Mackenzie, 7 March 1930. Enfranchisement files are, of course, closed. The government, however, clearly favoured Carcross graduates when reviewing such applications.

⁴⁷ YTA, AC, Selkirk Children Reports, Robinson to Dickson, 7 March 1939.

homes, torn between school values and the realities of camp life. Some of those who visited their families each summer readily discarded years of education and re-adopted village mannerisms and customs. For those who had assimilated substantial portions of their teachers' message, however, a more painful transition ensued. As a summer missionary at Carmacks noted in 1934, "They are potential outcasts of their own people and are not quite up to the standards of the white intellect. In other words, they are 'betwixt and between' — a condition of pitiful helplessness."⁴⁸ Schooling had taught them to disdain their parents' customs, but their race and lack of formal education precluded a more permanent integration into an exclusionist white society.

The lack of systematic records on the graduates' experiences, compounded by the wide and rapid dispersal of students upon leaving the schools, makes it impossible to follow these children through later life with much precision. Scanty evidence of enfranchisement applications suggests, as would be expected, that many of those applying for full rights as Canadian citizens had come through the residential school program.

The bulk of the evidence, however, suggests that the students faced a rough transition. As one commentator noted in 1926,

It is utterly wrong to send these nice well-trained girls, who have been used to decent living, back to homes such as they have to go to, where they know nothing of their native life, are a burden on their people who are already half-starved, as soon as the first welcome wears off, are regarded as a useless encumbrance [*sic*].⁴⁹

Sarah-Jane Esau, a native woman from Moosehide, echoed these sentiments when she wrote to Bishop Stringer, "When they are too long at school they won't have anything to do with us; they want to be with white people; they grow away from us."⁵⁰

These attitudes were widely shared. An Old Crow woman noted in 1937,

When they (ex-pupils) return their lot is not an easy one, for they have to

⁴⁸ YTA, AC, Carmacks-Little Salmon file, Report of Missionary Work carried on from 23 May to 31 August 1934 in and about Carmacks. Similar comments, supporting what follows, can be found in YTA, AC, Carcross file, C. E. Whittaker to Dr. Smith, 2 July 1919; C. F. Johnson file, Stringer to Johnson, 31 October 1917; DIA, vol. 3962, file 147, 654-1, pt. 2, T. G. Bragg to Secretary, DIA, 23 June 1910; DIA, vol. 6479, file 940-1, pt. 6, Hawksley to Principal, Choooutla School, 27 May 1933; YTA, AC, Old Crow file, McCabe to Coldrick, 11 December 1933; YTA, AC, McCullum file, E. D. Wood to Stringer, 14 April 1926.

⁴⁹ YTA, AC, McCullum file, E. D. Wood to Stringer, 14 April 1926.

⁵⁰ YTA, AC, Moosehide file, Sarah Jane Essau to Bishop, 31 August 1919.

go back to primitive conditions, and the majority of them can never hope to change their people. They told me it would be impossible to do anything with the old people. Consequently they slip back into careless ways and many go astray. . . . I am sure those who spent many years of their lives trying to teach these children a higher standard of living both physically and morally would be horrified about their morals.⁵¹

The Indians of that community made the same point eight years later, although their emphasis was notably different. In a petition to the federal government asking for a residential school in their area, they noted that the graduates were poorly prepared for the harvesting way of life, had trouble adjusting to the harsh northern climate, and tended to "look down upon their parents and our (and their) natural way of life." The negative experience with Carcross graduates had been such that no children had been sent to the school for more than ten years.⁵²

A major difficulty facing the former students lay, ironically, with their occupational training. Though the clergy repeatedly restated their desire to prepare the students for their "afterlife," experience illustrated that the clergy's mix of practical and technical skills was inadequate for most students. Male graduates occasionally found temporary work as railway hands, labourers, guides, meat wholesalers or, more often, school assistants. The regional economy, however, emphasized skilled labour on a seasonal basis, and provided few regular openings for the partially trained students. The experience of Harry Davis is not untypical. After graduating in 1939, he remained in Carcross for a year attempting to secure suitable employment. Unsuccessful in his efforts, he applied to the school for funds for travel to Dawson City, where it was rumoured he could find work.⁵³ If Davis' career paralleled that of other graduates, he would have been unsuccessful in this effort as well.

The missionaries tried very hard to secure positions for their graduates, particularly the more promising ones. Their efforts were often unsuccessful and, with regret, they noted that the students returned to their home villages. By itself, this was often interpreted as a sign of weakness. When a promising young scholar, James Tizya, sought permission to return to Old Crow in 1933, former Anglican missionary and territorial Indian Agent John Hawksley commented: "I am inclined to think his decision is to some extent influenced by a desire for freedom and the somewhat

⁵¹ YTA, AC, Old Crow, McCabe to Coldrick, 11 December 1937.

⁵² DIA, vol. 6478, file 932-1, pt. 1, Peter Moses et al. to Indian Agent, 28 August 1945.

⁵³ DIA, vol. 6481, file 940-10, pt. 1, Grant to Hoey, 20 July 1940.

lazy life of the Old Crow Indian.”⁵⁴ These children did not return easily to the harvesting way, for their education had not offered sufficient skills. At the same time, however, the students lacked the inclination to turn wholeheartedly to a Euro-Canadian lifestyle. Those who attempted such an integration typically found their way blocked by exclusionist attitudes, their educational attainments of little practical use. The clergy, while focusing their attentions on the students, had done little to smooth a path for the natives in a still strongly segregationist white society. These graduates of the Carcross Residential School were clearly caught in the middle, unsure of their place, uneasy in both worlds and unclear as to what the future held.

Because so much of their mission rested on the students, the Anglican clergy maintained a close watch on their progress, revelling in their accomplishments, despairing in their troubles. To protect their investment, missionaries endeavoured to keep the young people from the twin evils of village life and white-dominated urban centres. The church ended up protecting the students from the very environment they were supposed to reform. Several of the better students (defined by academic competence) were kept at the school after graduation as over-age students, teaching assistants or labourers. The teachers hoped that the extra years’ grace would prepare them more adequately for the unenviable challenge ahead. Most clergy viewed the inter-marriage of graduates as the best means of protecting those versed in the new morality and customs, and they encouraged suitable marriages, occasionally over the graduates’ protests.⁵⁵ Their efforts to save this one group only served to highlight their distinctiveness and compounded the difficulties of returning to the village. While few supported one theology student’s recommendation that a separate village be established for the young graduates,⁵⁶ most missionaries privately acknowledged that the residential school children could not be left entirely to their own devices.

The post-graduation experience of the Carcross Residential School graduates was difficult for the missionaries to accept. Cautioned by the federal government to make their instructional program relevant to the

⁵⁴ PAC, RG91, vol. 11, file 2335, pt. 6, Hawksley to Principal, Choooutla Indian School, 27 May 1933.

⁵⁵ YTA, AC, Whittaker Papers, Stringer to Whittaker, 20 February 1915; AC, Townsend file, Stringer to Townsend, 28 January 1916; AC, Bennett file, Stringer to Miss Bennett, 13 July 1918. Bishop Stringer was a particular advocate of this approach. Subsequent bishops followed the same line, but with less zeal.

⁵⁶ YTA, AC, Carcross-Little Salmon file, Report of Missionary Work, 23 May to 31 August 1934.

students' "afterlife," the clergy had modified their curriculum. The intention was to impart rudimentary literary and computational skills plus extended training in directly relevant occupational activities. Though the technical training proved of limited utility, the students equipped for neither the hunting nor the mining camp, the real difficulty lay in the school's social program. Through their system of rigid discipline, social control, Christian teaching and moral guidance, the clergy sought to substantially revise native attitudes. These teachings, however, set the students on a collision course with the values and customs of their Indian villages. Accommodating these vastly different attitudes made the transition from residential school to hunting camp an onerous one.

It is understandable that the clergy refused to modify their social goals. The central theme of the institution was a desire to provide the native students with a new outlook on life, health and work, all in a Christian framework. Those values could not be compromised. To do so would have meant denying the fundamental purpose of the Carcross School and the missionaries' aspirations for the Yukon Indians. The problems encountered by the graduates upon re-entry therefore originated with the basic structure of the institution and the underlying aims of the Anglican church's mission to the northern natives. Conflict between long-separated children and parents, between school ideas and those of the native village, was as inevitable as it proved painful. Designed to provide a generation of leaders for the Yukon Indians, the facility instead produced children caught "betwixt and between" the contradictory values of their parents and their teachers.

The construction of a new 150 student facility in 1953-54 radically altered the nature of the Carcross Residential School. Reflecting a post-World War II surge in social welfare programming, the federal government's policy toward the northern native changed dramatically in favour of increased intervention. Far removed in time and outlook from Frank Oliver's warnings, government officials clamoured for a major extension of residential education and in particular for the implementation of a more formal and intensive scholastic and training program. The Anglican clergy and teachers were quickly pushed to the sidelines. In the years that followed, as Richard King demonstrated in his study of the school in the 1960s,⁵⁷ the new civilian teachers went noticeably beyond the limited program developed by their Anglican predecessors. It was imperative to the government that native children be brought to a level of scholastic

⁵⁷ King, *The School at Mopass*. For a more favourable view, prepared by a principal of the school, see M. Gibbs, "The History of Choooutla School."

attainment equalling that provided by territorial public schools. To fail to do so, many believed, would doom the Indian children to a life outside the mainstream of a rapidly modernizing northern economy. As had been the case in the Anglican period, however, little thought was given to the impact of the social, cultural and educational programs on the children or to the difficulties they would encounter upon graduation. In moving the institution much closer to the norms of the public schools, and therefore making it even less relevant to the natives' cultural and economic background, school administrators and Department of Indian Affairs officials unwittingly accelerated the problems facing the students upon returning to their homes.

Acting with great sincerity and a firm conviction that their program was best for the native children, the Anglican clergy readily (though never adequately) modified their educational offerings to make the school relevant to life in the native village. Their best efforts could not, however, overcome the underlying fact that their institution demanded through its social and moral structure a rejection of parental and community values. The Carcross Residential School failed to provide the native students with an obvious route into either native or white society.