Identifying and documenting the locations of Residential Schools in Canada

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Territorial Land Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

Introduction

Between the 1870s and the late 1990s, approximately 150,000 Aboriginal children attended more than 139 residential schools. To quote the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's web site: "Many never returned. Often underfunded and overcrowded, these schools were used as a tool of assimilation by the Canadian state and churches. Thousands of students suffered physical and sexual abuse. All suffered from loneliness and a longing to be home with their families. The damages inflicted by these schools continue to this day. In 2009, the Truth and Reconcilation Commission of Canada began a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, communities and others affected by the Residential School system. The resulting collection of statements, documents and other materials now forms the heart of the National Centre for Truth and Reconcilation" (https://nctr.ca/about-new.php).

The project arose when a colleague requested print maps from the York University Map Library showing the presence of three residential schools in Ontario. I contacted Raymond Frogner, the Archivist at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), who kindly provided me with a spreadsheet, created by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which had detailed information and geographical coordinates for each school. I quickly discovered that the location for Mount Elgin School (near London) was off by 1.2 kilometres. I spot-checked several other schools in Ontario and found similar inaccuracies in the spreadsheet. After several conversations with Raymond, we agreed that during my sabbatical year, I would work with the NCTR to determine the precise location of the residential schools in Canada. Early on, I had the pleasure of meeting Stephanie Pyne, the lead of the groundbreaking Residential Schools Interactive Map (RSIM) https://lhta.ca/residentialschools/index.html and the Residential Schools Land Memory Project. The schools are mapped using oral history, traditional knowledge and written sources. I also had the pleasure of speaking to Morgan Hite, who produced the Atlas of Indian Residential Schools in Canada (http://hesperus-wild.org/GIS_carto/IRS.html) in 2017 for the Tk'emlups First Nation and Justice for Day Scholar's initiative. The dataset created in this project builds upon and acknowledges the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Hite and RSIM.

Objectives

The objectives of this project are as follows:

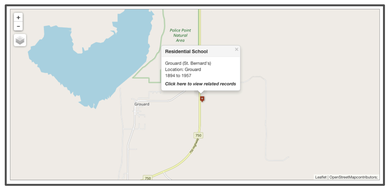
(1) Create a dataset that describes each school location. Each entry will include the geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude) of the school, accuracy of the coordinates (in metres), acknowledgment of the location source, location description, religious affiliation of the school, URL to a school photo, and links to primary and secondary sources (cartographic and textual) that show the location of the school.

(2) Create a bibliography of cartographic and textual resources for each school location. Each resource will have a bibliographic citation, URLs to the resource (if available), call number/archival code, short description of the relevant content, and a list of key features that are present such as schools, cemeteries, churches, hospitals and property boundaries.

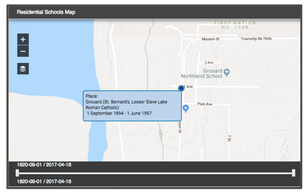
Methodology

The Grouard Residential School will be used to illustrate the methodology used in this project. The Grouard Indian Residential School (St. Bruno's) operated from 1894 to 1957. It was located in northern Alberta near Lesser Lake.

Step 1: Compare the geographical locational information from NCTR, Hite, and RSIM, and review the background information from the NCTR documents portal and school narratives. These resources establish whether there is more than one location of the school. When a school is moved to a new property or location is more than 5 kilometres away, it is considered to be a unique school location.

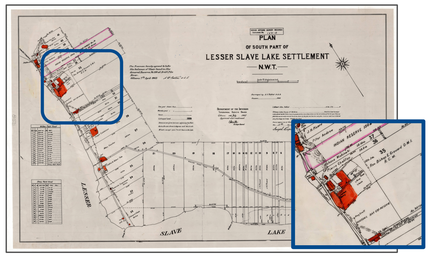


NCTR Interactive Map of Residential Schools, showing the location of the Grouard Residential School. The geographic location is incorrect.

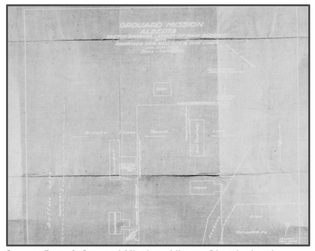


The Residential School Interactive Map (RISM), above, shows the residential school location with more precision. Hite's Atlas shows that it is 100 metres west of the location determined by RISM.

Step 2: Find primary and secondary sources that contain maps, aerial photos, survey plans, photographs, and sketch maps for each school location. Most were found on the NCTR web site, Library Archives Canada School Files Series, Indian Affairs Annual Reports, provincial and territorial archives, church archives, National Air Photo Library, and the Canada Lands Survey database. From these sources, the geographical coordinates for one of the school or residence buildings is determined. If the building still stands, that point is used. Then the school location dataset is updated with the new information.



Source: Talbot, A.C. ***Plan of South Part of Lesser Slave Lake Settlement. N.W.T.*** [Survey Plan]. Scale 10 chains to 1 inch. 1901. Canada Lands Survey. A150B CLSR AB. http://clss.nrcan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=A150B%20CLSR%20AB. This survey plan shows the location of the mission and the footprints of the convent (student residence) and a school bulding in 1901.



Source: Part of, ***Grouard Mission, Alberta. Sketch showing layout of main bldgs with new proposed well sites and pipelines. January 31st, 1939.*** Scale 1 inch = 50 feet. Library Archives Canada. RG 10 Volume 6366, file 765-1, part 3. Microfilm c-8719 page 122 to 123. This map helped determine the location of the boys' and girls' residence buildings.

Vue d'ensemble de Grouard en 1938. [View of the Grouard Mission in 1938]. Source: Les Oeuvres Oblates de l'Ontario (Deschatelets Archive) and NCTR. https://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000820-d0031-001.pdf. Photo shows left to right: the school, boys' residence, church (background), convent (girls' residence) and priests' residence. This photo is included in the database of the school locations.

Sucker Creek I.R. 150A, Grouard I.R. 150B, 150C, 150D. [Photo Map]. Scale 1:10,000. May 1976. Canada Lands Survey. http://clss.nrcan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=684+RSA+AB. Aerial photo of the Grouard in 1976. The convent (girls' residence), priest's residence and old school building have been demolished. The boys' residence building and church are in the photo and still exist today. The geographical coordinates of the boys' building was entered into the School Locations database.

School ID	Location ID	School Name	Alternate Names	First Year	Last Year	Latitude	Longitude	Location Source	Description of location	Location Accuracy	Accuracy (m)	Community / Municipality	Prov.	Religious Affiliation	Photo Title	School Photo	Photo Source
55	551	Fort Vermilion	St. Henri; St. Henry's	1903	1968	58.39315	-116.01007	Orlandini	On River Road, between 45th Street and 47th Street. Point situated at the location of the former convent building which was used as the residential school.	Accurate	0.00	Fort Vermilion	AB	Roman Catholic	Fort Vermilion School circa 1933.	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000821-d0032-001.jpg	Deschatelets Archive and the NCTR
56	561	Grouard	St. Bernard;	1894	1957	55.34509	-116.15551	Orlandini / RSIM	Point is located on the building that formerly was the boy's residence of the Grouard Residential School, which was located on the grounds of the Grouard Roman Catholic Mission. Currently the building is part of the North Lakes College, Grouard Campus.	Accurate	0.00	Grouard	AB	Roman Catholic	Grouard Residential School, 1938.	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000820-d0031-001.jpg	Deschatelets Archive and the NCTR
57	571	Holy Angels	Fort Chipewyan	1874	1974	-	111.17311	NCTR	School property located on the Roman Catholic Mission site, formerly Lot 36, currently lot 2A. The point is situated at the location of the former school building.	Accurate	0.00	Fort Chipewyan	AB	Roman Catholic	École des Saints-Anges, 1953.	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000947-d0019-001.jpg	Deschatelets Archive and the NCTR
58	581	Jossard	St. Bruno's; Lesser Slave Lake	1913	1969	55.40048	115.96894	Orlandini / RSIM	Site located on the east side of Mission Creek in Jossard. Point situated at the location of the convent. Imagery in Google Maps and Google Earth show a cemetery located in the NW corner of the property.	Accurate	0.00	Jossard	AB	Roman Catholic	Mission St. Bruno [Jossard Residential School], 1947.	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000811-d0010-001.jpg	Deschatelets Archive and the NCTR
59	591	Lac La Biche	Notre Dame des Victoires	1893	1898	54.82381	-112.09147	Orlandini	School was located on the Lac La Biche Mission property. Point is situated on the location of convent building which was used as the school.	Accurate	0.00	Lac la Biche	AB	Roman Catholic	Lac La Biche Mission [ca. 1906].	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/10a-c000563-d0014-001.jpg	Deschatelets Archive and the NCTR
60	601	Lesser Slave Lake	St. Peter's	1891	1932	55.58900	-116.19247	Orlandini	School property was located at Lot 64, Section 13, Township 78, Range 15,300m west of the Kapawe'no No. 150C reserve boundary. Point is situated at the position of the school building.	Accurate	0.00	Lesser Slave Lake	AB	Anglican	St. Peter's Indian Residential School [ca. 1917-1922].	http://nctr.ca/AIMS_BASE_PDF/10A/11a-c002191-d0192-001.jpg	General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada Archive and the NCTR

Part of the Residential School Locations dataset of Alberta. The final dataset representing all of the schools in Canada will be similar in structure and format.

Step 3: Create a bibliographic description for each document and indicate if the map/resource has school buildings, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, property boundaries and other major features. This information is linked to the locations dataset.

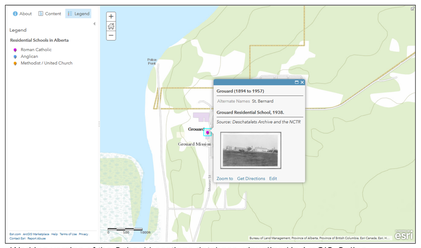
Ref ID	School ID	Location ID	School Name	Bibliographic Citation	Description	School Buildings	School Locations	Hostel Buildings	Cemetery	Grave Sites	Property Boundaries	Church Buildings	Hospital
R0061	56	561	Grouard	Talbot, A.C. 1901. "Plan of South Part of Lesser Slave Lake Settlement N.W.T." [Map]. 1:7,920. [Ottawa]: Surveyor General Branch. A150B CLSR AB. Canada Lands Survey. http://clss.nrcan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=A150B+CLSR+AB.	Survey plan showing the lots of the south part of Lesser Slave Lake includes the properties and annotated buildings of the Grouard Roman Catholic Mission and HBC Post.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
R0062	56	561	Grouard	Côté, J. L. 1912. "Côté's Map of Grouard: Compiled by Côté, Tremblay & Pearson, Engineers and Surveyors" [Survey Map]. 1:.14,400. Edmonton: Côté, Tremblay & Pearson, Engineers and Surveyors. Peel's Prairie Provinces. University of Alberta. http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/maps/M0001A8.html.	Survey plan of the Grouard area of Alberta. Property boundaries are shown for the HBC, Mission, and nearby reserve.	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
R0064	56	561	Grouard	Kenting Earth Sciences Limited. 1976. "Sucker Creek I.R. 150A, Grouard I.R. 150B, 150C, 150D." [Photo Map]. 1:10,000. [Ottawa]: Indian and Northern Affairs. 684 RSA AB. Canada Lands Survey. http://clss.nrcan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=684+RSA+AB	Photo mosaic of Grouard and Sucker Creek I.R. 150, TP. 75, RG. 14, W5M. Sheet 2 of 3. Date of photo May September 1976. Mission is labelled on the photo	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
R0065	56	561	Grouard	Floch, T. W. 1925. "Sketch Map of Grouard School included in a Letter Sent to A.F. Mackenzie, Acting Assistant Deputy and Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, from Reverend T. W. Floch, September 29, 1925]" [Archival Document]. No scale given. RG 10 Volume 6366, file 765-1, part 1. Microfilm c-8718, page 1270. Library Archives Canada. http://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/009/006003/c-8718/pdf/c-8718.	Sketch map shows the location of the buildings in relation to the road and the river. Buildings on the sketch map include: laundry, main building (girls' residence), school, boys' residence, bakery and kitchen, and a proposed building.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
R0066	56	561	Grouard	LeCapelain, C.K. 1939. "Grouard Mission, Alberta. Sketch Showing Layout of Main Bldgs with New Proposed Well Sites and Pipelines. January 31st, 1939." [Site Plan; Archival Document]. 1:600. Ottawa: Surveys and Engineering Branch. Department of Mines and Resources. RG 10 Volume 6366, file 765-1, part 3. Microfilm c-8719 Images 122 and 123. Library Archives Canada. http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/microform/data2/dm09/009/006003/c-8719/pdf/c-8719-00122.pdf.	Site plan of the school property. Sketch map includes river, road, building outlines of the school, convent, boys' dormitory, church, priests' house, dining hall, laundry, farm buildings. Sketch map included in a report dated February 21st, 1939, entitled "Report on Water Supply Situation at Grouard Residential School. Alta." by Mr. LeCapelain, Assistant Engineer.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
R0063	56	561	Grouard	Department of Lands and Forests. 1949. "Mosaic of Map Sheet Area 83N/09 [Grouard, Alberta]" [Photo Map]. 1:63,360. Edmonton: Alberta. Department of Lands and Forests. University of Lethbridge: Libraries Spatial Data Collection. http://digitallibrary.uleth.ca/cdm/ref/collection/geo/id/690.	Photo mosaic of Grouard (1949-1951). Shows the buildings present on the site of the mission during that time.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

Excerpt of the bibliographic database of sources (documents) used to determine the precise locations of the residential schools. The portion above lists the sources for the Grouard Residential School. The final bibliographic dataset will contain over 800 sources and can be linked to the Residential Schools Locations dataset.

Results and Discussion

The NCTR is engaged in a project to provide curricular resources to the government of Alberta about the history and legacy of residential schools in Alberta. For the project I provided the NCTR with the school locations dataset for Alberta.

To date, the School Locations dataset and the reference list has been compiled for all the provinces and territories, except for Nunavut and Labrador. Precise locations (within 50 metres) have been found for more than 95% of the schools.



Working version of the School Locations database, visualized in ArcGIS Online.

The School Locations dataset will be completed soon. It will include the 139 residential schools identified by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (TRC website, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=12). as well as 13 schools that were not included in the agreement. Since some schools have multiple locations the dataset will include unique records for a total of 187 locations. The bibliography will include over 850 sources. Most of the archival documents in the bibliography exist in the NCTR repository. Many of the published documents (aerial photographs, survey maps, theses, government documents and periodical articles) will be new additions to the NCTR repository.

It is important to note that the precise location could not be determined for 21 schools; this is due to a lack of a written and cartographic record. However, these schools still exist in the memories of the survivors, their descendants, and with local knowledge keepers. The NCTR is the lead in the Commemorative Marker project, the missing children registry, as well as the identifying and documenting school site locations, cemeteries, and the locations of unmarked graves of the missing children. The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders, Residential School survivors and local traditional knowledge keepers are vital to the reconciliation process.

In the next few months, I will continue to work with the NCTR staff and the NCTR Survivor's Circle to finalize the School Locations dataset and bibliography of cartographic resources. I will also help the NCTR to update their interactive maps that show the school locations. Researchers and educators will be able to apply for access to the geographic locations data and bibliography via the NCTR's newly established ethics process.

This project has deepened my understanding and knowledge of the cultural, historical and societal legacies of the residential school system and other colonial policies such as the Indian Act, and the effects on Indigenous people in Canada. I have had the honour to meet and listen to Survivors of residential schools, travel to Winnipeg to attend the Indigenous Mapping Workshop and visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Through reading, listening to stories, searching for primary sources, and reflecting, I have become conscious of indigenous teaching and knowledge practices. I have become more aware of the TRC's Principles of Reconciliation, which I have incorporated into this project and infuse them into my daily interactions with colleagues, students, family, and friends.

Acknowledgements

This project would not be possible without the support and assistance of the dedicated staff at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg, especially Raymond Frogner (NCTR Archivist) who is an amazing archivist and has guided me through the process of working with the NCTR and liaising with the NCTR Director (Ry Moran) and the NCTR Survivors' Circle. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Morgan Hite (author of the Residential School Atlas) and Stephanie Pyne. In addition, I would like to thank the staff, librarians and archivists at Library Archives Canada, National Air Photo Library, Archives of Ontario, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Toronto Reference Library, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives and York University Libraries for their guidance, assistance and patience.

Works Cited and Suggested Readings

"Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society (TRC Principle of Reconciliation #10)". Below is a list of recommended documents and sources to learn more:

- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website: https://nctr.ca/map.php
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *What we have learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation.* http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada : Calls to Action http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- Hite, Morgan. Mapping Canada's Indian Residential Schools http://hesperus-wild.org/GIS_carto/IRS.html
- Residential Schools Land Memory Mapping Project. *Residential Schools Interactive Map* https://lhta.ca/residentialschools/index.html