

Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Desmarais, Alberta
Saint Martin Mission
Codex (volume II), February 1959 to February 1971

PAA - PR1997.0199/1953 (This notebook contains 105 pages)

March 3, 1959 - pages 4-5

Arrival of the provincial school Inspectors. Mr. O Fadum from High Prairie and Ward from Fairview. The day of the 4th is spent visiting the classes. They said they were delighted with our four religious teachers and the progress our children were making. It is not quite the same with regard to Mr. Mandy, who leaves something to be desired in terms of discipline. On the 5th, they went to visit the Anglican mission and then our school in St. Charles in the afternoon. Again, they said they were very satisfied with our school. They left for Slave Lake late in the afternoon.

March 4, 1959 - page 5

Arrival also of Mr. C. H. Keoter, Inspector of Indian schools for the north of the province. He spent the day of the 4th (Thursday) visiting the classes. At 4 o'clock, meeting with the teachers, the Principal and Mr. Mandy to discuss various problems concerning education. On the 6th, he visited the Anglican mission, made a short courtesy visit to St-Charles where he was presented with a small program. He expressed his admiration for the children's behaviour. He returned to St-Martin to sleep and left before 3 a.m. for Slave Lake, wanting to take advantage of the cooler weather that made the road less slippery.

May 15-18, 1959 - page 8

Holiday for the children on this long weekend (Victoria Day).

May 28, 1959 - pages 8-9

Lauretta Auger, daughter of Marie-Dwak, runs away a second time. The mother refuses to let her daughter return. She accuses me of insults, makes the worst accusations against the mission. What a family! Since her own internship at the boarding school she gives trouble. But she seems to reap what she sows. Her oldest lives in concubinage around Slave Lake. Napoleon has just done a year's internship in prison for theft at the Post Office. Denis has to go to court for a fight. Anne Philomène has just seriously beaten her mother twice to the point that Marie Dwak wanted to put the police on her case to have her sent to reform school and now it's Loretta, encouraged by her mother!

June 29, 1959 - page 9

Big picnic for the school children. [Illegible word] ... to the river on the other side of the bridge, then played ball and races at "Duseault". The rain forced us to come back around 5 o'clock.

June 30, 1959 - page 10

Distribution of prizes, reading of promotions, then departure of the children for the vacations. There are still nine who will leave in the next few days.

September 1, 1959 - page 12

The children entered the school around 7 o'clock in the evening. Several latecomers as usual.

December 2, 1959 - page 15

Arrival of the school Inspectors: Mr. Oscar Fadum, Superintendent of the school division, Mr. R. M. Ward, Superintendent of the Fairview school division, Mr. J. W. Chalmers, of the Dept of Education, Edmonton. The latter came to study the possibility of making the community a school district. They had left Slave Lake on the 1st, but had to spend the night on the way because of the poor condition of the road.

January 31, 1960 - page 22

Reception of the new Crusaders on the feast of St. John Bosco. Hockey game between the boys and the staff. Evening: big bingo.

April 20, 1960 - page 24

A young boy, Houïe Courteoreille, from the Boyer River reserve, Fort Vermillion, boarding here, had his leg crushed. A plane came to evacuate him. The news is distressing: his leg had to be amputate.

September 9, 1960 - page 26

Arrival of Mr. Harry Chapman, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for a regular visit.

September 10, 1960 - page 26

A large McMurray Airlines Norseman plane arrived with new students for the year from Sandy Lake, then in another flight brought us children from Jousard - about a dozen in all. That many were supposed to come from Sandy Lake itself. It was missed - the children were not at the dock! So, it is Racine who will come to drive them in two trips!

September 1960 - page 28

This year, the day students at Point St. Charles School are traveling by bus. This is a novelty around here. At present, it is Mr. Hachey who drives this machine.

September 21, 1960 - page 28

It's time to dig up potatoes with the help of the students of grades 5-8.

October 3, 1960 - page 29

The X-ray team from Charles Camsell Hospital arrived this morning in a Barkley plane. Heading the team is Dr. MacDonald.

Five of our older girls find a way to "skip school" tonight to go to an Indian pow wow on the reserve. They returned the next morning disappointed because the party did not take place.

November 21, 1960 - page 31

Five of our girls run away from school this afternoon - in broad daylight.

November 25, 1960 - page 31

Margaret Beaver and Elizabeth Noskeye, two of the five from the other day, are running away again tonight to go to a dance held for a friend.

December 5, 1960 - page 32

A district nurse is coming to us these days, which is good news. She is Miss Attreux who comes to us from Slave Lake where she worked for ten years. A new Indian Agent is also coming for rations - Mr. Shatz.

January 4, 1961 - page 34

[Father Fournier's trip to Sandy Lake] The people were glad to see me, even though I was a poor missionary without their language. Several men, having learned that I was coming, delayed their departure for the hunt to wait for me and they stayed there for the duration of the "mission". In my mind, it was a real "parish mission"! I gathered the parents together on the first night and spoke to them heart to heart through an interpreter: how the missionaries had devoted themselves to them, etc., and that they were the ones primarily responsible for their children's education at home. It was up to them to tell the children where to go for religion - "you had them baptized Catholic, you want them Catholic"!

February 1, 1961 - page 35

Dr. Corrigan of Camsell Hospital is making his regular flying visit today.

February 10, 1961 - page 35

Our hockey team (boys) and basket ball (girls) teams board the school bus to Jousard and Grouard where they measure their strength against the local teams. It took 5½ hours to get there. The return trip was on the 12th (Sunday afternoon) with a stop at Mr. Eben's "museum" near Slave Lake. A win for the girls wonderfully redeemed our boys' loss! The children returned proud of their pleasure trip.

February 27, 1961 - page 36

Following Mr. Oldring, the official auditor for Indian schools, Inspector L. Jampolsky, accompanied by Dr. Chalmers of the Dept. of Education, arrived. (One day visit only.)

March 9, 1961 - page 37

Dr. Corrigan comes for his monthly visit. He will spend the afternoon at Sandy Lake. This seems to be the first visit of a doctor of the department in this place! He pulls 50 teeth!

May 10, 1961 - page 39

Visit of Dr. Corrigan from the Charles Camsell Hospital. With him comes Dr. Weilliger, a dentist, who will pass all the (treaty) children of the school at the inspection.

June 6, 1961 - page 40

The treaty party arrives from Calling Lake tonight. They include the policeman from Faust, Mr. Chapman and his secretary, the pilot Don, the two youngsters from the X-Ray team, Frank Dalla and They will be sleeping here two nights. Today they pay the treaty at Wabasca and tomorrow here. 240 X-Rays are taken at Wabasca and 260 here, which includes adults only.

Another plane today brings the school Inspectors, Mr. Gue from Edmonton and Fadum from High Prairie.

June 9, 1961 - page 40

Sports day. It doesn't start until after dinner. We have been thinking and preparing for this for a long time. Three bingos and a raffle were held, an amateur night to raise money to pay the prizes to the various race competitors, etc. Leonard Ketchemonia, our boys' Supervisor, took charge of the whole affair and organized it with the help of a team of six Indians - two from each of the two reserves and two representatives of the local Métis. It was very successful in that respect. May we attract as many people and as much revenue for the church!

Leonard is doing very well in his field. He organized the first basketball games here for boys and girls last winter with great success. He also inaugurated baseball games for the boys this spring. His youngsters rarely lose a game when they play against the men on the reserve. Leonard has been giving regular gymnastics lessons to the boys and girls this year. In early July, he will be taking his 2nd year of physical education classes in Red Deer on his own initiative. He is a Saulteaux Indian from Kamsock, Sask.

Coming back to Sports Day, there was a fairly good turnout, but less than last year it seems. This may have been due to the fact that about 40 men were busy fighting the fire. There were several games of baseball and softball. Horse races, children's races and then, in the evening, a good dance!

June 21-22, 1961 - page 41

Doctors Corrigan and McDonald from the Camsell Hospital come to spend two days here to treat and examine the Indians.

June 30, 1961 - page 41

The children received their promotions in class this morning from Father Guimont, Principal. In spite of the rain again this morning, many of them ran home when they had been asked to wait! Long live the vacations!

July 12, 1961 - pages 41-42

Departure of the school children who stayed here since the end of classes because of the difficulty to get a plane and the bad weather. Most of the eleven children are from Calling Lake. Our children from the Superior School in Joussard have suffered the same fate and are arriving today.

On the 13th, a big Barkley is coming to pick up nine patients, mostly children, to have tonsil surgery at Camsell.

August 15, 1961 - page 42

A big Barkley brings us several government officials for dinner. They are Dr. Davies from the Camsell, Letourneau from the Dept of Public Works, Chaffu and John Davids the pilot. They are on their way to the Fort and Assumption. The same day, the new Superintendent of the High Prairie Indian Agency, J. R. Kelly and his assistant, Mr. Conrad, arrived for a visit.

September 5, 1961 - page 43

Classes began with 96 boarders, including 53 girls and 43 boys and 35 day students.

September 12-13, 1961 - page 43

Dr. Davies and Dr. Wilkinson from Camsell arrive to see the patients. Dr. Davies toured Trout Lake, Chipewyan and Sandy Lake the next day.

September 17, 1961 - page 43

Mr. Knott, the auditor for the Indian schools is here.

October 11, 1961 - page 44

Dr. McDonald from Camsell visited for patients. Then engineers for the school water system.

October 16, 1961 - page 44

Visit of J. R. Kelly, Superintendent of the High Prairie Indian Agency, Mr. Wyman and Conrad - all came about the sawmill. Mr. Gareth inspects the school boiler room.

November 6-8, 1961 - page 44

Dr. Wilkinson came and brought four patients back to Edmonton.

January 22, 1962 - page 46

Arrival of the Rev. Mother Provincial of the Sisters of Providence, Sr. Florence Marie, accompanied by Sisters Veronica (bookkeeper) and Beatrice (director of studies). Mr. Shatz, the Indian Assistant Agent lost his baby in the last few days. He is on his way back from High Prairie and is bringing Mr. Oldering (the federal auditor) to us. Camsell physician, Dr. Wilkinson, came this week also.

January 31, 1962 - page 47

Reception of about 100 Crusaders in the school chapel this afternoon by Father Superior. Father Lesmerises who is in charge of the Crusade was master of ceremonies for the occasion.

February 2, 1962 - page 47

The hospital is full of patients - mostly sick babies with their mothers taking care of them.

February 9, 1962 - page 47

In the meantime, the children are recovering from a bad influenza attack - a kind of epidemic called "the flu". It lasted from Feb. 4-16 and most of the children had to be bedridden. Nothing absolutely serious, as no one died, but it was a painful illness. Almost all the families on the reserve had a taste of it. On the 11th, Father Fournier received a visit from Madame La grippe and was also bedridden.

February 17, 1962 - page 47

The next day, Dr. Wilkinson arrived from Camsell. Although a very sick patient had to be taken out, he decided to spend the night here because of the thick fog.

April 3, 1962 - page 50

Mr. Kelly, Superintendent of the Indian Department for the High Prairie Division, comes to make his "monthly" visit.

May 18, 1962 - page 52

[Repairing the school chapel's Stations of the Cross].

Paul Gladue Jr., a former student of the school, has repainted all the stations with oil, with skill, taste and simplicity.

The final result is a Stations of the Cross that looks marvelous and invites to a deep, true piety.

May 16, 1962 - page 53

Dr. Thompson (woman) brings in several patients who have been waiting for the landing strip to dry out here for three weeks! Mr. Martin from Welfare is also visiting.

June 6-10, 1962 - page 53

It is the day of the Treaty at Desmarais. Mr. Kelly is there with a policeman from Slave Lake, two technicians for the X-ray and a male nurse who takes blood samples. Yesterday the Treaty was paid for at Wabasca and despite a torrential downpour, 170 people showed up.

June 25-29, 1962 - page 54

It's the end of the year cleanup all over the school. It is the children who are put to the test to accomplish these chores.

June 30, 1962 - page 54

Departure of the students for the vacations following the promotions given by Father Principal in the school gymnasium. Most of the students passed in their school year, although they could have done better. They received many certificates of competence in catechism or other subjects and all left with large boxes of laundry and books.

October 17, 1962 - page 58

Arrival of Mr. L. R. Gue, School Inspector for the Northland school division. Fr. Guimont takes him to the new school & gymnasium to visit. Tonight, they will go to Point St. Charles to visit St. Theresa School where Sister Eilaine Marguerite is Principal.

October 19, 1962 - page 58

In the afternoon, departure of Mr. L. R. Gue, Inspector. During his visit, he visited the new schools and held a meeting of the teachers.

Arrival of Mr. Garth, engineer, federal inspector.

October 22, 1962 - page 59

A plane brings us the X-Ray Unit from Camsell. Father Guimont drove them to Point St-Charles. The same evening, they were back here for the personnel.

October 23, 1962 - page 59

Departure of the plane around 10:00 a.m. with the two radiology technicians on their way to Assomption & Habay and Fort Vermilion.

November 7, 1962 - page 59

Visit of Mr. R. Kelley, Superintendent of the Indian Agency. He is accompanied by Mr. Yeoman, Federal Forestry Engineer.

November 20, 1962 - page 60

In the afternoon, the new Superintendent of the Slave Lake Indian Agency, Mr. J. R. Wild, arrived with Mr. Conrad.

November 25, 1962 - page 60

At two o'clock this afternoon, Sunday, was held in the school gymnasium the Amateur Show. Groups and individuals from here and Wabasca presented songs, recitations and music on guitar and fiddle. A large crowd attended; the hall was packed. Prizes were distributed to those whom the judges designated as winners.

December 3, 1962 - page 60

Visit of Mr. J. R. Wild, Superintendent of the Indian Agency and his wife. (They are Catholic.)

December 5, 1962 - page 60

Departure of the above-mentioned visitors. Mr. Wild came to investigate the recent (and first) election of the Chief & Councillors of the reserve. It appears that the whole thing suffers from irregularities, which means that a new election will probably be necessary.

February 11, 1963 - page 66

Visit of Mr. Wild, Supt L. S. L. Agency & Mr. Yoeman, Federal Forestry of Ottawa.

September 3, 1963 - page 69

Opening of the school year. This year we are receiving a few students from the Hobbema, Saddle Lake, Sturgeon Lake and Fort Smith reserves. Most of them are neglected children for one reason or another. Some are delinquent, but are not hardened to the job.

November 13, 1963 - page 70

Misters G. K. Gooderham - Superintendent of Indian Schools and L. R. Gue, Superintendent of the Northern School Division, come to Desmarais and Wabasca to visit the schools and classrooms. For the first time in the district a school committee was formed. There was a vote by the parents. One Protestant and two Catholics were chosen. By the way, the Protestant member elected is very favorable to the Catholics and was even proposed by the Catholic missionary.

March 20, 1964 - page 72

Two mission cars left for a short visit to Jousard with the older girls of the mission to give them a contact between the students of these two Indian schools. A nice reception was made by the staff and the students of the mission of Jousard. The visit continued to the town of High Prairie and the return trip was made on Saturday evening, all happy.

September 5, 1964 - page 73

The Desmarais Indian School saw the number of boarding students increase from 70 to 115 thanks to several Indian students sent from the various reserves such as Hobbema, Saddle Lake,

Winterburn, Canyon Creek, Driftpile, Sturgeon Lake and especially an impressive number of 28 students from the Fort Vermilion agency, in all 70 boys and 45 girls. The boarding school is now almost fully operational.

June 9-10-11, 1965 - page 77

Indian Treaty paid for by Mr. Wild, Indian Agent. From Desmarais to Wabasca, Lac La Truite and Chipewyan Lake. Departure of the whole group composed of the Indian agent, the police, the people of the x-ray and the nurse.

June 10, 1965 - page 77

Children's game day for all schools in the Wabasca District.

September 3, 1965 - page 78

The students returned to school quietly, as did the teachers. We regret that Northland School Division could not keep its promise to provide us with Catholic teachers and out of 10 teachers for Desmarais and Mistassini High School, there are only 3 in all. A strong protest, by letter from Father Tissier, obtained a second promise in writing that a correction will be made next year and permission was granted to teach catechism, even during class, before the end of the class so that we could fulfill our obligations in teaching catechism.

February 5, 1966 - page 80

Father Sauvé, from Joussard, arrived with his hockey club to play against the children of the Desmarais Indian School. The final score was 8 to 7 in favor of Desmarais. There was no lack of interest until the end and the last minute gave our club the upper hand.

February 16, 1966 - page 80

A delegation from Wabasca numbering ten, consisting of Indian Chief Sammy Young, Oliver Yellowknee, George Pelletier, Clara Yellowknee, P. G. Tissier, Sr. Denise, Denis Cardinal, Francis Ominagak and [??] Carburry, leave by plane, paid for by the Department, to go to McMurray to visit the Indian and Metis Industrial School. This may give ideas for requesting a similar program in Wabasca.

Father Lamothe went to Slave Lake to meet with eight Gambler children who had come from Calling Lake to Slave Lake for our school.

June 30, 1966 - page 82

The children left at noon. Forty of them will leave on two Northland School Division buses that are on their way to Edmonton for repairs. Lawrence Mathews of the Joussard Mission will meet them at Slave Lake to bring them to Joussard for the evening and will leave the next day for Fort Vermilion with more than 25 children from this area who have spent the year here at our Desmarais Indian Residential School. Mr. and Mrs. Côté, Supervisors of the children, accompany them during the trip to the Fort.

August 30, 1966 - page 82

The children arrive from all over the province for our Desmarais boarding school. It will take a few more weeks before the school year stabilizes.

September 12, 1966 - page 83

Visit from Mr. Richard Grovern [??], recruiter for our Indian schools, and surprise to count 121 boarders, which we have not had for several years.

December 22, 1966 - page 84

A special Canadian Coachways bus from Edmonton, hired by the Indian Department and Northland School Division, picked up over 45 children to take them for the Christmas vacations to their families at High Level, Meander River, Steen River and Fort Vermilion and to Sturgeon Lake. The children from Le Poisson Blanc went with their parents. All in all, out of 130 boarding children, we have only 30 left for the Christmas vacations.

September 4, 1967 - page 86

The children arrived from all over and in the first week, we counted 125 boarders.

December 22, 1967 - page 87

For the first time in many years, all the children of our Desmarais boarding school leave the residence to spend the vacations with their families or with some relatives. Our personnel can thus take a good rest and this has allowed us to receive several visitors.

June 28, 1968 - page 89

Three Canadian Coachways buses came to pick up the children from the residential school to take them back to their respective families. One for Edmonton, one for Sturgeon Lake and one for Fort Vermilion. Over 100 children were returned to their families for the summer vacations.

September 2, 1968 - page 90

Today is the first day of school for the children. Already 125 are registered and there are still a few to come. We already have all our personnel for the supervision of the children of which three are C. L. M. (Canadian Lay Mission). L. M. (Canadian Lay Missionaries) from Wawa, Ontario. Mr. Frank Allan, their director from Wawa, accompanied them and came to see our present organization.

December 20, 1968 - page 91

Three buses came to pick up the children to give them the privilege of spending the vacations with their families. None of the children stayed at the Mission for the Christmas vacations.

January 3, 1969 - page 91

The children are back from vacation; about fifteen are missing, but the future has brought almost all of them back to us.

September 2, 1969 - page 95

Today is the first day of school for the children. Due to a change imposed by the Indian Department, only 32 children are admitted to the Desmarais Residential School, almost all of them from the Fort Vermilion, Tall Cree and Fox Lake Agency.

August 31, 1970 - page 103

The bus brings students to the school. There are some from Fort Vermilion, Tall Cree, Fox Lake and surrounding areas; 47 in all. Classes began the next day.

Page 105 - [Last entry dated February 6, 1971.]

- ◆ Translated by Eloi DeGrâce with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)
December 2021