

Indian Affairs  
School Files

(RG 10, Volume 6434)

File 877-5, part 6	West Coast Agency - Alberni Residential School - Building Maintenance - Supplies - Accounts. 1938 - 1941
File 877-5, part 7	West Coast Agency - Alberni Residential School - Building Maintenance - Supplies - Accounts. 1941 - 1944
File 877-5, part 8	West Coast Agency - Alberni Residential School - Supplies - Accounts. 1944 - 1947
File 877-5, part 10	West Coast Agency - Alberni Residential School - Building Maintenance - Supplies - Accounts. 1947 - 1949
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VOL. 7 CLOSED

VOL. 8

877-5 1027



DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND RESOURCES

ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

BUILDINGS, ACCTS. &C.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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In his report Mr. Cornish further advises as follows:

"The slab in this instance was laid on a bed of gravel over natural gravelly material. Before laying any linoleum on the basement slab, the linoleum layers tested the concrete for dampness and were satisfied that the surface was dry.

"Linoleum floors have been cleaned by scrubbing with mop and water, this being done as often as three times a week. As the linoleum was laid with tight joints filled with wax, I do not think that the scrubbing started the condition. However, once a joint was slightly opened the use of water no doubt accentuated the trouble. The danger of using an excess of water on the linoleum surfaces was pointed out to Mr. Scott.

"Careful examination of basement walls and of cement floor areas not covered with linoleum disclosed no sign of dampness. The linoleum on all floors above the basement is in good condition".

Mr. Cornish's report has been carefully reviewed, and it is felt that in addition to the damage attributable to excess water used in cleaning, the possibility exists of a slight trace of moisture being present in the concrete slab below the linoleum during the rainy season.

It is common practice to lay linoleum on good concrete basement floor and this was followed in this structure in order to keep capital cost as low as possible. However, it would seem local conditions at Alberni would be better taken care of by the application, over the concrete slab, of a damp-proofing treatment.

The cost of carrying out such work is no greater now than when the building was under construction, with the exception of the minor charge of lifting the linoleum.

The enclosures which were forwarded with your memorandum of the 29th ultimo included an estimate dated the 25th ultimo from the Fred M. Beatty (Tremco Western) Ltd., to take up linoleum, remove all adhesive materials from floor and linoleum, thoroughly damp-proof all concrete floor surfaces and relay linoleum in certain listed rooms, for the sum of \$715.00. The list included all linoleum covered areas except the boys' and girls' locker rooms. In considering treatment we felt these areas should also be included. The Beatty Company have advised by wire in this connection:

"Retel locker areas not included in tender STOP  
Figure eighteen cents per square foot additional  
STOP This now covers all linoleum areas in base-  
ment STOP Can safely recommend and guarantee  
specification".

The additional area involved is approximately 600 square feet and at the figure quoted raises the total cost to \$823.00, which is considered reasonable.

Under the circumstances it is recommended that the price submitted by The Fred M. Beatty Tremco Ltd., of Vancouver, be accepted.

With regard to the item in the Beatty tender regarding the application of Tremco Penetrem Floor finish to the linoleum in the three basement Recreation rooms, at an additional cost of \$82.00, I may say that these areas were specified to be wax finished when the linoleum was laid and the suggested treatment over a waxed surface is not desirable. The linoleum should be waxed periodically as an ordinary maintenance operation.

With reference to the Fir floors in the Classroom Building which were reported to be deteriorating due to unsatisfactory finish, Mr. Cornish reports as follows:

"There is slight wear in the most used sections of these floors and some dirt has been ground into the surface of the flooring. The condition is not serious, the wear being no more than might be expected from the heavy traffic. In my opinion, there is no evidence of faulty material or finishing. In order to apply a protective finish of the nature of Penetram it would be necessary to re-sand the floors. Such a finish would certainly save the surface from future wear but I do not see the necessity for it at this time".

Under the circumstances no action is recommended in this connection.

There still exists a free balance of \$1,030.00 from funds provided under this year's estimates for the project. If these funds are to be used for the work it will be necessary to arrange to begin work immediately to have same completed before March 31st. In this connection it should be ascertained from the Indian Affairs Branch whether they prefer to have the work carried out now with funds available, but at great inconvenience to the school authorities, or if they will provide funds in 1941-42 to have the work carried out during the summer months when the pupils will be absent.

We would be glad to be advised of the decision regarding the matter as soon as possible if the work is to be carried out before March 31st.

Respectfully submitted,

*J. S. Mills*

Chief Engineer.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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*Act. [Signature]*

Ottawa,  
February 25, 1941.

Memorandum:

DIRECTOR

Surveys & Engineering Branch

I am in receipt of your memorandum of February 20 forwarding a report on the condition of the floors in the basement of the Alberni Indian Residential School.

It is noted that to do the work required will involve an expenditure of \$823.00. There are no funds for this purpose provided in our appropriation for the fiscal year 1941-42.

*[Handwritten initials]*

*[Signature]*  
Director.

*Feb 26/41*

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Full-Rate Message	
Day Letter	DL
Night Message	NM
Night Letter	NL

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a full-rate message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

# CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAM



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THE SECRETARY, INDIAN AFFAIRS BRANCH 271

DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND RESOURCES OTTAWA ONT

REGRET REPORT CLASSROOM BUILDING ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL COMPLETELY

DESTROYED BY FIRE NO DAMAGE TO MAIN BUILDING NO ONE INJURED COMPLETE

REPORT TO FOLLOW

P B ASHBRIDGE INDIAN AGENT

1242P



Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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154-1-5

OFFICE OF THE  
DIRECTOR

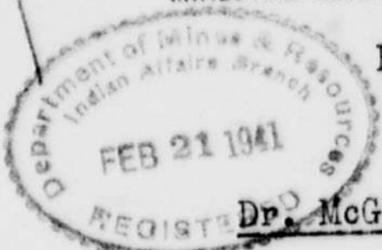


CANADA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
MINES AND RESOURCES

SURVEYS AND  
ENGINEERING BRANCH

February 20, 1941.

Memorandum:



Dr. McGill

Re - Floors, Indian Residential  
School, Alberni, B.C.

Our Engineer, Mr. C.R. Cornish, made a recent inspection of the condition of the floors in the basement of the above building, with particular regard to the cementing of the linoleum on the concrete floors. The attached copy of Mr. Mills' report of the 19th instant in this connection is self-explanatory.

I am advised that with the provision made in this building for sub-drainage of the basement by a tile system underneath the floor, it was considered that the cost of waterproofing might be saved. However, perhaps due to both seepage from under the floor and from water applied to the floor surface, waterproofing seems now necessary, and our officers recommend that the offer of the Fred M. Beatty (Tremco Western) Ltd., to take up the linoleum, damp-proof all concrete floor surfaces and re-lay the linoleum in certain rooms, for \$715.00, be accepted. At the same time, the locker areas should be similarly treated, giving an approximate cost of \$823.00.

There are funds remaining in the Vote for this School to cover this work, but it is doubtful if it should be undertaken at this time. It will greatly disrupt the work of the School and the dining room facilities, if undertaken now, as the work would likely be under way for some three weeks. At the same time it might be difficult to get the floors thoroughly dry at this time of year.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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It would consequently be preferable to defer the work until the School is closed next summer, if your Branch could make funds available at that time.

Would you kindly advise me of your wishes in this connection.

*J. M. Davids*

Director.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
CANADA

OFFICE OF  
INDIAN AGENT

6172/41/C.

West Coast Agency,  
Port Alberni, B.C.,  
February 22, 1941.

Sir:

I have the honour to report on the fire which destroyed the classroom building of the Alberni Indian Residential School.

Date and Time. Fire was first discovered at 10:30 P.M. on February 18th, 1941.

Notification. At 10:40 P.M., I was informed by the telephone operator that she thought there was a fire at the Indian Mission.

Action. I immediately phoned Constable Garrard, and proceeded to the school, arriving at approximately 10:50 P.M. On arrival I noticed that the fire was centred about the entrance and the centre of the building and roof. The fire department from Alberni had arrived and had two streams of water on the fire from the one hydrant. The amount of water was insufficient to be of any great value, and the fire was quickly out of control. Every effort was made to protect the main and surrounding buildings, and the fire was successfully confined to the classroom.

I had the Constable patrol the grounds, and posted others on the roofs of main buildings with extinguishers. The School staff and pupils behaved splendidly. Pupils were dressed and held in dormitories, and no confusion or excitement existed. Members of the staff guarded the exits and assisted generally in a very creditable manner.

Fire completely destroyed the classroom building and contents. Manual training machinery and exhibits were also destroyed. Fire was burned out by 1:30 A.M., when I arranged for one hose to be left with a fireman in charge.

Notification of Commissioner and Department. On return from the school, I immediately notified Mr. D. M. MacKay, and wired the Department of the occurrence.

Enquiry. On February 19th, I investigated causes etc. in company with the Provincial Police, and attach hereto findings and evidence as taken. The Police notified me that they were conducting their enquiry, and were not requested by myself to do so.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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6172/41/C.

- 2 -

West Coast Agency,  
Port Alberni, B.C.,  
February 22, 1941.

Report on fire, Alberni School.  
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Approximate Loss.      Approximate loss would be as below:

Building	\$10,000
Machinery	1,000
School Desks & Supplies	1,500
Pianos, etc.	500
Supplies	500
Exhibits	300
	<u>\$13,800</u>

Cause of Fire.

As investigation is being continued, I would hesitate at this time to express an opinion, but I do not feel satisfied that it was caused by spontaneous combustion or by carelessness.

Inspection by  
Commissioner.

On February 21st I accompanied Mr. Commissioner D. M. MacKay on his inspection of the school, at which time temporary arrangements were made for carrying on the school routine.

Respectfully submitted,

Your obedient servant,

P. B. Ashbridge,  
Indian Agent.

PBA/AM

D. M. MacKay, Esq.,  
Indian Commissioner for B.C.,  
P. O. Box 70,  
Vancouver, B. C.



Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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STATEMENTS OF REV. R. C. SCOTT, PRINCIPAL, AND STAFF MEMBERS  
OF THE ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, IN CONNECTION WITH THE  
FIRE IN THE CLASSROOM BUILDING, FEBRUARY 18th, 1941.

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Rev. R. C. Scott, B.A., Principal.

I was in the Mending Room with Miss Kirkpatrick, the Matron, talking over arrangements for the Opening Day. I left there at 10:20 P.M. and came to the office. Then I stepped into the Staff Sitting room and just then Mr. Bothwell, who was on duty on the Boys' Side came along. I asked him if he smelled anything. He said "No", but I distinctly smelled something as though there was cloth burning or burning rubber. We stood around a moment and then Mr. Bothwell went to the Boiler Room. He came back up and said there was smoke in the Boiler Room. I did not think anything of that as the fire box on the High Pressure Boiler often leaks a little smoke when freshly banked for the night. Mr. Bothwell then went through the door on the Boys Side and rushed back saying the Classroom Building was on fire. He rushed out then to the Classroom Building and I followed him. When I got to the door, the fire was burning up the wall to the right of the door and coming through the window at the top of the door and high up. There did not seem to be any fire on the basement floor; it seemed to be on the steps and up the wall. It seemed to be a boiling flame. There was no base to it. I rushed back into the Main Building and got a Fire Extinguisher. The Alberni Fire Department had been called. One of the small panes in the glass door was broken and I squirted the pyrene fluid in through that. I saw then that I could not do anything more and I realized that the children might get panicky if the fire got bright enough to waken them, so I came back into the building and gave instructions to the staff to stand by and to dress the children.

Miss L. Swartz, Teacher.

I left the Classroom Building at ten minutes after six. I tried the door to see if it was locked and it was. I know it can be forced open if you pull on both doors. There was nothing inflammable in the hall and there was nothing there to cause a fire that I could see.

Subsequent enquiry, February 19th, 1941, by Indian Agent and Provincial Police:

Ques. When did you leave the building, Miss Swartz?

Ans. Ten minutes after six.

Ques. How did you establish the time? Ans. I looked at my watch.

Miss Swartz: The lights were out. I had the hall light on and put it off when I came out. Miss O'Brien came over at 5:30 for her supper. When I came out the little catch on the door was out. Why it was out, I don't know. I just wondered if it had slipped out or what. When I had come in I know it was in. When I went in the catches were both in. I remember definitely putting my finger on the part for my thumb. I went in at 5 o'clock. We were looking over seat work. I didn't have a light on. I didn't see anyone and didn't hear anyone. Had classroom door open too. I didn't have the light on at the foot of the steps but I could see my way down. This is my first year. I have the Junior room.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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(2)

STATEMENTS RECEIVED FROM STAFF MEMBERS RE FIRE IN CLASSROOM  
BUILDING AT INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, ALBERNI, FEBRUARY 18, 1941.

Miss L. O'Brien, Teacher.

I saw the fire between 10:25 and 10:30 P.M. There was no one around the Classroom Building. The flames were coming out above the door. I ran out to the school. Mr. Bothwell was ahead of me. The door did not appear to be locked. It was open when I got there. The hall seemed full of fire right in front of the door.

Subsequent enquiry, February 19th, 1941, by Indian Agent and Provincial Police:

Miss O'Brien: I have been here four and a half months. I teach grades three and four.

Ques: Did you go into the building with Miss Swartz? Ans: Yes.

Ques: Who opened the door? Ans. Miss Swartz - with a key.

Ques: Did you notice just exactly what she did with the lock?

Ans: No. I was talking to two boys and didn't notice what she did.

They came with me into my room, one of them wanted his book. Then they both went directly out. I saw them out. I came back here about 5:25. I came out through the boys' door. I believe it was open, I don't remember for sure. The boys were then lining up. I came directly over to the school.

Ques: Would you be definite in saying that only Miss Swartz was left in the building? Ans. No - I wasn't in the other two rooms. They were closed. There was no sound. I believe Miss Enves was in one room when we arrived. She left after we had got there.

Ques: When did you first notice the fire? Ans. 10:25 to 10:30, I think. I was in my room. I was opening my window. I saw the blaze coming from the boys entrance from the door to the roof. Right from the bottom to the top. When I got over to the school the door was open but I believe Mr. Bothwell opened it just then. I didn't see anyone on the grounds from my window. I wasn't looking for anyone. I couldn't see very far around.

Mr. Nichol, Engineer.

I saw the fire about 10:30 P.M. I live in the cottage and I was in bed. Mr. Prosser, who lives there too, saw the fire and shouted that the school was on fire. He went out ahead of me. I saw no one. I am usually the last around at night. I left the cottage about 9:55 P.M. and came to the Boiler Room to look after the fires for the night. There was no fire then in the Classroom Building. I came up through the building and out the front door. That was about 10:20 p.m.

Subsequent enquiry, February 19th, 1941, by Indian Agent and Provincial Police.

Ques: You are the Engineer, Mr. Nichol? Ans. Yes. I have been employed here since 1st August 1940. I came from Coqualeetza. I am staying in the cottage and I am practically the last one around the buildings at night looking over the boilers etc. At about 5 to 10 I went over to the Boiler Room. I saw no lights in the Classroom Building. If there was any fire, I would have seen it. At the school, whoever comes out last puts out the lights and sees that the doors are locked. I wasn't within 50 or 60 feet of the door. There were definitely no lights. No one was around. I had been down in the boiler room 6 or 8 minutes. It was after ten before I left. The clock was striking ten when I was coming up the stairs from the Boiler room. The "iron Firemen" were the last that I put out. I came up here and looked into the staff sitting room, then came into the office with Mr. Scott for possibly ten minutes. I left there and went straight over to the cottage and went into the bedroom and looked at my watch. It was between 20 and 25 minutes past ten. I set my alarm clock at that time. (To go to the cottage, I left the school by the front door. I had my back towards the classroom building.) I then went to bed and Mr. Prosser came into the bedroom and looked through the window, and said "the school is on fire."

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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(3) STATEMENTS RECEIVED FROM STAFF MEMBERS RE FIRE IN CLASSROOM BUILDING AT ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, FEBRUARY 18th, 1941.

Mr. J. Nichol, Engineer. (cont.)

The fire was breaking through over the door. Whether it was coming through the glass or not I could not say. It was all right in the doorway. It hadn't broken through the ceiling then. It was all confined to the stairway and was not on either side or doorway at first, looking in through window. There was a light switch in the lobby. I would say there was absolutely no defective wiring. There was nothing in the passageway leading from the Manual Training room to the Motor Mechanics that was inflammable, with the exception of lino on the stairs. My theory was that there was nothing inflammable. I hadn't been actually at the door and am not prepared to say that it was open or closed. I am not prepared to say if the door was locked or not. It definitely started in the stairs and was fed pretty huskily. I couldn't say that I smelt any special odour. There were no strangers around. I could see no lights or fire in the manual training room itself. I couldn't have helped seeing it if there was. I am positive there was no light or fire. There was no sign of fire in the Manual Training room when the firemen arrived. After they began to break windows the draft got in and away it went. Nothing could cause a short circuit in the wiring in building.

Ques. What colour was the flame? Ans. There was not much flame until it broke through the roof.

There were no rags in the building to cause spontaneous combustion.

Mr. R. Huddlestone, Boat Building Instructor.

I heard a roaring noise and saw the glare on the wall of my room. I did not hear anything outside of that. The fire was in the hallway inside the door on the Boys' Side of the Classroom Building.

Subsequent enquiry, February 19th, 1941, by Indian Agent and Provincial Police.

Mr. Huddlestone: I have been six years with the Indian Department. I have been heresince the school opened in August. I stay in the cottage Mr. Glover had.

Ques. When did you first see the fire? Ans. I thought it was 10 minutes past 10, but it must have been 20 minutes past ten. I noticed it from bedroom window which faces that way. I heard the noise (like a car on gravel) and saw the reflection on the wall at the same time. I was up like a shot. I looked out first, then, as I remember it, there was a considerable glare even though it seemed just like a few seconds from the start. They were all by the boys entrance door. (flames) It seemed to be a mass of flames. The house is about 250 feet from the Classroom building. I went down to see it as quickly as I could. I didn't notice any peculiar odour. The motor mechanics department is in that building. There were some chemicals stored there but they were nowhere near where the fire started.

Ques: Do the boys ever get out of the dormitories at night?

Ans. They can't after the doors are locked. When the lights are out, the doors are locked, and the lights are not put out until they are all in.

I know that the Manual Training room was clean and tidy. It apparently didn't start in that room anyway. The centre burned out first. There was practically nothing that would burn. The hallway was painted.

Mr. R.R.Bothwell, Manual Training Instructor.

I saw the fire at 10:25 P.M. I was just going through the Fire Doors on the Boys' Side. The flames were coming through the window above the doorway. I ran back down the hall and told Mr. Scott. Then I ran back out to the Classroom building. The door was loose but you could not force it. I closed the door at once as the flames broke out. As I came back from the Girls' Side, I saw an Indian coming across the grounds. I do not know who he was but I pointed him out to Mr. Scott and Mr. Nichol.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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(4) STATEMENTS RECEIVED FROM STAFF MEMBERS RE FIRE IN CLASSROOM BUILDING AT ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, FEBRUARY 18th, 1941.

Mr. R. R. Bothwell, Manual Training Instructor. (cont.)

He had a round face, about 5'4" in height, wore horn rimmed glasses, a Chinchilla coat, gray trousers. He appeared to be quite neat. Just the one door opened. The plungers were in the door. The door on the Girls' Side was locked.

The flames appeared to be smouldering at first, but when I opened the door they flared up. The fire appeared to have started on the concrete floor and worked up the walls. The basement had all been cleaned up that day. I was in the Boiler Room at 10:20 P.M. and there was smoke in the Boiler Room. The building (Classroom) was full of smoke. There was a liquid on the floor under the door leading from the Motor Mechanics room into the passageway where the fire was. I do not know what this was.

Subsequent enquiry, February 19th, 1941, by Indian Agent and Provincial Police.

Mr. Bothwell: Have been here about six months. This is my first appointment with the Department. I left the building about ten minutes to five. Miss Enves was in the building when I left. She was the only one as far as I know. Building was clean and in order. I asked the boys to sweep the dust out of the passage - no rags, etc. First notices the fire at 10:25 P.M. I came up from down stairs after putting lights out. Mr. Scott said he could smell smoke. I couldn't. I had been down in the boiler room. I saw an orange coloured flame coming through windows on the landing just in the doorway. Coming out through windows. Signs indicated fire was in lobby. Flames came out top window.

Ques. You pulled the door open? Ans. It wasn't unlatched. The door was closed but not locked. The lock wasn't out.

Ques. Did you open the door without a key? Ans. I unlocked the girls door. Nothing I can think of to indicate if door had been locked or charred from inside. On the girls' side, it had definitely been locked. The door was well charred inside on the boys' side. I could tell from the heat coming from the door. One door was fastened and one was not locked. I put my hand out and pulled it. I always go out to the school, try door first, then if locked put key in it and open it. I have the key.

What about the Indian you saw? -- I saw him coming across the girls' playground when I was coming back, or going to the girls' door. The Indian was coming from East to West. He was approaching the school. I can pick him out. I ignored him altogether. He had a surprised look on his face. His hands were in his pockets. He was coming towards the school.

Ques. Where, in your opinion, did the fire originate?

Ans. Either on the landing or just downstairs towards the basement.

The fire seemed to catch hold in the wall. I told the firemen that alcohol, paint, etc. were in the manual training room.

Re liquid on the floor: -- It wasn't burning. I have no idea what this would be. When I picked up my feet it seemed to cling to my feet. It was a concrete floor. No reason for it unless the fire extinguisher broke. The wiring was in flexible cable up above. I don't see how it could have possibly started there.

Ques. Do boys do down there after school hours?

Ans. They came down before the quarter to four bell rang, and watched me build the partition, then all cleared out after. I remember putting the latch on the outside door on the boys side. Miss Enves mentioned she thought that Miss Swartz and Miss O'Brien were in the building. The Indian was there shortly after the fire.

Ques. How would you account for the quick way the fire took hold?

Ans. Perhaps the donnaconna board (pressed paper), which was used on all upper part of the hall. Three-ply was used below.

I saw smoke while I was in the boiler room.

Ques. How long from time you were in boiler room before you saw fire?

Ans. A few minutes. I saw smoke in boiler room that had come through the tunnel.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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STATEMENT OF MR. HUGH MARTIN - CONTRACTOR.

It was a straight frame building. The construction was such that it should have been a slow burning building. The walls were finished in fibre board, which is fireproof. I can't imagine how fire could have gained such rapid headway. It is the second building I have built like that. The large hall was 15 feet to the top. Flames shooting up from the bottom of the stairs would have a good chance to lick right up the centre of the walls. I believe there must be about 15 keys for these buildings because we locked the buildings up all the time. Many sub trades had keys. There are about 23 keys now in existence for these buildings - I had 8 more sent to Mr. Scott. Indians were around here all the time before the school was taken over by Mr. Scott.  
(The building must have been dry as tinder)



Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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159 - 1 - 5

EXTRACT  
ORIGINAL ON  
75-159

West Coast Agency,  
Port Alberni, B.C.  
February 28, 1941.

Sir:

I have the honour to submit  
herewith regular Agency Letter, covering conditions  
within this Agency during month ending February 28th,  
1941.

x x x

SCHOOLS:

At the Alberni Residential School, fire  
destroyed the classroom block and all school supplies,  
desks, etc. A complete report on the fire has been  
forwarded. Following the fire, arrangements were  
made to continue classes, using various rooms in the  
main building for the purpose.

x x x

The Secretary,

P.B. ASHBRIDGE,  
Indian Agent.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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File

EXD.

### FIRE RAZES UNIT OF INDIAN SCHOOL

ALBERNI, B.C., Feb. 19.—(CP) —Fire last night destroyed the school-room unit of the new Alberni Indian School, but was kept from spreading to other buildings by fire-fighting work of the school staff and Alberni volunteer brigade.

Damage is estimated at \$16,000. The entire school, which houses 215 Indian children and staff of 20, was completed a few months ago at a cost of \$165,000. It was to have been opened formally next Friday.

Rev. R. C. Scott, school principal, said he smelt "an odor like overheated iron" in the building about 10:20 p.m., but at first located no fire, although a small quantity of smoke was seen coming from basement heating apparatus.

While the tour of inspection was in progress, flames were seen to burst from the windows. The staff tried to fight the fire while a call was put in for the volunteer fire department, which arrived in seven minutes. No one was injured.

Four years ago almost to the day the entire school was destroyed by fire.

Mr. Scott said the school opening would have to be postponed as a result of the fire. It was postponed once before due to a mild influenza outbreak among the children.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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*Re letter to  
A.P.*

Ottawa,  
February 27, 1941.

Memorandum:

DIRECTOR

Surveys & Engineering Branch

With reference to my memorandum of February 20 and your reply of February 23, in connection with the destruction by fire of the new classroom building at the Alberni Residential School, I enclose, for your information, copies of letters which have just been received from Indian Commissioner MacKay and Indian Agent Ashbridge.

*et  
J.M.H.*

*Feb 27/41*

*Sweeney*  
Director.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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Ottawa,  
February 27, 1941.

Memorandum:

DEPUTY MINISTER

Re: Alberni Indian Residential School

With reference to the fire on February 18 which destroyed the classroom building at the above-mentioned residential school I enclose copies of letters which have just been received:

1. The Indian Commissioner's letter of February 25;
2. Indian Agent Ashbridge's letter of February 22;
3. Statements of the Principal and staff members of the Alberni School in connection with the fire.

*PP*  
*PH*

PP

*Feb 27/41*

*Howell*  
Director.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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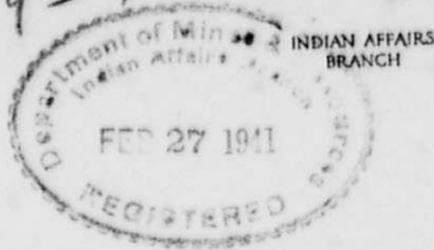
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INDIAN COMMISSIONER  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

IN YOUR REPLY REFER TO  
NO. 15/15/577.  
ALSO TO DATE OF THIS LETTER



CANADA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
MINES AND RESOURCES



P.O. BOX 70 February 25, 1941.  
VANCOUVER, B.C.

AIRMAIL

Dear Sir:

The Department has no doubt been advised by Mr. Indian Agent Ashbridge of the destruction by fire last Tuesday night, the 18th instant, of the new classroom block of the Alberni Indian Residential School. I was informed of the fire by the Agent early Wednesday morning while in Victoria on my way to Alberni for the official opening, which had been arranged for 2 P.M. on the 21st instant.

I visited the school on Friday, last, and conferred with Rev. Mr. Scott and also the Provincial Police and Provincial Fire Marshal, who were at the school making the usual investigation. Up to the present time the origin of the fire, which completely destroyed the classroom block, remains a mystery. Although incendiarism is suspected and has been suggested, no evidence has so far been produced which would indicate this to be the cause.

Smoke was first noticed issuing from the building shortly after 10 P.M. but the fire had gained too much headway to be controlled with hand extinguishers, the only fire fighting equipment available and which had to be taken from the main building as the fire prevented the use of the equipment in the classroom block.

The loss to the Department is considerable. Valuable stocks of school supplies, manual training tools and machinery, all the desks and classroom equipment were totally destroyed.

Mr. Ashbridge's report has been received and is enclosed herewith. Reports of the investigation held by the police and fire marshal will also be forwarded when received.

The Secretary,  
Indian Affairs Branch,  
Department of Mines and Resources,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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The assembly hall, senior girls' and boys' playrooms and the old day school will be utilized as classrooms until such time as the classroom block can be replaced. A complete list of desks and other equipment necessary to continue the academic work of the school will be forwarded at the earliest possible date. It has occurred to me that the Department would no doubt wish to purchase as much as possible of the equipment required from any balance that may still be available in the current year's Vote, and all information with respect to such equipment is being secured and will be provided without delay.

Rev. Principal Scott and Rev. Mr. Bunt, the Superintendent of the United Church Missions for B.C., are to visit this office this morning for a conference with Inspector Barry and myself.

I expect, as a result of this conference, that it may be found necessary to have Inspector Barry proceed to Alberni during the first week in March to assist the Indian Agent and the Reverend Principal in the reorganization of the classroom work.

Yours faithfully,



D. M. MacKay.  
Indian Commissioner for B.C.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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Chairman: *A. N. Lean.*  
REV. W. M. ALLAN  
6444 ROAD Alberni,  
VICTORIA, B. C. B.C.

Secretary:  
REV. NORMAN J. CREES  
220 MOSS STREET  
VICTORIA, B. C.

Treasurer:  
MR. J. JOHNSTON  
1320 DALLAS ROAD  
VICTORIA, B. C.

The Victoria Presbytery  
OF  
The United Church of Canada

R. R. 3,  
Victoria, B. C.,  
28th. Feby. 1941.

Major McKay,  
Commissioner of Indian Affairs,  
Federal Building,  
VANCOUVER, B. C.

Dear Sir,

I beg to enclose herewith a copy of the findings of the special Committee appointed by the Victoria Presbytery for the purpose of surveying the work in connection with Alberni Residential School, Alberni, B. C.

Hoping that they may be of some assistance to you in your efforts to have the Alberni day school restored, and with kindest personal greetings,

I remain, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

*William Allan*

Secy of committee.



Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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CANADA

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Chairman: *T. McLean*  
REV. W. McLean  
GLYN ROAD Alberni  
VICTORIA, B. C. B. C.

Secretary:  
REV. NORMAN J. CREES  
220 MOSS STREET  
VICTORIA, B. C.

Treasurer:  
MR. J. JOHNSTON  
1320 DALLAS ROAD  
VICTORIA, B. C.

*The Victoria Presbytery*  
OF  
*The United Church of Canada*

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY VICTORIA PRESBYTERY  
TO MAKE A SURVEY OF CONDITIONS PERTAINING TO THE WORK AT  
ALBERNI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, ALBERNI, B. C.  
-----

On Thursday 20th. Feby. 1941, while Presbytery was in session at Metropolitan Church, Victoria, a special committee was appointed consisting of the following members; Rev. B. H. Wallace and Rev. W. Allan of Victoria; Rev. J. H. Wright of Nanaimo; Rev. A. McLean and Rev. F. E. Pitts of Alberni. This committee accompanied by Rev. W. P. Bunt, United Church Superintendent of Missions for B. C., and Rev. R. C. Scott, principal of Alberni Residential School, met in the school on the evening of Friday the 21st. February at 7 p.m.

On motion the following resolutions were unanimously adopted;

1. That this special Committee of Victoria Presbytery of the United Church of Canada places on record its deep appreciation of the excellent and far-reaching provision made for the comfort, wellbeing and educational development of B. C. native Indian children, in the erection of the new institution at Alberni, B. C., and known as the Alberni Residential School.
2. That in view of the recent destruction by fire of the day school in connection with the Alberni Residential School, any future replacement of the destroyed edifice should be built of brick or cement.
3. That ample supplies of hose and other fire-fighting apparatus should be provided for both Residential School and adjacent day school, such apparatus to be installed at a convenient location removed from the buildings themselves.

*William Allan*

-----  
Secy.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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POOR-COPY

INDIAN COMMISSIONER  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

IN YOUR REPLY REFER TO  
NO 15/15/655  
ALSO TO DATE OF THIS LETTER



CANADA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
MINES AND RESOURCES

159-1-5  
INDIAN AFFAIRS  
BRANCH

P.O. BOX 70  
VANCOUVER, B.C. March 3, 1941.



Dear Sir:

I enclose herewith a letter dated the 28th ultimo received from the secretary of the special committee appointed by the Victoria Presbytery to make a survey of conditions pertaining to the work at Alberni Residential School, together with their resolutions, which are self-explanatory.

Yours faithfully,

For D.M. MacKay,  
Indian Commissioner for B.C.

:GR

The Secretary,  
Indian Affairs Branch,  
Department of Mines & Resources,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

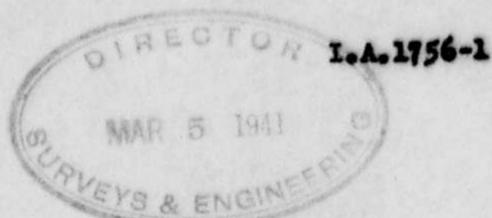
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POOR-CO

MID.



March 4, 1941.

Memorandum:

Mr. Wardle

Re: Floors, Indian Residential School,  
Alberni, British Columbia.

With reference to your memorandum of the 1st instant covering that from the Director of Indian Affairs dated the 25th ultimo in connection with the above, it is noted that Dr. McGill states, no funds have been provided for the purpose in the Indian Affairs appropriation for the 1941-42 fiscal year.

Your attention is directed to my memorandum of the 19th ultimo in this connection from which the following excerpt is quoted:

"There still exists a free balance of \$1,050.30 from funds provided under this year's estimates for the project. If these funds are to be used for the work, it will be necessary to arrange to begin work immediately to have same completed before March 31st. In this connection it should be ascertained from the Indian Affairs Branch whether they prefer to have the work carried out now with available funds, but at great inconvenience to the school authorities, or if they will provide funds in 1941-42 to have the work carried out during the summer months when the pupils are absent."

You will recall that the matter was further discussed with you on the 20th ultimo, and it was understood that you would recommend the waterproofing treatment be deferred until the summer vacation period.

It is now understood that due to the destruction by fire of the Class Room building that the areas to have been treated will be required by the school authorities for class room purpose, under which circumstances it would appear inadvisable to carry out the work on the floors before the summer months.

We would appreciate being advised as soon as possible of the final decision on the matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Engineer.

J. M. Wardle, Esq.,  
Director,  
Surveys and Engineering Branch,  
Department of Mines and Resources,  
O T T A W A,  
Ontario.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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Ottawa,  
March 13, 1941.

*EXD.*

Memorandum:

DIRECTOR

Surveys & Engineering Branch

Re: Floors, Indian Residential  
School, Alberni, B.C.

With reference to my memorandum of March 10 and previous correspondence in connection with the above I enclose, for your information, a copy of a letter which is being directed to the Principal of the Alberni School. This matter was carefully discussed with Mr. Buck and I believe that the decision now reached is the best under the circumstances.

*MAH*

*Alvord*  
Director.

*Wahl*

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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Ottawa,  
March 13, 1941.

AIR MAIL

Dear Doctor Scott:

I have had considerable correspondence with the officers of the Surveys & Engineering Branch in connection with the condition of the floors in the basement of the Alberni Indian Residential School.

In order to remedy the condition it would be necessary to take up the linoleum, damp-proof all concrete floor surfaces and relay the linoleum. This would involve considerable expenditure and in addition would necessitate totally vacating these rooms for a period of approximately four weeks.

Due to the approach of the end of the present fiscal year our funds are becoming limited and in addition there is the inconvenience that would be caused to you. With these in mind it has been decided that the best course to take is to take up the linoleum, store it and replace it later on.

The Surveys & Engineering Branch is arranging to have expert men take up the linoleum and that Branch will also purchase the materials required for waterproofing it.

When the linoleum is taken up the Department will depend on you to see that it is properly dried and stored until such time as we can arrange to have it relaid. This could most easily be done when the pupils are absent from the school.

Rev. R.C. Scott,  
Principal,  
Indian Residential School,  
Alberni, B.C.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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-2-

The materials which are being purchased by the Surveys & Engineering Branch and will be sent to the school before the end of the month should also be carefully stored so that they may be available when required.

Yours truly,

R.A. Hoey,  
Supt. of Welfare & Training.

*MA  
revised*

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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159-1-5

Ottawa,  
March 10, 1941.

Memorandum:

DIRECTOR

Surveys & Engineering Branch

Re: Floors, Indian Residential  
School, Alberni, B.C.

With reference to your memorandum of  
March 6 I consider that the necessary work should  
proceed at once with a view to having it completed  
by the end of the current month.

*Howley*  
Director.

*CRH*

*Wet 11/41*

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6434, File 877-5, part 7)

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