

Ahousaht IRS Timeline

- 1891** Roman Catholic day school closes.
- 1895** Presbyterian day school opens in December.
- 1900** First government grant, of \$300, to pay the day school teacher's salary, is issued.
Day school attendance reaches 68, with 56 the highest on the roll at any one time.
- 1901** Presbyterians apply for a grant to open a boarding school at Ahousaht for 50 children.
- 1902** Teacher John W. Russell takes 14 to 20 school children into his home.
- 1903** Twenty-six children are boarding with Russell; his wife's health breaks down and he resigns.
The Women's Missionary Society offers to pay for a residential school building and the government agrees to put \$1500 toward the building and a per capital grant for 25 students at \$60 per student.
Ahousaht is recognized as a boarding school as of July 1.
- 1904** Ahousaht chiefs petition against the Presbyterian school and mission.
Ahousaht IRS's first school year begins, although the school building is not yet complete.
- 1905** The main school building, with residence, is completed this year or next. It belongs to the WMS.
Thirty-five children are in residence.
- 1906** Will Maquinna, son of Ahousaht hereditary chief Billy, dies Nov. 11 at the school, sparking petitions and complaints against the school by community members who threaten "not to send any more children."
There is a whooping cough epidemic during 1906/07 school year.
- 1907** A small lake behind the school is drained to provide 12 acres of farmland.
There is a flu epidemic during 1907/08 school year. In this period, TB is also a serious health concern leading to the deaths of several children.
- 1908** A bake house is added to the west side of the main building.
There is a measles epidemic in February and at the close of the year [it is not clear whether this is one epidemic or two].
Forty children are in residence.

- 1909** A barn and a henhouse are erected.
Principal J.L. Millar resigns or is transferred suddenly, leaving the school without a principal.
- 1910** In January, John Ross, long a teacher at the school, is made principal.
A workshop is built by the school children.
- 1911** The boys build a boat house with launch site and a smoke house.
- 1912** The boys build a wooden playground for the girls.
There is a mild flu epidemic during the 1912/13 school year.
- 1913** A well is dug, this year or earlier, but it is not suitable for drinking water, which is collected from rainfall or brought by canoe from a mile away.
- 1914** Community members lodge complaints against Ross, among them, that he has pursued legal action against Ahousaht people engaging in potlatching.
- 1915** There is a mild chicken pox epidemic during 1915/16 school year.
- 1916** Only one acre of the “farm” is still fit for cultivation.
A girl dies after she accidentally sets herself on fire.
In [October?], the school is destroyed by fire.
- 1917** A day school is opened in December.
- 1918** The day school is declared a failure and closes in December.
The WMS puts up a new residence, smaller than the one that burned, that will accommodate 25 students and includes “an isolation sick room in the upper story.”
Older children will go to Alberni IRS.
- 1919** Ahousaht IRS reopens.
- 1923** Approved registration is increased from 25 to 30 at the start of the year, and to 35 in April.
- 1925** An increase in registration from 35 to 40 is approved.
Dorms in the attic are almost ready for occupation.
- 1926** There is a severe flu epidemic during the 1926/27 school year.

- 1928** Principal Millar has a stroke; Rev. Burton fills in until a replacement can be found.
- 1929** Principal J.W. Woods reports alarming levels of illness and mortality among the students.
A series of improvements are made: a coal-powered hot water heating system; plumbing and toilets; new kitchen and girls' playground, and enlargements to the dining room, girls' dorm and classroom.
Accommodation is now available for 50 students.
- 1930** In April, the per capita grant is increased to 50 pupils.
A new well is dug.
- 1931** Rev. Joseph Jones, of Cross Lake, takes over as principal.
Jones asks (unsuccessfully) for a plank road to connect the school with the government dock so they can bring in freight more easily.
Jones starts up a boy scout troop; girl guides are added later the same year.
On May 7, a roof fire occurred in the classroom building.
A carpentry and boat building shop and another classroom (as a separate building) is installed.
- 1932** In April the per capita grant is increased to 60 students because the school has promised to make a dorm for 10 boys above the new carpentry shop.
- 1934** A second classroom ("entirely constructed by the boys") is added to the classroom building; they also build the new workshop with a dorm above it.
Sixty-four students are in attendance. There are two teachers, six staff in all.
Fire hazards are noted.
- 1936** A separate principal's residence is built, paid for and owned by the Indian Department.
Community leaders ask school to introduce machine engine repair to the curriculum.
The farmland is drained again.
Given the state of the school buildings, the Indian agent recommends they be used for "only one more year."
- 1937** Ahousaht IRS receives children from Alberni after that IRS is destroyed by fire.
To cover the extra costs, the per capita grant is raised from 65 students to 70 for the next year only.

In February, a 14-year-old boy of the Nitinat Reserve, gets his arm mangled in the laundry extractor; he is taken to hospital in Tofino where his arm is amputated.

The half-day system is implemented and a manual training instructor is hired for the first time.

Kindergarten children, who “so far have not been in the classroom,” will now receive some instruction.

The playground is unusable.

1938 In November, 32 children were confined to bed with flu and tonsillitis.

Twenty former Alberni IRS students are on the roll and ten or 12 more will start next term.

The manual training instructor leaves and no replacement is found.

The septic tanks overflow and backs up under the school building; the well water is tested as a precaution.

An “unfortunate accident” causes the death of a student.

1939 There is a flu epidemic in March.

The building is dilapidated and “a great fire hazard,” but “in view of the new proposed school at Alberni not much new construction work is being done.”

Since there is no training or facilities at the school, the boys build a 40-foot boat in the village. They are learning about marine engines in class.

1940 An Indian woman is hired to teach girls weaving and beadwork.

The main school building is destroyed by fire on Jan. 26, 1940. No one is hurt and other buildings are not effected.

Resident children are sent to their home community day schools or to other residential schools.

A temporary day school for Ahousaht children is opened in the classroom building.

1944 The Indian Department decides to leave the principal’s residence, which is on United Church land, to the Women’s Missionary Society.