

Mount Elgin Industrial Institute Timeline

- 1845** The Chippewas of the Thames, the Chippewas of Sarnia, the Moravian of the Thames and the Mississaugas of the New Credit set aside one fourth of their annuities in support of industrial schools.
- 1847** The Indian Department and the Wesleyan Methodist Society establish an industrial school at Muncey under the supervision of the Wesleyan Methodist Society.
- 1849** The Chippewas of the Thames surrender 204 acres of their reserve for the school's use.
- 1851** Mount Elgin Industrial Institute officially opens.
Children attend from the four contributing communities.
- 1862** The school is closed for four years.
- 1866** The Wesleyan Methodist Society and the Indian Department reach a new agreement for Mount Elgin's management.
Admission is limited to the bands contributing to the school's operation: "The Chippewas of Sarnia, the Thames and Lakes Huron and Simcoe, the Moravians of the Thames, southerly shore, the Mississauga of the Credit River and Mud Lakes and Alnwick."
- 1867** The school reopens under Reuben E. Tupper.
- 1876** The Chippewas of the Thames object to non-contributing bands, such as Munsee-Delaware, receiving spots at the school, when they have not received their allotted eight spots.
- 1882** The Thames River floods, destroying school crops and \$2000 in fencing.
- 1883** An Iroquois youth residing on the Gibson Reserve in Muskoka is given permission to attend the school, even though his band does not contribute to the school fund.
- 1884** The school applies to lease additional farmland.
Oneida families petition to send children to the school; the Methodist Church agrees, "so soon as a vacancy occurs."
Four students write a complaint against Principal Shepherd and are expelled; a total of 13 children go truant.

- 1885** Students from Rama are given permission to enrol; by now the school is open to “all the other Bands of Indians in Ontario.”
- 1886** Enrolment is increased by 10, bringing the number of financed spots to 60.
Students receive two months’ vacation annually.
- 1887** The school’s students are contracted to build the new council house on the Chippewas of the Thames reserve.
- 1888** The school builds a new barn.
Financed enrolment is increased to 80.
Summer vacation is extended to three months, and Saturday classes are added.
- 1889** The boys’ playroom, which included a lavatory, clothing room, and the junior division schoolroom, burns down.
There are “several cases of inflammation and one death” among the school’s pupils.
- 1892** Bands now attending the school are Munceys [Munsee-Delaware], Lake of Two Mountains [Oka], Mississaugas of the Credit, Chippewas of Sarnia, Chippewas of the Thames, Chippewas of Beausoleil, Chippewas of Nawash, Chippewas of Saugeen, Chippewas of Rama, Oneidas of the Thames, Iroquois Caughnawage [Kahnawake Mohawk], Six Nations, Mississaugas of Almwick [now Alderville First Nation], Parry Island Indian Reserve.
- 1894** Children from Chimong [Curve Lake] are listed among the students.
The Chippewas of the Thames accuse Principal Shepherd of taking fence poles and cordwood from the Caradoc Reserve.
The Chippewas also refuse to contribute funds to enlarging the school, calling instead for a day school on each reserve.
Vacations are reduced to eight weeks.
- 1895** The school is closed for two quarters while the new building is constructed.
Vacations are reduced again, to six weeks.
- 1896** The new school building is completed.
The school is found to be occupying approximately 30 acres of unsundered land. The Indian Department seeks a surrender, but the Chippewas of the Thames will only surrender for leasing purposes.
Vacations are reduced to four weeks.
- 1897** Financed enrolment is increased to 100; the children come from 18 reserves.

- 1898** The school plans to renovate the old school building to serve as a music hall, a hospital, and rooms for the male cook and watchman.
- 1901** The school's water supply is found to be contaminated with sewage. The foreman's family becomes ill and his wife dies, the cause traced to the water.
A night watchman is hired because Principal Shepherd fears arson from Indians on the reserve.
- 1904** The water supply is still bad and the building is "completely unprotected in case of fire."
The corn crop fails.
- 1905** A boy is discharged with TB and dies in the hospital in Sarnia; another from Walpole Island, having no home, is cared for in the school hospital and dies there. In this period, TB is a serious concern.
Fifty acres of the winter wheat crop is destroyed.
A piggery is built for 72 pigs.
- 1906** Two girls set fire to the kitchen.
- 1907** There is a measles epidemic of 46 cases, one fatal. One boy and three girls are discharged with TB, and one girls with syphilis. There are also two light cases of pneumonia and one of diphtheria.
The boys' playhouse is destroyed by fire.
- 1908** A boy sets fire to the barn because "he did not want to stay at the institute."
- 1909** The half-day system is implemented for senior students.
- 1911** Hot water is installed.
Leased farmland has grown to 881 acres.
- 1912** Music is added to the curriculum.
After years of resistance from the principal, fire escapes are installed, but they are kept padlocked to prevent runaways.
- 1913** Two new wings are built.
Enrolment is increased to 125; non-vocational teaching staff is increased to three.
Blacksmithing is added to the curriculum.
The school, with the per capita grants and proceeds from the farm, is now self-sustaining.
Half the students receive vacations in July; the other half, in August.

- 1914** A nurse is added to the staff.
- 1915** An accidental fire destroys the barn and 25 head of cattle and horses; the barn and stable are rebuilt the same year.
- 1917** Funds for a drier are approved, as there is nowhere to dry laundry except on the radiators.
- 1920** Three boys are arrested for stealing, found guilty and committed to Mimico.
- 1922** There is a small fire in the kitchen.
- 1923** Sixty cases of flu are reported, a number of them with pneumonia.
- 1924** Enrolment reaches its highest point, with 169 students.
The septic tank is inadequate and sewage backs up under the school.
- 1925** Funds are approved for a creamery.
- 1926** There are only two school teachers, for 140 students.
- 1934** The laundry room floor is near collapse.
Principal McVitty retires; Oliver B. Strapp replaces him.
Under Strapp, children known to have syphilis are not admitted.
- 1935** The DIA calculates that the Indians Bands' equity in the institute building had depreciated to zero.
There is a measles outbreak, with 40 cases. Later in the year there is a german measles epidemic, with 60 cases, 24 children down with flu and another 10 with pneumonia.
- 1936** Farm revenue drops by 75 percent.
Parents and students report insufficient and unsatisfactory food. The DIA investigates and finds 15 children are underweight. They are put on a supplemented diet.
Cases of trachoma are fewer after systematic treatment and impetigo is brought under control by providing students with separate towels.
- 1937** Twenty-two students run away on the same day.
The annex walls are bulging and breaking away, and another wall is cracked.
The school begins to screen for TB before admission.
- 1938** Leased farmland now comprises 343 acres.

- There is a measles outbreak.
- 1939** As a disciplinary measure, Strapp detains truant or misbehaving children during summer holidays and past the age of obligatory discharge.
- An underage child is admitted and then dies when he falls from a window.
- Two girls assault a third; police are called.
- There is an outbreak of mild flu, with 60 cases.
- 1940** There is a chicken pox epidemic.
- 1941** There is a scarlet fever outbreak.
- 1942** An inspector calls Mt. Elgin's buildings "the most dilapidated structures that I have ever inspected."
- Department of Indian Affairs officials start to call for the school's closure.
- 1943** The Chippewas of the Thames call for an investigation of Strapp and the school following complaints from parents regarding conditions and reports of "improper conduct" with the girls. No investigation is made.
- There is an outbreak of mumps, with about 12 cases.
- 1944** Farming continues although 65 out of 100 children in residence are under the age of 13 and the school is "desperately understaffed."
- An inspector orders the padlocks removed from the fire escapes, but the following year they are still there.
- 1946** Mt. Elgin closes at the end of June. A day school is constructed; it opens Nov. 1. The United Church auctions off farm stock and equipment to repay its bank debt; its land holdings—547 acres—revert to the Carodoc Agency.