

Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School, 1884-1990: A 106 Year Sports Perspective

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The signing of Treaty Number 4 between Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the native peoples of Canada's great central plain guaranteed education for all Treaty Indians. The document was signed on September 15, 1874, however, nine years of bureaucratic fumbling preceded the establishment of the first three industrial, residential schools on the Canadian prairies. Reverend Father Joseph Hugonnard was appointed principal of one of these located in the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley. The Qu'Appelle Industrial School was to be the most successful of the three initial schools. Today this school continues to operate on the residential basis and to place a particular emphasis on sport.

Sport was an aspect of the schools program that had some successes in combining traditional Indian values with the games and pastimes of the immigratory whites. The desire of the Christian missionaries to have the natives "play white" differed from the Indian concept of play and how they approached the different sports. During the many years (1884-1969) the Oblate priests and Grey Nuns operated the school, sports prospered, however, the children and their parents quite often perceived that the athletes were playing more for the clergy than themselves.

Qu'Appelle has built an enviable tradition of excellence in individual and team sports. Herb Strongeagle, Gerald Starr, George Poitras and Art Obey won the Tom Longboat medal presented to Canada's outstanding Indian athlete on an annual basis. Hockey, basketball, soccer, and volleyball have had provincial champions come from this proud school.

In 1973 the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School Council became the management body for the institution. Today the school is operated by the Star Blanket Band and is a model for other native educational administrations. The sports program of the school continues to be an important aspect of the students' lives.