

GENERAL TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE Mohawk Institute

The following information has been obtained through document collection and high-level analysis. The documents consulted include Mohawk Institute and New England Company administrative records, private correspondence, publications, and first-hand testimony from both perpetrators and Survivors.

1828

The Mechanics' Institute founded by the New England Company opens as a manual training day school for boys on Six Nations of the Grand River.

1830

The Mechanics' Institute transitions to a boarding school and is renamed the Mohawk Institute. It becomes the first Indian Residential School in what is now known as Canada.

1830

Reverend Robert Luggar is hired as principal of the Mohawk Institute

1837

Reverend Robert Luggar resigns as principal. Reverend Abraham Nelles is appointed to take his place.

1840

In the summer of 1840, expansions were made to both the building and property of the Mohawk Institute which allowed for more children to be boarded there.

1854 - 1859

A fire burns down the original Mohawk Institute building.

1859

A larger building is established near the Mohawk Chapel to increase the accommodation of the Mohawk Institute, with room for ninety children.



1860

The New England Company acquires 200 acres of farmland adjacent to the Mohawk Institute. Children boarded at the Institute were forced to provide farm labour throughout the Institute's history.



1872

Robert Ashton is appointed Superintendent of the Mohawk Institute.

1876

The Indian Act is passed. The Act gives the federal government greater control over the lives of Indigenous peoples.

1890

Ontario raised the minimum age for factory work to 14 and banned hiring children under 10 for shops. Children's Protection Acts began to appear.

1891

The Department of Indian Affairs begins to contribute to the funding of the Mohawk Institute through a per capita grant.

1895

The Mohawk Institute expands again to accommodate additional children.



1903

A series of fires were set that destroyed the entire Mohawk Institute building, including the laundry, the farm buildings, and the dairy.

1904

The Mohawk Institute is rebuilt and additional buildings are added.



1907

Conditions at the Mohawk Institute deteriorate. There are complaints from the parents of children attending that Robert Ashton is keeping the children longer than agreed upon, and that he makes them work on the farm instead of attending classes.

An inspector visiting the Mohawk Institute notes the presence of prison cells in the boys' room, learning that children would be held in these cells for a week at a time after attempting to run away.

1914

The First World War begins, lasting for 4 years. Many former Mohawk Institute Survivors served in the war.

1914

Alice Boyce reports her brother, **Alfred N. Ashton** as being physically unfit to principal the Mohawk Institute. He is sent to a sanatorium. **Boyce** is then appointed principal for the remainder of the year. **Reverend Cyril M. Turnell** is appointed principal in 1915.

1907

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce shares his findings of extremely high death rates at Indian Residential Schools due to illness, poor conditions, and neglect.

1910

In October **Alfred Nelles Ashton** is appointed principal of the Mohawk Institute beginning on January 1, 1911. His father, **Robert Ashton**, remains on property as chaplain.

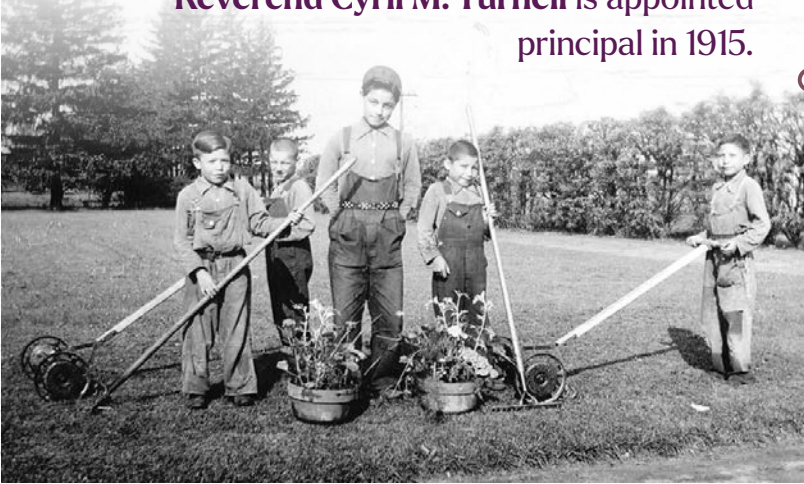
1913

A complaint is made to the New England Company regarding the egregious mistreatment of children at the Mohawk Institute. The Six Nations Council requests a full investigation.

Then principal, Alfred Ashton sends a letter to Duncan Campbell Scott (the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs) detailing the punishment system that he instituted, which includes solitary confinement, limiting food, and physical abuse.

1918

In May, **Turnell** is fired from the Mohawk Institute. **Alice Boyce** returns as the acting principal. **C.M. Turnell** writes to Indian Affairs regarding his concerns about the Mohawk Institute, including issues of underfunding and insufficient food and clothing for the children.



1919

An anonymous complaint is made to Ontario's Medical Officer of Health, alleging that children at the Mohawk Institute are being given milk from tubercular cows that had been ordered to be destroyed.

1920

More detail is added to the Indian Act regarding compulsory attendance of Indigenous children at day, industrial, or boarding schools. Attendance is mandatory for children aged seven to fifteen, and truancy officers are appointed to enforce attendance. Parents can be arrested or imprisoned if they resist.

1922

Alice Boyce resigns as principal of the Mohawk Institute. Her husband, **Sidney Rogers** is appointed principal.

1924

The Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child is adopted by the League of Nations; this is the first international agreement recognizing the inherent rights of children.

1929

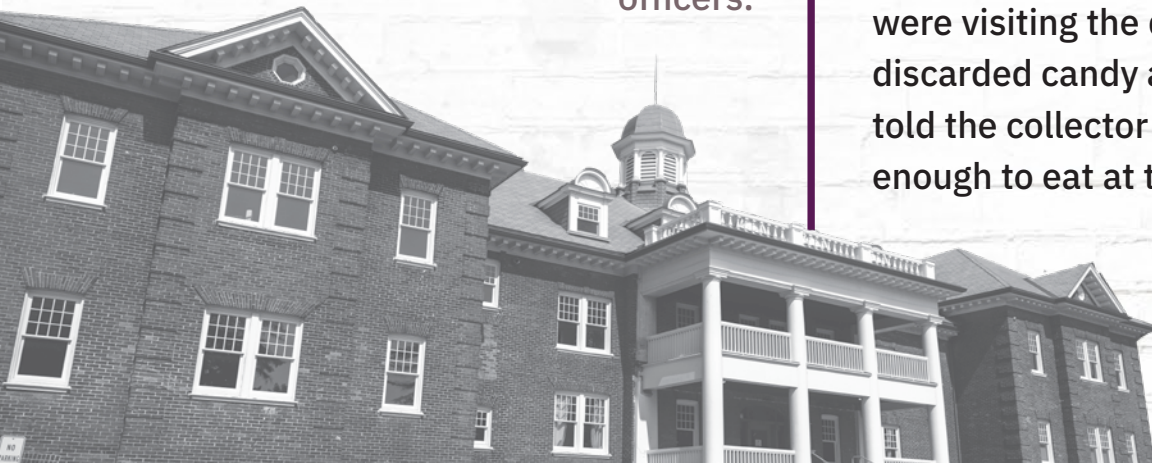
Sidney Rogers is terminated from his position as principal of the Mohawk Institute. He was confronted about his misuse of school resources, including exploiting Mohawk Institute students by having them work on his personal farm. **Reverend Horace W. Snell** is appointed principal.

1932

An amendment made to the Indian Act allows for Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers or police constables to be considered truant officers.

1934

A garbage collector in Brantford reported that boys from the Mohawk Institute were visiting the dump and eating discarded candy and biscuits; the boys told the collector that they do not get enough to eat at the Mohawk Institute.



1939

The Second World War begins, lasting for 6 years. Children at the Mohawk Institute, already living in harsh conditions, experienced intensified challenges with food insecurity and clothing. Similar to the First World War, many Mohawk Institute Survivors contributed to the war effort.



1948

The Brant County Health Inspector finds that students are being given unsafe milk with a high bacterial count; he threatened to ban milk service at the Mohawk Institute unless it was properly handled.

Three epidemics occurred at the Mohawk Institute within the year. Measles, mumps, and chickenpox ran rampant, with concerns about contaminated water from the canal being used for ice. In addition, an inspection report reveals the overcrowded state of the Mohawk Institute, which contributed to the high infection rate.



1945

Principal Snell retires in 1944. **William John Zimmerman** is appointed the final principal of the Mohawk Institute.

1946

A new 21-year lease is signed for the Mohawk Institute. This lease continues the agreement between the New England Company and the Canadian government, with the New England Company taking on a reduced role and the Department of Indian Affairs taking responsibility for the Institute's administration.

An investigation by the Brantford Council of Women finds that conditions at the Mohawk Institute are "terrible", with children insufficiently fed and clothed.



A report made by the acting medical officer at the Mohawk Institute, Dr. Harold Palmer, to the Superintendent of the Indian Office in Brantford highlights the concerning health recommendations for the Mohawk Institute notes issues, such as unsanitary kitchen practices and a rat infestation in the outbuildings.

1958

After several years of construction, a new school classroom block is opened.

A Department of Indian Affairs official is made aware that unpasteurized milk was being used at the Mohawk Institute, contrary to Public Health Regulations. Principal Zimmerman is directed to immediately use only pasteurized milk.

1960s

Large numbers of Indigenous children are removed from their families, communities, and cultures by child welfare officials. The child welfare system gradually begins to replace Indian Residential Schools.

1969

Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to walk on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission.

1972

The Woodland Cultural Centre opens at the former site of the Mohawk Institute, under the direction of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians.

1997

The last Indian Residential School closes in Canada.

1959

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, recognizing “children’s rights to education, play, a supportive environment and health care.”

1950s – 1960s

The Department of Indian Affairs continues to expand enrollment to the Mohawk Institute of children in Northern Ontario and surrounding communities. The decision was made to ensure the continued operation of the Institute.

1966

Universal healthcare is first introduced in Canada and is implemented throughout the provinces over the next several years.

1970

The Mohawk Institute closes on June 24, 1970. Principal Zimmerman remains as interim custodial staff and official retires and leaves the property on May 4, 1971. The building and parts of the property is signed over to Six Nations Elected Council.

Legend

- Provincial/National/International significant Historical Moment
- Highlights the Principal Changes over the years
- Mohawk Institute related event

Captions

Image 1. Girls sewing – Mohawk Institute, Brantford, [1943?]. The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada.

Image 2. Boys farming at Mohawk Institute, Brantford, Ontario, 1943. The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada.

Image 3. Photograph of Communion Class taken in Her Majesty's Chapel of the Mohawks, 1950s. This enforced Christianity violated children's freedom, culture, and spiritual identity and was used as a method of control. V. P. Cronyn Memorial Archives, The Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron.

Image 4. The Mohawk Chapel was central to the lives of the children at the Mohawk Institute. Children were expected to attend regular services, learn prayers and become practitioners of a foreign belief system. Canada. Dept. of Interior / Library and Archives Canada / PA-043627

Image 5. Group of children seated in large room at Mohawk Institute, n.d. Photo #06954, Courtesy of the Brant Historical Society.

Image 6. Mohawk Institute, Brantford, Ontario, 1943. The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada.

Image 7. Mohawk Institute, 1884. Library and Archives Canada/PA-051881

Image 8. Graduates of the Mohawk Institute, 1880, posing on the steps of the Institute. Photo #0637, Courtesy of the Brant Historical Society.

Image 9. Mohawk Institute. Courtesy of Know History.

Image 10. The Girl Guides program was used to impose colonial values and discipline, using structured activities to promote assimilation under institutional control. Source unknown.

Image 11. His Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks, built in 1785, on Six Nations of the Grand River territory at Brantford, Ontario. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library.

Image 12. Students and staff posed on the steps of the Mohawk Institute in September 1915. New England Company Fonds, The London Archives.



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