

Records of Manitoban Residential Schools in Oblate Archives

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how the Roman Catholic religious congregation the Oblates of Mary Immaculate have mediated the archival records from residential schools that the congregation operated in Southern Manitoba from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries. This includes questions over the broader contexts that influenced these mediations, the role of other colonial entities, such as the Canadian state and other Catholic entities, and how such mediations have shaped the composition, custody, and management of school record collections. This in turn could impact how archival users can access and use these records alongside these collections' access policies. To examine these questions, I use a close reading of primary and secondary texts about the Oblates' involvement in the residential school system to identify contexts relevant to the creation and management of school records. As well, I examine the form and structure of school records to observe how these contexts impacted these records' characteristics and compare these records to the obligations mandated for the Oblates by various government and Catholic authorities as to note any discrepancies. Finally, I use a variety of sources from the archives and draw on work by archivists who have managed school record collections to show these records' custodial histories and the various archival environments they have existed in up to the present day. This thesis argues that while the Oblates have never had absolute control over school records, their pervasive autonomy in managing school records remains key to understanding the contents, contexts, and custodies of these records over time. Given this autonomy, there is a need to to examine the Oblates' role in shaping record collections as a distinct entity due to their autonomy in both operating residential schools and managing school records. Ultimately, by documenting Oblate contexts and mediations, archivists and researchers can develop responsive policies, practices, and research strategies that can better meet researchers' specific interests and needs with these records.

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Thanks to my supervisors and colleagues at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and Centre du Patrimoine, including Christopher Zaste, Jesse Boiteau, Julie Reid, Janet LaFrance, and Sharon Humphrey. Special thanks to Raymond Frogner for offering me the opportunity to work with records relevant to my research. This was deeply invaluable to my thesis. Special thanks also to Sarah Story for guidance on thesis writing and the archival profession generally and assistance with my oral history interview.

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## Introduction

The on-going identification of potential burial sites on the grounds of numerous former residential schools since May 2021 has put increased scrutiny on the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic religious congregation which operated dozens of these specific schools and other schools across Canada. A considerable part of this scrutiny from Indigenous communities and archivists/scholars has concerned accessing the records of these Oblate-ran schools. First Nations leaders involved in burial site searches in the spring of 2021, such as Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Chief Bobby Cameron, has called on the Oblates and other Christian entities to release residential school records.<sup>1</sup> Other First Nations leaders, such as Grand Chief of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation John Boudrias, noted the Oblates' hesitancy to communicate with them concerning access to their records, describing this as "one of the biggest obstacles we're going to have to cross".<sup>2</sup> In addition to questions of access, scholars such as Brenda Macdougall have also noted how the Oblates' shifting custodial and managerial regimes of school records could hinder researchers' access to vital information, citing examples of the congregation relocating records from Canada to its headquarters in Rome or simply throwing away records following the re-location of their national archives, Archives Deschâtelets, in 2014.<sup>3</sup> While the Oblates, often represented by Fr. Ken Thorson, Provincial of

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Eneas, "Sask. First Nation Announces Discovery of 751 Unmarked Graves near Former Residential School," *CBC News*, June 25, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/cowessess-marieval-indian-residential-school-news-1.6078375>.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Nakonechny, "Quebec government, Catholic oblates still haven't delivered key residential school records," *CBC News*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-residential-school-records-oblates-1.6075344>.

<sup>3</sup> Julie Ireton, "Residential school records once held in Canada now in Rome, researchers say," *CBC News*, November 15, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/residential-school-records-now-in-rome-researchers-survivors-concerned-1.6241449>.

OMI Lacombe Canada, have since July 2021 released statements regarding cooperation with the NCTR to expedite access to residential school records, dedicate resources to facilitate processing of records,<sup>4</sup> and provide access to relevant records held in Rome,<sup>5</sup> the extent to which the congregation will stay committed to providing the type of access needed by communities and researchers remains uncertain at this time.

While concerns over access policies are still important to consider, the questions raised by Macdougall indicate other aspects about the records that could significantly impact the accessibility of the records overall. This includes the how and why behind the creation, composition, custody, and management of school records from when the Oblates first became involved in the residential school system to the present day. This thesis seeks to answer questions over how the Oblates have mediated residential schools, what broader contexts influenced these mediations, and how other colonial entities, such as the Canadian state and other Catholic entities, have impacted these mediations.

This thesis argues that to better understand how the Oblates have mediated residential school records, it is important to understand the congregation itself and the various historical, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it has operated in. This clearer understanding of the contexts behind Oblate mediations can make it easier to identify and document these mediations and in turn assist archivists and researchers to explore their potential impacts and develop responsive policies, practices, and research strategies that can better meet researchers' specific

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<sup>4</sup> National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, "Joint statement: NCTR to work with the Oblates to access residential school records," *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*, July 5, 2021, <https://nctr.ca/joint-statement-nctr-to-work-with-the-oblates-to-access-residential-school-records/>.

<sup>5</sup> National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, "NCTR to collaborate with the Oblates to access residential school records," *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*, December 7, 2021, <https://nctr.ca/nctr-to-collaborate-with-the-oblates-to-access-residential-school-records/>.

interests and needs. As well, documenting these layers of mediations can help hold the Oblates and other colonial entities accountable in negotiating better access and use of the records. While there are sizeable literatures on residential school histories, the archiving of school records, and Oblate archiving generally, there has not been a detailed examination of Oblate record-keeping and archiving specifically in the context of residential school records. Prominent residential school histories, such as those by J. R. Miller<sup>6</sup> and John S. Milloy,<sup>7</sup> focus on government-church relations when discussing the Oblates, with little focus on the Oblates' internal administration in the schools or with school records. Reports from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, specifically Volume 4,<sup>8</sup> examine school record creation processes generally but without discussion of the Oblates' unique record processes. While works about the Oblates and their archives, such as those by Raymond J. A. Huel<sup>9</sup> and Archives Deschâtelets,<sup>10</sup> do provide valuable insights into Oblate school administrative and archival contexts, they do not specifically examine school records within these contexts. This thesis is meant to address this gap, especially as more residential school researchers continue to seek access to Oblate collections.

The focus on the Oblates is not meant to diminish the active roles that other groups have and continue to play in mediating school records, especially those of Indigenous peoples.

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<sup>6</sup> J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System*, vol. 11 (Winnipeg, CA: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 4*, Vol. 151 (MQUP, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Raymond J. A. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Metis* (The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien*, 2 vols (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986).

As Tom Nesmith discusses with his theory of societal provenance the meaning of archival records is bound up with numerous societal contexts and actors, from their ongoing creation to their keeping and finally to their use by researchers and others.<sup>11</sup> In this framework, school records can be seen resulting from the initial Oblate record-creators, children and their families who influenced which records were created, record mandates from church and government officials, the Oblates' archival policies and practices, Survivor and Indigenous activism that demanded access to these records, and on-going archival research that continually shapes and re-shapes public awareness about the records. This multi-provenance view is important for examining colonial documents as it de-centres the Oblates as the sole "creators" or "owners" of the records while still acknowledging the congregation's significant role in mediating the records. In many ways, this mediation has often resulted from the congregation responding to the actions of others, from letters about children running away from schools to re-evaluating access policies in the face of legal challenges and community activism.

My focus on the Oblates' unique mediations is meant to show their considerable autonomy within the Roman Catholic Church as well as from the Canadian state and the various communities with whom they interact. This allowed the congregation significant control over managing residential schools and subsequently over managing school records. While they have never had absolute control over school records, the Oblates' pervasive autonomy in managing school records remains key to understanding the contents, contexts, and custodies of these records over time. Given this autonomy, there is a need to to examine the Oblates' role in shaping record collections as a distinct entity due to their autonomy in both operating residential

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<sup>11</sup> Tom Nesmith, "The Concept of Societal Provenance and Records of Nineteenth-Century Aboriginal-European Relations in Western Canada: Implications for Archival Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 6, no. 3-4 (2006): 353.

schools and managing school records. This continued autonomy over archival affairs has been identified as a key challenge for researchers by Ry Moran, former director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), who notes how the lack of a unified central Catholic authority in Canada forces researchers to work with entities like the Oblates on a one-by-one basis, each with their own legal counsels and resource limits.<sup>12</sup> This disproportionate influence over the mediation of the records makes it essential to understand the Oblates themselves so as to understand this mediation. As well, acknowledging the Oblates' considerable power over their records is useful for responding to the congregation's rhetoric of "external" restrictions on their current collections. While Oblate mediations are still only one part of the broader mediations these records have undergone, they remain significant ones, especially for those seeking access to the records. It is also important to consider how these mediations result from numerous factors within and outside the congregation, from deliberate policy decisions to changing record custody and management to the long-term consequences of the congregation's shifting jurisdictions within Canada. This point is not meant to suggest that mediations which limit accessibility are merely unintentional or accidental on the part of Oblate and other Church officials. Rather, by distinguishing between different types of mediation, it is easier to distinguish instances of unintentional mediation from intentional mediation and thus hold officials accountable for more deliberate actions. That said, mediations which limit accessibility can result from various other custodial and management choices, logistical restraints, or even neglect, not just intentional efforts to obscure the records. Ultimately, the Oblates are responsible for a large number of the

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<sup>12</sup> Gollom, Mark. "Why retrieving former residential school records has proven so difficult." *CBC News*. June 30, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/residential-school-records-indigenous-1.6083493>.

factors that mediate their records, and those outside their direct control should never be used as excuses.

I also want to emphasize that this research focuses more on describing and contextualizing mediations of records rather than prescribing how different archivists and researchers should address them. This reflects the considerable variation in the exact mediations that different Oblate collections have and the varying needs and resources of different archivists and researchers. I cannot speak to these varying needs, especially those of the archivists and researchers from or working with Indigenous communities. It is my hope that this more descriptive research can serve as a helpful resource for these archivists and researchers in addressing their collections and developing their strategies.

This approach is also influenced by my positionality in relation to this topic. I am a white male settler from a middle-class background. I am of Scottish, Norwegian, Scots Irish, and French-Canadian descent. I was born and raised in Winnipeg Manitoba, which is on occupied Treaty One land and the Métis Homeland. Finally, I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church and worked at my local parish for several years before starting this research. I chose my research topic in part due to my Catholic background. Given this context, I have struggled over whether I am the right person to research topics related to residential schools. My specific topic of Oblate archives, however, I feel is something appropriate for me to examine, as it focuses on settler entities with whom I share several identities (Catholic, French-Canadian, white, etc.) in the effort to document their involvement in past and on-going forms of colonialism and to hold them accountable. Regarding my Catholic background, while I approach my research on Catholic entities critically and offer no defense for the harms they have inflicted, I still recognize that my

Catholic background shapes how I conduct my research, consciously or not, alongside my other backgrounds.

I also must acknowledge that I worked as a student assistant for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for one year while conducting my research. This work involved cross-referencing records of Oblate residential schools found in NCTR databases with the physical documents held by le Centre du Patrimoine. This would help to prioritize records for digitization as to make them more accessible for Survivors and other researchers. This position was deeply beneficial for my research as it granted a special level of access to Oblate records, insights into both archives' policies and collections, and connections to archivists knowledgeable about the records that many other researchers would not have. I worked extensively with my supervisors to ensure that I did not use this special access to advance my thesis research and writing, with all my research with these records occurring outside of work hours and under a separate research agreement with the Oblates. That said, it is still my responsibility to use these advantages to produce research that I hope can benefit other researchers working with these records.

To specify the scope of this research, I focus on records that were created by and about residential schools in the Oblate Province of Manitoba. Created in 1905<sup>13</sup> and merged into the current Lacombe Province in 2003,<sup>14</sup> this Oblate jurisdiction covered the southern half of the Canadian Province of Manitoba as well as parts of southern Saskatchewan and north-west Ontario. This focus on a single Oblate jurisdiction reflects both my own familiarity with the

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<sup>13</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 292.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge 1845-2016, deuxième édition 2016*, 2016, 266, Rare/Boîte 263, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba, 37 (hereafter cited as Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation).

records of this province through my work with the NCTR, were I primarily worked on records from schools at Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba, and Keeseekoose First Nation, Saskatchewan. As well, the sheer amount of information about the school records of this province makes it worthwhile to explore this single jurisdiction in detail. This said, I do cite relevant examples of record processes collections from other Oblate jurisdictions that were adjacent to the Manitoba Province. These include the Keewatin-Le Pas province of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, now held at the Centre du Patrimoine along with the Manitoba Province's records, the Alberta-Saskatchewan Province in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, now held in the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and the various provinces in British Columbia, now held in the Royal Museum of British Columbia. I also discuss several Oblate archives in Eastern Canada in detail in Chapter Three. These comparisons highlight to a small degree the complexity that internal Oblate organization had on record mediation. While certain histories and contexts I explore may be more applicable to the Manitoba Province than others, my general research model could be applied to other Oblate jurisdictions across Canada.

Before outlining my thesis chapters, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of the Oblates' history, their involvement with residential schools, and the custodial histories of school records from the Manitoba Province. This overview can be referenced alongside my more detailed discussions of these topics throughout this thesis. The Oblates of Marry Immaculate was founded in France in 1816. The Catholic congregation first arrived in Eastern Canada in 1841 and arrived at the Red River Colony, present-day Winnipeg, in 1845. The Oblates created numerous missions for Indigenous peoples over what is called Western Canada in the following decades, becoming one of the largest Catholic entities in this region. The Oblates in modern southern Manitoba and parts of Saskatchewan and Ontario operated under the congregation's

Vicariate of St. Boniface until the majority of this territory was turned into the Oblate Province of Manitoba in 1904.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Oblate Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, the congregation played a key role in the development of the Canadian residential school in the 1880s, with many Oblate-ran schools growing directly out of their existing missions. Through their partnership with the federal government, the Oblates operated most Catholic schools and around 48 out of the roughly 139 total schools that operated in Canada.<sup>16</sup> During this time, Oblate school officials created the bulk of records from or about residential schools, with these records routinely flowing to federal government offices, Provincial headquarters, and other record hubs in the congregation. For the Manitoba Province, this would include their various headquarters in Winnipeg, the national leadership in Ottawa, and to a lesser extent an archive in the congregation's scholasticate in Lebret, Saskatchewan. As the federal government assumed more control over the residential school system and Oblate membership declined in the 1960s, the congregation began leaving the system or shifting towards day schools.<sup>17</sup>

The congregation's departure from the residential school system by the early 1970s led to more records going to Provincial headquarters, with the Lebret Archives also going to the Manitoban headquarters after the scholasticate's closure in 1965. In 1984, the Manitoba Province transferred the majority of their archival collections from Winnipeg to the congregation's national archives, the Archives Deschâtelets, then located in Ottawa. While most school records

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press/Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2000), 2-17.

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Martens, "NCTR digging into records of Oblate priests who staffed residential schools," *APTN News*, July 28, 2022, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/oblate-priests-nctr-residential-schools-catholic-church/>.

<sup>17</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 73-282.

would have gone to Ottawa, the province still retained certain administrative and personnel records and continued to produce more records. In 2000, the province agreed to transfer its records from Deschâtelets and its Winnipeg headquarters to the newly built Centre du Patrimoine in Winnipeg, with several accruals occurring from 2000 to 2005. In 2003, the Manitoba Province was merged into the Lacombe Province, which currently covers most of Western Canada. Currently, Centre du Patrimoine holds the majority of school records from the former Manitoba Province, though as I explore in Chapter Three, Archives Deschâtelets may still have some relevant records.<sup>18</sup>

The structure of my thesis is as follows: Chapter One examines the broader contexts in which Oblate-ran schools operated and how these contexts are reflected in school records. I consider how the congregation's cultural/linguistic identities, administrative structures, and distinct missionary histories contributed to the creation and mediation of school records. For my sources, I draw on secondary sources about the congregation's history in Western Canada by both Oblate and non-Oblate historians to explore the contexts the Oblates operated in while managing residential schools. I supplement these sources with residential school histories by academic historians, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and select accounts by school Survivors. My focus on the Oblate-centered sources is not meant to diminish the value of these Survivor testimonies and broader experiences, but rather to highlight topics more distinct to the congregation that are relevant to discussions of record creation and keeping elsewhere. As well, I personally do not feel qualified to speak to or analyze the experiences of children, their families, and communities as recorded in these testimonies. That said, these accounts still inform the

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<sup>18</sup> Gilles Lesage, interview with Jackson Anderson, May 10, 2022, 8-17; *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, Winnipeg, Manitoba, le Centre du Patriomoine, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/permalink/archives46>, 4.

critical lens with which I approach the Oblate-centered literature, as I examine the Oblates as agents of religious colonization within the schools rather than as the more neutral or beneficial entities that some of the literature presents them as.

Chapter Two explores the processes behind the creation of school records and some of their characteristics. I explore the entities and events that influenced record creation and how record creation impacted the composition of record collections. For my sources, I examine legal and regulatory texts from the Oblates, the broader Catholic Church, and the federal government in exploring mandated record creation and record keeping. For record characteristics, I look at examples of school records from the Fort Alexander Residential School as found at Centre du Patrimoine. With these records, I focus on their physical form and more contextual information rather than the contents themselves, paying special attention not to describe the details of children themselves. This is again not meant to obscure harm caused by the Oblates but rather to avoid mis-representing these children's lives and experiences.

Chapter Three covers the custodial and managerial histories of school records from the Manitoba Province, tracing the movement of records from the schools themselves to their current archival repositories. I consider how this network of custodial and managerial changes have mediated the composition and accessibility of these records. For my sources, I draw on a wealth of documents created by various archives, particularly Archives Deschâtelets and the Centre du Patrimoine, detailing their custody and management of the Manitoba Province's records. This includes inventories, fonds descriptions, histories about the archives, and some archival documents themselves about relevant archives. Another major source for both Chapters Two and Three is an oral history interview I conducted with Mr. Gilles Lesage, the former director and archivist of Centre du Patrimoine who also worked as an archivist with the Oblates. Lesage

offers vital contextual information about the various transfers and processing of the Manitoba Province's records that is difficult to find in official documentation about archives.

Fundamentally, this thesis argues that while the Oblates have never had absolute control over school records, their pervasive autonomy in managing school records remains key to understanding the contents, contexts, and custodies of these records over time. Given this autonomy, there is a need for archivists and researchers to examine the Oblates' role in shaping record collections as a distinct entity due to their autonomy in both operating residential schools and managing school records. Ultimately, by documenting Oblate contexts and mediations, archivists and researchers can develop responsive policies, practices, and research strategies that can better meet researchers' specific interests and needs with these records.

## **Chapter One: Contexts of the Oblates and Oblate Residential Schools**

This chapter explores the various contexts that Oblate schools operated in and how these contexts mediated school records. The first section looks at the Oblates position with the broader Catholic Church as to highlight the congregation's relative autonomy in their involvement with residential schools and by extension school records. The second section examines the congregation's origins in nineteenth-century France and their early missions in North-West Turtle Island by the end of that century. This provides the general context behind how the congregation became involved with residential schools and some of the congregation's key characteristics that informed subsequent record processes. In particular, I highlight the Oblates' autonomy within the Catholic Church, predominance of French language and identity, and changes to membership size as major factors behind record processes up to the modern day, all of which I discuss throughout my three chapters. Finally, section three covers Oblate-ran schools and broader Catholic jurisdictions in Southern Manitoba up to the 1970s. This brief overview shows how the various other contexts informed these schools' administrative policies and practices and in turn how these impacted record creation and management. I conclude with a brief discussion of how Indigenous activism from the 1970s onwards, particularly legal actions in the 1990s and 2000s, functions as an on-going context in which all subsequent Oblate archival practices have been made.

## Section One: Background on the Oblate Congregation and Canadian Missions

### *Oblates in the Catholic Hierarchy and Canon Law*

This section provides a brief overview of the Oblates' position within the laws and structures of the broader Roman Catholic Church and the administrative structures of the congregation itself. This provides context behind how the Oblates administratively functioned while working with the residential school system and later with their school records. This section highlights the primary types of officials and jurisdictions responsible for the creation and archiving of school records. Overall, this illustrates the considerable autonomy that the Oblates have had within the Catholic Church, either legally or in practice, which reinforces my broader point on the importance of understanding the unique characteristics of the congregation to understand broader record processes. For a concise visual representation of the Oblates within the broader Catholic hierarchy, see the organization chart on page 15.

Created by  
Jackson  
Anderson, July  
2023

# Overview of the Oblates in the Roman Catholic Hierarchy

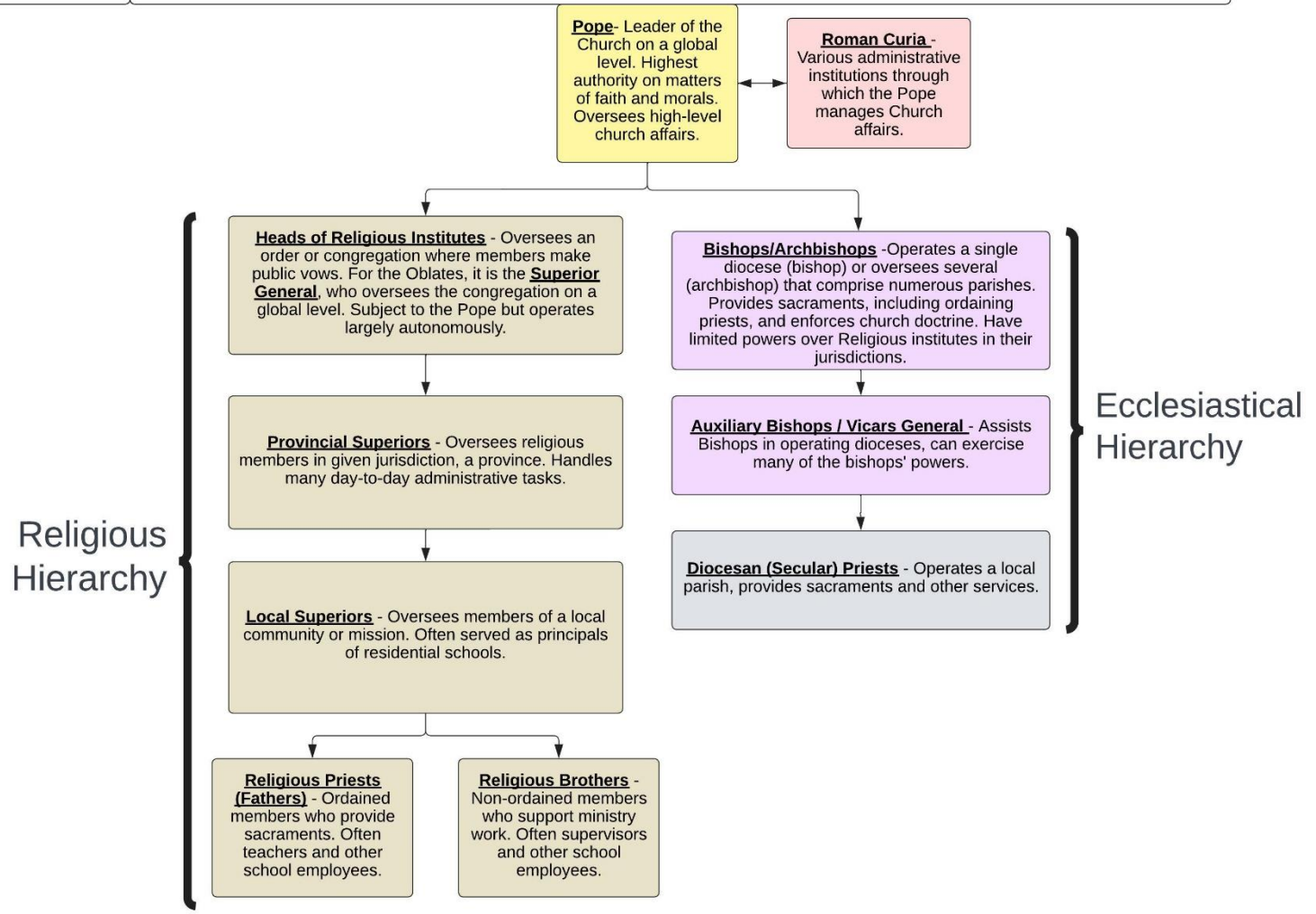


Figure 1. Oblates in the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

I first review the key terminology related to canonical definitions of Catholic entities, though for simplicity's sake I only use definitions from the 1983 code. Within Canon Law, the Oblates are a religious congregation, which is a type of religious institute. Historically, canon law distinguished congregations, which took simple vows, from religious orders, which took solemn vows,<sup>19</sup> though the 1983 Canon Code refers only to “religious institutes” while retaining different types of vows.<sup>20</sup> In the Catholic church, the term “religious” typically refers to men and women who take public vows in a particular community, live as a community, and work towards that community's specific aim, or charism. The term “secular” refers to members of the church, namely priests, who are ordained to work in a particular diocese, living “with the world” rather than as a separate community within the church. Secular priests are commonly referred to as diocesan priests.<sup>21</sup> For this research, I use the terms “diocesan” or “ecclesiastical” primarily to refer to bishops, their associated secular priests and officials, and to a lesser extent the Vatican. I use “congregational” to refer to the Oblates as a whole or certain groups of members. I mainly use “religious communities” to refer to other religious orders and congregations associated with the Oblates, like the Grey Nuns.

In discussing the Oblates' position within Catholic canon law, it is important to note that Canon Law itself underwent several major changes from when the Oblates first became involved

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<sup>19</sup> “THE CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE,” *Vatican*, accessed August 8, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccsclife\\_profile\\_en.html#top](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_profile_en.html#top).

<sup>20</sup> Code of Canon Law, cc. 607-709, “Code of Canon Law,” *Vatican*, accessed August 8, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann607-709\\_en.html#TITLE\\_II](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann607-709_en.html#TITLE_II).

<sup>21</sup> Catholic Answers Staff, “What Is the Difference between Secular Priests and Religious Priests?,” *Catholic Answers*, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://www.catholic.com/qa/what-is-the-difference-between-secular-priests-and-religious-priests>.

with in the residential school system to the present-day. Prior to 1917, there was no singular code of canon law, making it difficult to legally define the first generation of Oblates involved in the school system. The Pio-Benedictine law, or 1917 Code of Canon Law, was the first official comprehensive codification of canon law in the Latin church and was thus the law code that many schools operated under until the Oblates left most of the schools in the 1960s and 1970s. The Johanno-Paul law, or 1983 Code of Canon Law, replaced the 1917 code is the code that the Church currently operates under.<sup>22</sup> All of the Oblates' subsequent archival policies and practices towards their school records have also occurred under this code. For this research, I focus on the 1917 and 1983 codes, though the lack of codification prior to 1917 is still worth acknowledging.

In the 1917 code, bishops have certain powers over religious institutes, like Canon 492 where founding institutes requires consulting the Vatican, while other powers are reserved for the Vatican, such as Canon 493 on suppressing institutes or Canon 494 on dividing and uniting provinces of institutes with pontifical right like the Oblates. Laws like Canon 499 and Canon 500 also state that all religious are subject to the Roman Pontiff (the Pope) and local Ordinaries but that high-ranking church officials attached to an institute, such as a Cardinal Protector, has no direct jurisdiction over an institute.<sup>23</sup> This shows some of complexities of the Oblates being at once subject to diocesan and Vatican authorities in significant ways but also possessing considerable autonomy from these authorities. Overall, the 1917 code leaves much of the major administrative structures and practices of religious institutes to institutes themselves. This is also true with the 1983 code, which similarly grants bishops and the Vatican significant powers over institutes but also provides institutes major administrative independence, though canon laws do

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<sup>22</sup> "Canon Law," *New Advent*, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09056a.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Edward N. Peters, *The 1917 or Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English Translation with Extensive Scholarly Apparatus* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 118.

vary between male and female religious communities.<sup>24</sup> While I do not want to understate ecclesiastical power over the Oblates, the congregation's continued administrative autonomy has important implications for school management, record creation and keeping, and archiving of school records. I explore these implications throughout this research.

In terms of the Oblates' internal laws and structures, the congregation is governed by its Constitution and Rules, which are defined by the 1983 code as containing the essential norms of an institute's purpose, governance, membership, and more. Though the Vatican must approve Constitutions and Rules, the congregation has control over drafting and revising them. The first Oblate Constitution and Rules was approved in 1826-1827 and underwent several revisions from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Constitution and Rules underwent major revisions starting in the mid 1960s that culminated in the 1982 Constitution and Rules, which remains the current governing text aside from several smaller revisions. I do not compare changes to rules on congregational administration given the sheer number of revisions, though it is worth noting that post-1982 revisions structure the congregation first around local-level administration followed by higher-level entities.<sup>25</sup>

Using the current 2018 Constitution for sake of clarity, the structure of the congregation starts with Local Superiors, who oversee an Oblate House which typically serves as the administrative centre of a mission or a group of missions. Local Superiors are assisted by Local Councils for financial and other administrative duties. Missions are served by either Oblate Brothers, non-ordained or lay members who take the congregation's vows, or Oblate Fathers,

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<sup>24</sup> Code of Canon Law, cc. 573-606, "Code of Canon Law," *Vatican*, accessed August 8, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann573-606\\_en.html#PART III. INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann573-606_en.html#PART_III. INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE)

<sup>25</sup> "Constitution and Rules," *The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://www.omiworld.org/lemma/constitutions-and-rules/>.

ordained priests who also take these vows. Above Local Superiors are Provincial Superiors, often just Provincials, who supervise multiple Oblate Houses in a territory known as a province. Local Superiors most often report directly to Provincials for various financial and administrative concerns. Provincials are also assisted by a Provincial Council. Historically, provinces were typically preceded by another form of jurisdiction, Vicariates of Missions led by a Vicar of Missions, before being raised to the rank of province. Finally, the Superior General with the General Council headquartered in Rome leads the congregation on a global scale and possess the supreme authority on congregation-wide policies.<sup>26</sup> The Superior General and his Council have important powers over provinces and missions, such as appointing, confirming, and removing Provincials and Councillors, and establishing, suppressing, merging, and re-organizing provinces. However, there are other regulations that allow the Superior General to delegate many of these powers to the provinces themselves, such as allowing provinces to elect their Provincials and Councillors and “allowing exceptions to the norm regarding the proper functioning and stability of a province.”<sup>27</sup> For this research, I focus primarily on the relationships between Local and Provincial leadership as these were the primary jurisdictional units involved directly with residential schools. As I discuss in the following chapters, provinces also appear to have had the most direct control over record creation and archiving processes within their jurisdictions based both on earlier versions of the Constitution and Rules and many school records themselves. All of this illustrates that in addition to the congregation’s overall autonomy within the Catholic hierarchy, provinces both then and now also possess major autonomy within the congregation.

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<sup>26</sup> Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, *Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate* (Rome: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 2018), 75-85.

<sup>27</sup> Missionary Oblates, *Constitutions and Rules* (2018), 188-191.

Finally, alongside these legally defined relationships, it is important to examine how the Oblates often interacted with other Church officials in practice. Lesage gives insights into how these relations played out on the ground in Manitoba, arguing that when operating residential schools, the Oblates had complete management of the schools with little interference from the dioceses. However, canon law still obligated the Oblates to seek permission from bishops to operate on the territory of dioceses and answer to the bishops as “final [authorities]”. As well, Oblates who were priests needed bishops’ permission to administer sacraments like baptisms and confessions, even if this was often a formality. Lesage notes, though, that while the congregation and the dioceses were in constant conversation about different activities within a diocese, it is unclear how much congregational officials reported to diocesan officials about residential schools. As well, the distinctions between congregational and diocesan officials could often be narrow due to dioceses often depending on Oblates to serve as priests in parishes and Oblates serving in high-ranking diocesan offices, including as Bishops. In certain jurisdictions like the Oblate Province of Keewatin-Le Pas and the Diocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, Oblates made up most of the Catholic priests, further blurring distinctions<sup>28</sup> Lesage argues that the dioceses’ dependence on the Oblates to serve in parishes in Western Canada allowed the congregation to operate with little diocesan intervention. As well, the fact that Provincials would often have to negotiate with several dioceses about Oblates serving in parishes gave the Provincials considerable power with the dioceses.<sup>29</sup> The 1910 Oblate Constitution and Rules even includes a Rule mandating Provincials and Local Superiors to annually survey parish priests’ requests for

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<sup>28</sup> Lesage, interview, 18-19.

<sup>29</sup> Lesage, interview, 19.

Oblates to serve in parishes and determine which parishes they would prefer to send members to.<sup>30</sup>

With all these examples, it is clear that throughout the Oblates' involvement in Southern Manitoba residential schools, Oblate provinces and local missions were the primary administrative units within the overall Catholic Church responsible for the day-to-day operation of the schools. While it is important not to over-emphasize the Oblates' authority over schools, especially as various other officials, staff members, and Indigenous communities and individuals frequently contested this authority, this legal and on the ground power of the provinces and missions highlights which officials had the primary responsibility for school and management and later archiving of school records. It is the policies and actions of these officials that thus must be examined to understand the creation, management, and archiving of school records.

### *Overview of Oblate Missions*

This is a brief overview of the Oblates' origins and how they became involved with residential schools. For sake of brevity and focus on the long-term archival implications of this history, I avoid going into much detail but still cite which sources to consult for more information. As this overview is meant to provide the basic context behind the Oblates' involvement with residential schools, I draw on secondary literature more than original primary source research. Also, it is important in this and the following section on Oblate school histories to not characterize Indigenous peoples as passive pawns to the broader settler politics that influenced Oblate activities. Rather, both these activities and politics were also impacted by

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<sup>30</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles de la congrégation des missionnaires oblats de la Très Sainte et Immaculée Vierge Marie* (Rome: Maison Générale, 1912) 4-5.

Indigenous peoples' resistance to colonization just as contemporary Indigenous activism over residential schools impacts debate over the management of school records.]

The Oblates trace their origins to post-revolutionary France in 1816, when French nobleman and later Bishop of Marseilles Eugène de Mazenod founded the Missionaries of Provence in the eponymous southern French department. This group focused on serving the poor communities, whom Mazenod believed had abandoned the Church and needed salvation. The congregation received papal approval in 1826 under the name Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M. I.).<sup>31</sup> The Oblates embraced many of the reactionary trends in mid-nineteenth century Roman Catholicism that emerged after the Church's decline in power in France during the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Era, and the post-Restoration French state.<sup>32</sup> These trends included a shift to more centralized forms of government, with increased emphasis on Rome as the "headquarters of the international Catholic Church", and the related conservative ultramontane theology, which viewed all of humanity in need of salvation from themselves and the vices of liberalism and secularism. Many of these reactionary trends were cemented by Vatican Council I (1870) and various papal encyclicals and decrees.<sup>33</sup> The Oblates' adoption of these trends helps explain the rapid expansion of their missionary activities into the North-West that resulted in their prominent role in the residential school system. As well, the congregation's early origins in French and broader Francophone culture would have long-term impacts on the creation, custody, and management of school records. It is important to note that while the Oblates promoted an increasingly centralized church structure, the congregation itself continued

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press/Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2000), 9-11.

<sup>32</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 4-5.

to operate with considerable autonomy from central church authorities, including while managing residential schools and school records.

The Oblates began their missionary work in Canada after the Bishop of Montréal, Ignace Bourget, met with Mazenod in 1840,<sup>34</sup> which led to the first Oblates arriving in Montreal in December 1841.<sup>35</sup> This reflected both Mazenod's shift towards global missionary expansion due to increased difficulties expanding in France,<sup>36</sup> and a broader religious awakening within Canadian Catholicism in response to the liberal 1837-1838 Rebellions and the 1840 union of predominately Francophone-Catholic Lower Canada and Anglo-Protestant Upper Canada, which saw the number and membership of religious congregations greatly increase.<sup>37</sup> Oblate missions in Canada also intersected with broader trends of nineteenth-century Christian missionaries, which Norman Etherington<sup>38</sup> and France Lord<sup>39</sup> explore in more depth. The Oblates quickly expanded their apostolate throughout the new Province of Canada, other British colonies on the East and West coasts, parts of the United States, and the North-West throughout the 1840s.<sup>40</sup>

The first Oblate missionaries arrived at Red River in 1845 upon the request of Vicar Apostolic of North-West Joseph-Norbert Provencher (later Bishop of Saint-Boniface), who felt

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<sup>34</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 9-11.

<sup>35</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 9-11.

<sup>37</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18-19.

<sup>39</sup> France Lord, "The Silent Missionary of the Society Eloquence of Things: Collections and Exhibitions of Jesus in Quebec, 1843-1946," in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, eds. Austin, Alvyn, and Jamie S Scott (Cel - Canadian Publishers Collection. Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 206.

<sup>40</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 17.

the Oblates would be more disciplined and less expensive than previous Catholic missionaries.<sup>41</sup> Oblate missionaries spread rapidly across the North-West, in part because the congregation often stressed sending large quantities of Oblates with basic missionary training to more practically achieve religious conversion and cultural assimilation over extended periods of in-depth religious education.<sup>42</sup> Mazenod himself has been described as “a man of action and not theories”.<sup>43</sup> As such, what training Oblates did receive stressed assimilation and by extension cultural genocide over adapting Catholicism to Indigenous cultures.<sup>44</sup> Both Claude Champagne<sup>45</sup> and Huel<sup>46</sup> explore colonialism in Oblate mission training in more depth.

While these missionaries quickly expanded across the North-West, they just as quickly found their ethnocentric expectations about Indigenous peoples challenged when Indigenous communities resisted their evangelization efforts. Some Oblates adapted their mission strategies to learn local languages and cultures, while others persisted in these racist worldviews despite the reality about Indigenous responses to missionary efforts.<sup>47</sup> These patterns of Oblates reacting and adapting to Indigenous agency would persist into the residential school system and be reflected both in school records themselves and subsequent research with these records.

A significant characteristic of the Oblate missions in Southern Manitoba and other prairie regions compared to other North-West missions is the prevalence of Francophone missionaries.

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<sup>41</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 15-16.

<sup>42</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 28.

<sup>43</sup> “Constitution and Rules,” *Missionary Oblates*.

<sup>44</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 14-16.

<sup>45</sup> Claude Champagne, “La Formation Des Oblats, Missionnaires Dans Le Nord-Ouest Canadien,” *Sessions D'étude - Société Canadienne D'histoire De L'église Catholique* 56 (1989): 21-33.

<sup>46</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, xx.

<sup>47</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 20.

These included both French Canadians, who often intertwined their missionary work with extending Québécois language, culture, and religion (ultramontane theology in particular) in the North-West at the expense of Anglo-Protestants<sup>48</sup> and Oblates from France who tied their missionary work to their distinct national politics, with many promoting the values of pre-revolutionary Catholicism in contrast to the secularization and anti-clericalism of the Third French Republic.<sup>49</sup> Lesage also suggests that different national or cultural backgrounds amongst the Oblate impacted record creation, stating that French-born Oblates wrote more abundantly than Canadian-born Oblates.<sup>50</sup> These Francophone missionaries often came into conflict with colonial entities that were or at least considered Anglophone-Protestant, like Protestant missionaries, the Hudson's Bay Company, and later the Canadian federal government.<sup>51</sup> Just as these missionaries' use of French is reflected in the records and their subsequent archiving, conflict between Francophone Oblates and the nominally Anglophone-Protestant federal government can also be reflected in the records' content and their management. While this partnership was often tenuous, Huel describes how the Oblates and the government ultimately shared the goals of using schools as vehicles of cultural genocide.<sup>52</sup>

Fundamentally, the Oblates' early missionary activities were critical not just for the congregation's participation in the residential school system but also its substantial role in constructing the overall system. Principally, it was the congregation's on-the-ground missionary experiences that influenced its conception of the residential school model as more effective for

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<sup>48</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, xix-xx.

<sup>49</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>50</sup> Lesage, interview, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, xvii-xxi.

<sup>52</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 120-121.

spiritual and cultural assimilation by the 1870s and 1880s. Before this, the Oblates already viewed education as a key to their broader missionary efforts, with Bishop de Mazenod's *Instructions* (1851) promoting missionaries to establish schools and stressing the need to instruct youth about the fundamentals of both Christianity and Western European-style sedentary lifestyles. The congregation in the North-West also viewed schools as ideal controlled environments to undermine Indigenous cultural practices by disconnecting children from their communities. By the 1870s, the Oblates operated dozens of mission-based schools.<sup>53</sup> The curriculum of mission schools varied, but many schools stressed both religious education and instruction in Western-European style agriculture, often through menial manual labour.<sup>54</sup> Through these missionary experiences, many Oblates saw earlier education initiatives that attempted some form of cultural accommodation with Indigenous communities as unsuccessful for assimilation and instead shifted towards more aggressively assimilationist models of education aimed at children based off other assimilation efforts that involved prolonged missionary contact and the removal of Indigenous children from their community lifestyles.<sup>55</sup>

The principal proponent of this shift in Oblate education was the Bishop of St. Albert, Vital-Justin Grandin, OMI, who is often credited as a main architect of the residential school system. Grandin believed that mission schools and orphanages gradually removed children's connections to their community's lifestyles, making them unable to return to these lifestyles and thus easier to fully convert. By 1879, Grandin made recommendations to the federal government about how to best assimilate Indigenous children, stressing the need to totally remove children

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<sup>53</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 99-103.

<sup>54</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 103-104.

<sup>55</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 73-74.

from their families. Grandin also stressed while the Oblates were willing to provide this education, the congregation lacked the funds to do so. In the early 1880s, Grandin and other Oblates requested government funds to support Oblate-ran education efforts alongside funds from other Catholic organizations and private donors in Canada and Europe.<sup>56</sup> The Oblates' desire for government funding was in part due to the congregation's rapid but increasingly expensive expansion across the North-West over the past forty years.<sup>57</sup> Grandin's push for schools funded and owned by the government and administered and staffed by the Church coincided with federal government considering the American industrial school model to replace the earlier on-reserve day schools created due to treaty obligations.<sup>58</sup> The early development of the residential school system in Canada also reflected global trends of Christian church and state partnerships in colonial education, which included other Christian denomination in Canada.<sup>59</sup>

It is not my intent to explore to what extent the Oblates were responsible for designing the residential school system compared to the state or other churches. Rather, my point is to highlight that the Oblates were active agents in crafting and operating the school system to achieve their own goals and objectives alongside those of the federal government and other churches. This question of the congregation's agency in the school system is also relevant to discussions of agency over school record creation, management, and archiving in this and my other chapters. The Oblates' relatively autonomous control over school records both past and present also makes it important to recognize the congregation's agency, goals, and objectives.

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<sup>56</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 106-117.

<sup>57</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 73.

<sup>58</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 124-126.

<sup>59</sup> Felicity Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part I: Church-State Relations and Indigenous Actions and Reactions," *History Compass* 10, no. 4 (2012): 294-297.

Fundamentally, the Oblates were not passive servants of the government, but actively pursued operating residential schools for their own agenda and with considerable autonomy. This is why I examine the congregation in such detail compared to the government and the Catholic Church, as this autonomy in operating schools also pervaded the creation and management of school records.

## Section Two: Oblate Jurisdictions and Schools in Southern Manitoba

### *Oblate Jurisdictions*

This final section provides an overview of Oblate schools in Southern Manitoba and the various Catholic jurisdictions that schools operated in. This forms a bridge to Chapter Two, where I will consider how these high-level changes might have impacted the composition and custodianship of school records. This section should also clarify some of the key locations and regions that I discuss in the sections on custodial histories.

Oblate schools in Manitoba operated within various layers of shifting jurisdictional boundaries. In addition to the boundaries of provinces/territories, municipalities, Indigenous-settler treaties, and traditional Indigenous territories, Oblate schools fell under two types of (at least Latin-rite) Catholic jurisdictions: religious and ecclesiastical. Religious jurisdictions comprised Vicariates of Missions led by a Vicar of Missions and Provinces overseen by a Provincial Superior. Religious jurisdictions that included Manitoban schools included the Vicariate of Missions of Red River (1851) and the Vicariate of Missions of Keewatin (1911). There were also the Oblate Province of Manitoba (1904).<sup>60</sup> Under Oblate administration,

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<sup>60</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 292.

missions within these jurisdictions were separate entities from other North American missions, which could benefit the congregation in requesting separate allotments for each jurisdiction.<sup>61</sup>

These jurisdictions could include schools outside the borders of the Canadian Province of Manitoba. For example, the Oblate Province of Manitoba included schools in southern Saskatchewan and schools by the international border in North-West Ontario, but did not include two schools in Northern Manitoba, which fell under the Vicariate of Missions of Keewatin. As such, records from schools in southern Manitoba may be grouped with records from Saskatchewan and Ontario schools in either three provinces, but not necessarily with those of schools from northern Manitoba.

In addition to their respective religious jurisdictions, Oblate schools also operated in various ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Formed in 1851, the Diocese of St. Boniface (later Archdiocese in 1871) was the largest ecclesiastical jurisdiction that schools in Southern Manitoba operated in at some point. Several ecclesiastical jurisdictions were erected from the Archdiocese's territory from 1962 to 1948, several of which were headed by Oblate bishops. These include the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg (1915), and the Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin (1910), later the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas (1967).<sup>62</sup>

These changes were in part responses to Indigenous peoples' resistance to missionaries. For example, in response to early missionary failures, Mazeond created Red River as an autonomous religious vicariate separate from the Oblate Province of Canada and designated Alexandre-Antonin Taché, an Oblate and coadjutor bishop to the newly created Diocese of Saint Boniface, the superior of all missions in the North-West. The consolidation of missions further

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<sup>61</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 296.

accelerated when Taché succeed as bishop (later archbishop) in 1853. As the number of Oblate missions increased under this consolidation, the congregation shifted from earlier itinerant missions that attempted some accommodation of Indigenous language and culture towards permanent missions that stressed cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples.<sup>63</sup>

Changes in Oblate jurisdictions were also impacted by the congregation's declining presence in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century. Lesage argues that the lack of new recruits forced the congregation to consider the future of the Manitoba Province as canon law required a certain number of Oblates in each province.<sup>64</sup> Lesage speculates that decreased Oblate membership in the second half of the twentieth century was in part influenced by various global social movements in the 1960s, including the development of liberation theology.<sup>65</sup> Lesage argues that jurisdictional responsibilities between Oblate and ecclesiastical territories were often clearly defined, with changing diocesan boundaries not considerably impacting record creation processes at residential schools.<sup>66</sup> It is evident that changes in jurisdictions did impact the custody of records in some provinces but not the Manitoba Province. Lesage states that though the records of the Keewatin-Le Pas Province did fall under the Manitoba Province's control when the former was merged into the latter in 1983, many records remained in Northern Manitoba and are possibly now in Deschâtelets.<sup>67</sup> This reinforces the need to study each province individually while also acknowledging how archival processes varied across the provinces.

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<sup>63</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> Lesage, interview, 12-13.

<sup>65</sup> Lesage, interview, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Lesage, interview, 19.

<sup>67</sup> Lesage, interview, 10-11.

### *Oblate Schools*

The Oblates operated the following schools in what at some point fell under the Oblate Province of Manitoba<sup>68 69 70</sup>:

- ❖ St. Boniface Industrial School (1891-1909)
  - Vicariate of Missions of Red River until 1904
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba after 1904
  - Archdiocese of St. Boniface
  
- ❖ Sandy Bay (1905-1970)
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba
  - Archdiocese of St. Boniface until 1915
  - Archdiocese of Winnipeg after 1915
  
- ❖ Fort Alexander (1906-1970)
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba
  - Archdiocese of St. Boniface

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<sup>68</sup> Donat Levasseur, *Les Oblats De Marie Immacule Dans L'ouest Et Le Nord Du Canada, 1845-1967* (The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000), 192.

<sup>69</sup> Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 152.

<sup>70</sup> “Interactive Map of Latin Dioceses, Eparchies, and Ordinariates,” Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishop, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.cccb.ca/the-catholic-church-in-canada/interactive-map-of-latin-dioceses-eparchies-and-ordinariates/>.

- ❖ Camperville Indian Residential School (Pine Creek Indian Residential School) (1891-1971)
  - Vicariate of Missions of Red River until 1904
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba after 1904
  - Archdiocese of St. Boniface until 1915
  - Archdiocese of Winnipeg after 1915
  
- ❖ Assiniboia Indian Residential School (1957-1973)<sup>71</sup>
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba
  - Archdiocese of Winnipeg
  
- ❖ Brandon Student Residence (1970-1972)<sup>72</sup>
  - Oblate Province of Manitoba
  - Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Here I provide an overview of the Oblates' involvement with these schools, in which I focus on the administrative developments of the schools themselves and the Oblate officials and organizations that operated the schools. I again stress that this focus is not meant to diminish the importance of children's experiences and the legacies of the school system in understanding residential school history and the records themselves. While Oblate administration was

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<sup>71</sup> Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Canada), *Directory of Residential Schools in Canada: Répertoire Des Pensionnats Au Canada*, Revised ed. (Ottawa, Ont.: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007), 18-19.

<sup>72</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Brandon Indian Residential School IAP School Narrative," Truth and Reconciliation Compendium, updated June 28, 2022. [https://t-r-c.ca/nctr/school\\_narratives/brandon.pdf](https://t-r-c.ca/nctr/school_narratives/brandon.pdf), 1-2.

significant to how schools operated and records were created and managed, it remains only one dimension of school history, and one that is not always useful to conceptualizing the various aspects of residential school histories. For this research, though, these administrative contexts are important to the broader histories of school records and Oblate archives, and thus need to be examined in some detail.

The Oblates' direct involvement with operating schools in Manitoba began with the St. Boniface Industrial School. The federal government had already approved funds for three industrial schools outside Manitoba in 1883, two of which were operated by the Oblates. Every aspect of industrial schools, from location to curriculum, was designed to acculturate Indigenous children as “devout progressive Christians” that met both Oblate and government standards of religious/cultural assimilation.<sup>73</sup> Industrial schools were “large, centrally located, urban-associated” institutions that focused on trade instruction along with basic language education, while boarding schools were smaller, located on or near reserves, and stressed more basic agricultural skills along with reading, writing, and arithmetic.<sup>74</sup> In 1890, Archbishop of Saint-Boniface Alexandre-Antonin Taché, O.M.I., established the St. Boniface Industrial School with public funding. The Grey Nuns operated the initial school for Indigenous girls while secular priests operated a school for boys that opened in 1891. In 1895, the two institutions merged under Oblate administration. While succeeding Archbishop Louis-Philippe-Adelard Langevin argued the school was successful in cultural assimilation, the Department of Indian Affairs ended funding for the girls school, turned it into a boarding school, and limited enrolments to the boys school.

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<sup>73</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 143-144.

<sup>74</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 7.

The Oblates' difficulties in funding and recruiting for the school, including government funding limits based on students' ages, led the congregation to transfer students to three new boarding schools: Fort Alexander, Sandy Bay, and Fort Pelly. The location of these and other Oblate schools reflected the existing presence of Oblate missions in these areas, further illustrating how schools were extensions of earlier and on-going missionary efforts.<sup>75</sup> The federal government transferred ownership of the St. Boniface school to the Oblates and agreed to build the three new schools.<sup>76</sup> The gradual replacement of St. Boniface Industrial School with these three boarding schools reflects the federal government's broader shift away from the industrial school-boarding school model in the 1890s, feeling it was too expensive and saw low rates of graduations. Parents' preference to have children attend boarding schools that were closer to communities also contributed to the decline of industrial schools.<sup>77</sup> The government abolished industrial schools as a distinct category in 1923 and consolidated existing industrial and boarding schools as residential schools, which were smaller in size and stressed rudimentary vocational training.<sup>78</sup> Residential schools carried over many of the same assimilationist objectives and tactics of earlier Oblate missions and industrial schools, including the conversion of children and their communities, as well the federal government's objectives of cultural assimilation to create a self-sufficient underclass and end obligations to Indigenous nations.<sup>79</sup>

At nearly all Oblate-ran schools, parents resisted sending and keeping their children at schools, with the Oblates often admitting that parents' reasons for resistance were justified. The

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<sup>75</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 52-53.

<sup>76</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 137-139.

<sup>77</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 147-149.

<sup>79</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 25-26.

congregation was forced to respond by sending principals to recruit students on reserves and purchasing wardship of students, both of which communities strongly resisted. After an 1894 *Indian Act* amendment on school attendance, the congregation could seek aid from Indian agents and police to enforce attendance. Students also frequently ran away from schools, leading Oblates to administer punishments, transfer students to other schools, or offer concessions to parents for children to stay. Huel cites examples of this resistance at Pine Creek, Fort Alexander, Cross Lake, Camperville, and other schools in Manitoba.<sup>80</sup> This shows student and community agency in resisting and the reactivity of school policies and practices to this resistance. It is important to consider how this reactivity is reflected in the records, both those created in direct response to resistance (i.e. documents about refused admissions, students fleeing) and those that reflect larger administrative changes that occurred due to resistance (i.e. documents about revised recruitment efforts).

Another aspect of these schools that directly impact the nature of school records was the composition of their administration and staff. Most of the staff was francophone, and many francophone Oblate missionaries had stressed education in French or even Indigenous languages to counter Anglicization and thus “Protestantization”. However, the predominance of English in the North-West from 1870s onwards meant Oblate schools had to teach and administer in English to compete with other denominations’ schools. In an 1888 letter, Bishop Grandin reflected on how teaching, bookkeeping, and correspondence was increasingly done in English at the Calgary Industrial School.<sup>81</sup> This increased use of English by still predominately Francophone staff resulted in a mix of school records in both French and English. I will consider

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<sup>80</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 143-156.

<sup>81</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 20.

the implications of this linguistic mix in the subsequent chapters. The Oblates' willingness to work in English also highlights the linguistic power dynamics at the schools, with children often being severely punished for speaking their Indigenous languages at school.<sup>82</sup> One Survivor from the Fort Alexander school noted how she asked staff members why they could speak French, but the children could not speak Ojibway, for which she was later publicly punished.<sup>83</sup> This shows how seriously Francophone staff took their own linguistic rights and identities while enforcing Anglo-assimilation onto children. It is also important to note that most staff members at many Oblate schools were female religious sisters. While I do not discuss the broader contexts of these religious sisters due to my focus on the Oblates, their presence at the schools was significant both for their impact on school administration and for being the staff members most often directly interacting with children.<sup>84</sup> These sisters' roles in mediating school records, alongside their broader participation in the school system, requires considerable research that I am unable to provide here.

School funding was on an on-going and contentious area of school administration, especially given the congregation's lack of available finances by the end of the nineteenth century. The early North-West missions were financially supported by French-based Catholic organizations like *l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* and *l'Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance*,

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<sup>82</sup> Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: the Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: a Memoir* (Surrey, B.C: Heritage House, 2010), 108

<sup>83</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Survivors Speak: a Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 52-53

<sup>84</sup> Choquette, *The Oblate Assault*, 6-7.; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 165-169.; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 172-173.; Myra Rutherford, "Mothers of the Empire: Maternal Metaphors in the Northern Canadian Mission Field," in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, eds. Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Cel - Canadian Publishers Collection. Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 46-49.

whose periodicals published often embellished accounts of missionary activities to stimulate interest from financial contributors. To compensate for limited funding from these organizations and other Catholic entities, especially with declining donor contributions with the fall of the French Empire and the Papal states in the 1870s, missionaries engaged in harmful tactics such as temporarily leasing children by providing money and gifts to parents and placing them in residential schools. According to Huel, the outright purchase of children was apparently rare in the Canadian context.<sup>85</sup> Some individual missionaries requested financial support from Indigenous communities, many of whom responded negatively to these requests. Others sought financial aid from friends and through fundraisers in Eastern Canada, the U.S., and Europe.<sup>86</sup> Theodore Fontaine notes how many people in the Sagkeeng First Nations community thought the Oblates manipulated their book-keeping to report higher wages to the government and thus receive more in reimbursements.<sup>87</sup> All these show the appeal of government funding through residential schools for the Oblates.

As time went on, the federal government was increasingly frustrated with the results of Oblate schools. Many of these frustrations were based in the Oblates' failures to prevent students and families from resisting school attendance. In response, the government initiated various administrative changes to reduce costs and increase attendance, such as introducing the per capita grant system, altering curriculum, centralizing its control by acquiring school ownership, and introducing compulsory school attendance legislation.<sup>88</sup> Tensions between the Oblates and

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<sup>85</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 23-72.

<sup>86</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 23-72.

<sup>87</sup> Fontaine, *Broken Circle*, 124

<sup>88</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 175.

the government were further compounded by the disorganization of Oblate school management. The delegation of power between principals and associates was often unclear, as the Department insisted that principals were superior to all Oblate brothers serving at schools while the Oblate administration criticized principals trying to assert absolute control over their schools.<sup>89</sup> Defining principals' authority is further complicated by many principals concurrently serving as the local superior of nearby Oblate missions, which gave them power over local Oblates outside of what the government formally designated. At the Fort Alexander school, of the 15 Oblates listed as principals or in equivalent roles,<sup>90</sup> at least two were simultaneously local superiors.<sup>91</sup> All of these had implications for the type of records created in and for school administration and their custody under Church or government control.

To clarify what authority Oblate principals had, while the federal government attempted several times to clearly define the responsibilities of school principals and other officials, these attempts were often not successful due to a lack of enforcing compliance, with principals often ignoring guidelines or directives from the government.<sup>92</sup> The TRC notes that in general, school policy was determined on a school-by-school basis, with new principals often being unaware of instructions sent to their predecessors and the government having little ability to determine if policies were being followed.<sup>93</sup> Lack of communication on principals' responsibilities even

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<sup>89</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 165.

<sup>90</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander Indian Residential School IAP School Narrative," Truth and Reconciliation Compendium, updated June 28, 2022, [https://t-r-c.ca/nctr/school\\_narratives/fort\\_alexander.pdf](https://t-r-c.ca/nctr/school_narratives/fort_alexander.pdf), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, 594-837.

<sup>92</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 64-67.

<sup>93</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part I, Origins to 1939: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 1*. Vol. 151 (MQUP, 2015), 201-205.

occurred within the federal government, as in one instance the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs sent a memorandum on guidelines for two Oblate schools, which included mandating principals to send monthly reports and keep school diaries alongside other responsibilities. However, while the principals received this memo, the Indian Commissioner did not until the following year, well after organizing the two schools was underway.<sup>94</sup> Overall, school principals often had de-facto control over key administrative activities, such as developing and implementing schedules and curriculum, hiring and paying staff, organizing building construction and maintenance, obtaining clothing and food, operating school farms and businesses, and recruiting and admitting children.<sup>95</sup> The significant power that Oblate principals had over these processes would in turn shape the composition of school records.

In 1936, the Oblates formed the *Commission Oblate des Oeuvres Indiennes et Esquimaudes* (COOIE) (Indian Welfare and Training Oblate Commission in English) in response to Superior General T. Labouré's recommendations to establish a permanent organization to represent the interests of Oblate schools and missions across Canada when dealing with the federal government. Made of representatives from across Canada, COOIE oversaw the status of missions and applied for grants from the government to fund the construction and maintenance of schools. COOIE also coordinated with other Christian denominations to lobby for federal funding for schools. COOIE and other churches argued that because Indigenous populations were rising in the mid twentieth century (this itself reflecting Indigenous peoples' broader resistance to genocide), funding for schools should increase to reflect increased number of children. Many provincials and bishops would still submit school budgets to government

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<sup>94</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 201.

<sup>95</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 293-328.

authorities rather than through COOIE. Greater coordination on schools and missions also reflected the development of missiology in the Catholic Church during the early twentieth century.<sup>96</sup>

After the Second World War, Oblate involvement in schools began to decline for several reasons, including broader government policy shifts away from churches as education providers. The government had frustrations with the Oblates over their dedication to preserve the residential school-model, with the principals often leading energetic campaigns to support residential schools, showing the congregation's deep investment in that particular form of colonial assimilation.<sup>97</sup> Oblate administration changed alongside this declining involvement. In 1960, COOIE was turned into Oblate Services and later renamed as Indianescom (The Oblate Indian and Eskimo Council) in 1962. By the 1970s, Indianescom mostly focused on administrating student residences and representing the Church on a federal level. In 1976, Indianescom was dissolved after most residences had been transferred to the federal government and the Canadian Oblate Conference took over federal representation.<sup>98</sup> The church-state administrative model of residential schools effectively ended on April 1, 1969, when the government formally ended its partnership with the churches in managing residential schools, though many such schools remained operating for some years.<sup>99</sup> The creation of these national-level organizations created another node in the creation and keeping of school records, with many records that might have been sent only to Provincials or principals now having copies sent to the national leadership.

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<sup>96</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 241-248.

<sup>97</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 231-232.

<sup>98</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 280-282.

<sup>99</sup> Milloy, *National Crime*, 234-235.

This would alter the composition of record collections at these various levels, as well as increase the possibility of specific school records being present in national-level collections but not local/provincial ones.

The Fort Alexander Residential School (1904-1970) offers one example of the complex web of colonial organizations that Oblate-ran residential schools existed within. One major example of these organizations are the numerous day schools that operated concurrently with residential schools and often succeeded them. On Fort Alexander, the Catholic Day School No. 2 opened in 1950 and operated independently until in 1954 when it merged into Fort Alexander RS.<sup>100</sup> However, a second Catholic day school, Fort Alexander #4 - (RC), operated nearby from 1955 to 1961.<sup>101</sup> As well, there were also two Anglican day schools at Fort Alexander, with the residential school re-locating some of its classes to one of these school's former sites.<sup>102</sup> By 1969, classroom education ceased, and the school was rebranded as Fort Alexander Student Residence. A new interdenominational school, Sagkeeng Consolidated School, took over the school's former classroom block.<sup>103</sup> Fort Alexander RS was also connected to other residential schools, such as when high school age children were sent to Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg during the summer of 1958.<sup>104</sup>

Fort Alexander RS also shows the interconnectedness of residential schools to the Oblates' broader religious assimilation efforts in Indigenous communities. In his memoirs,

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<sup>100</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 1.

<sup>101</sup> T. M. Christou, J. Pind, B. Farmer Lacombe, and K. Cummings-Bentley, "Federal Indian Day Schools," Indian Day Schools, last modified April 23, 2023, <https://indiandayschools.org>.

<sup>102</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 7.

<sup>103</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 2.

<sup>104</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 2.

Theodore Fontaine states that when his father attended the school in the 1900s, parents had more control over their children's attendance at the school, such as only sending children for basic skills like reading and writing. He notes this changed as the Oblates used their established mission to exert more influence over the community by his parents' generation. This included using the fear of death and spiritual damnation in weekly sermons to encourage parents to send their children to the school.<sup>105</sup> Survivors from Fort Alexander and other schools noted that the Oblates put a heavy emphasis on religious instruction, which many felt left them unprepared when they later entered public schools.<sup>106</sup> The Oblates also created separate religious education institutions as informal extensions of residential schools. This is evident with the creation of St. John's Minor Seminary at Fort Alexander in 1953. This seminary was designed to train Indigenous boys for the priesthood, though sources like the TRC describe it more like a general private high school.<sup>107</sup> This type of institution was supported by the Catholic hierarchy as far back as the 1930s, with Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, advocating for the Oblates to create a seminary for Indigenous children in a 1935 letter. The seminary was supported by the Archdiocese of St. Boniface but was independent from the federal or provincial governments.<sup>108</sup> Many children who attended the seminary also attended Fort Alexander RS. The Seminary was relocated to Otterburne, Manitoba before closing sometime after the mid 1960s.<sup>109</sup> St. John's Seminary illustrates how an Oblate-ran institution and thus records produced by its activities

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<sup>105</sup> Fontaine, *Broken Circle*, 92-99.

<sup>106</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Survivors Speak*, 123.

<sup>107</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 434.

<sup>108</sup> "St. John's Indian Seminary Trains Native Vocations," *Indian Record* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), March 1960, 7.

<sup>109</sup> "Indian Minor Seminary Blessed at Otterburne," *Indian Record* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), October 1964, 1.

may not have formally been a part of the residential school system but nonetheless had direct ties to the system through the Oblates. Cardinal Pacelli's letter also shows the extent to which the Vatican was both aware of and actively supported the Oblates' colonial activities. The school also had a tuberculosis preventorium from 1938 to 1939 and operated a farm until 1954.<sup>110</sup>

Fort Alexander RS also shows the numerous Catholic entities that could operate in a single school. Besides the Oblates themselves from 1904 to 1970, two female religious communities provided staff members: the Sisters of St. Andrew of the Cross (also known as Daughters of the Holy Cross or Sisters of the Cross) from 1905 to 1914, and the Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface from 1914 to 1970.<sup>111</sup> As such, the Sisters of St. Andrew of the Cross were likely able to produce and collect a considerable amount of records from the first ten years of the school's existence before the Oblate Sisters came to the school. Such records about the school's early history could be managed separately from the Oblates, creating another node in the broader record-keeping network.

The final contextual layer I discuss is the extensive Indigenous activism and legal action over residential schools from the 1970s onwards. All the Oblates' decisions over their school records and broader responses to the histories and legacies of residential schools discussed in Chapters Two and Three must be understood in this context. Not doing so would inaccurately depict the congregation's reactions as simply benevolent acts rather than measured responses to increasing social, legal, and financial pressure from Survivors and their communities. While this activism has taken numerous forms, I focus on the legal actions taken against the government

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<sup>110</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 2.

<sup>111</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 2.

and churches due to the direct pressure this placed on these entities generally and their keeping of school records specifically.

From the 1970s onwards, many Survivors formed associations to support each other, promote healing, raise awareness about abuse, and advocate for justice. These include the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association, Shubenacadie Indian Residential School Survivors Association, and The Manitoba Indian Residential School Survivors Society (later known as Spirit Wind), and The Indian Residential School Survivor Society amongst many others.<sup>112</sup> In late 1980s, criminal prosecutions and convictions of school staff served as the basis for many civil cases seeking compensation. These cases showed that the government and churches could be held financially liable for school abuse and allowed courts to rule on who was responsible for the harm caused by the system. These cases, however, had various limitations, such as very slow processes that created many outstanding cases, statutes of limitations that prevented most Survivors from pursuing claims, Survivors often having to relive and recount traumatic experiences, and the general costs and hardships for Survivors throughout these cases. As well, the federal government, various churches, and entities within the churches (e.g., individual dioceses) disputed the legal responsibility for administering the schools, further complicating the process.<sup>113</sup>

Many courts ruled that individual Catholic entities, such as the Oblates, could be sued, while the Catholic church at the national level could not be sued.<sup>114</sup> As well, liable Catholic entities would often strike different deals with the federal government over financial assistance

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<sup>112</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 556-557.

<sup>113</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 559-561.

<sup>114</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 561-563.

to meet their liabilities compared to the other churches..<sup>115</sup> This corresponds to the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops deciding in the early 1990s to have all apologies for Catholic-run schools to come from individual dioceses (and assumingly religious communities) rather than the denomination as a whole.<sup>116</sup> The Oblates did make an apology for residential schools in 1991, which was heavily criticized by Survivors.<sup>117</sup> These points reinforce the need to focus on the Oblates' distinct responses, archival or otherwise, given its willingness and legal status to act separately from other churches and the broader Catholic Church to a great extent. Various class-actions and resolution systems resulted in the single class action known as *Fontaine v. Canada (Attorney General)* and the signing of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2006, which came into effect in 2007. This provided compensation for Survivors, additional compensation for abuse victims, funding for commemoration and healing programs, and funding to establish the TRC. However, it did not include all Indigenous peoples who went to residential schools and excluded many similar institutions such as day schools. Catholic Church entities agreed to contribute between \$54 million and \$79 million,<sup>118</sup> though there is on-going controversy regarding Catholic entities meeting their financial obligations.<sup>119</sup> Since the

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<sup>115</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 563-565.

<sup>116</sup> Peter G. Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools, 1986-1998," *Peace research* 47, no. 1/2 (2015): 51-52.

<sup>117</sup> Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies," 53-54.

<sup>118</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The History, Part 1*, 566-575.

<sup>119</sup> Gloria Galloway, "Legal misstep lets Catholic Church off hook for residential schools compensation," *The Globe and Mail*, April 17, 2016, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/legal-misstep-lets-catholics-off-hook-for-residential-schools-compensation/article29657424/>.; Deborah Gyapong, "Federal government sues Catholic entities involved in residential schools," *The Catholic Register*, January 28, 2014, <https://www.catholicregister.org/item/17548-federal-government-sues-catholic-entities-involved-in-residential-schools>.; Gloria Galloway, "Ottawa to press church groups to fulfill residential-school settlement," *The Globe and Mail*, April 19, 2014, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-to-press-church-groups-to-fulfill-residential-school-settlement/article29686806/>.

agreement, further community activism and research activities, such as identifying burial sites, has continued to pressure the Oblates alongside other churches and the federal government. It is within this context of on-going activism that all of the Oblates' decisions over their school collections must be understood.

From this chapter, many of the defining contexts that the Oblates originated in persisted throughout their involvement with residential schools and in turn impacted records produced from this involvement. Though I highlight the congregation's autonomy and distinct membership as key to these contexts and the records themselves, other actors involved with the school system also shaped the contexts and characteristics of the records, even if not always in the most evident ways. As Lesage notes, the histories of residential schools exist within broader networks of memory than just Oblate records, citing the archives of female religious congregations, government agencies, Survivors' testimonies, and even oral history projects with Oblates as other important sources within these memory networks.<sup>120</sup> This multitude of influences on record processes provides context for my discussions on the creation of school records and the characteristics of these records in Chapter Two.

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<sup>120</sup> Lesage, Interview, 15-16.

## Chapter Two: Record Creation, Characteristics, and Archival Regulations

Chapter Two explores the processes behind the creation of school records and some of their characteristics. For section one, I explore the entities and events that influenced record creation and how record creation impacted the composition of record collections. I first review the various legal and regulatory texts from the Oblates, the broader Catholic Church, and the federal government that mandated record creation and record keeping. I then compare these record obligations to a sample record collection from Fort Alexander to note any discrepancies. Section Two covers general records characteristics of the Fort Alexander collection as to help determine the broader contexts and activities that created these records and how in turn the records reflect these contexts and activities.

For this chapter, I draw on certain principals from the discipline of diplomatics as defined by Luciana Duranti to examine how schools' broader historical contexts impacted record creation. Diplomatics stresses studying the historical, administrative, and legal contexts of record creators alongside examining individual records' purpose of existing, process of creation, and physical and intellectual forms. Diplomatics does not directly explore records' content as it uses various other elements of records to ascertain a fuller meaning of the content.<sup>1</sup> The utility of diplomatics in understanding how records illustrate "the discrepancies between law and actual procedure" and the "mediation [...] between legal-administrative apparatus and society" is also helpful for my discussion on record obligations.<sup>2</sup> While I disagree with Duranti's assertions about the universality of diplomatics, especially regarding Indigenous memory and knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science, Part I," *Archivaria* 28 (1989): 10-16.

<sup>2</sup> Duranti, "Diplomatics, Part I," 23-24.

systems around residential schools, the discipline is suitable for examining the church and governmental administrative aspects of residential school records given the discipline emerged in European administrative and legal traditions, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> My approach is similar to Raymond Frogner's use of diplomatics to examine the *North Saanich Treaty* of 1852, in that diplomatics can help to "dissect the document's form to understand its creative context" and posit the "interplay of legal-administrative rules and the relevant society" which produces the record.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, here is an unexhaustive taxonomy of records founds in Oblate collections to give an idea of collections' broader composition. This list reflects my working familiarity with the Manitoba Province collection, primarily the records found in residential school series:

- Sacramental records (baptisms, marriages, etc.)
- Reports (to congregational, ecclesiastical, or government leadership)
- Correspondence (commonly intra-congregational)
- Codices Historici (record of events at a mission, often in a journal format)
- Obedience (written instructions from a superior)
- Training materials (material from noviciates, scholasticates, etc.)
- Graphics (photographs, films, maps, architectural plans, etc.)
- Audio records (vinyl, cassette tapes, etc.)
- Published materials (books, periodicals, etc.)

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<sup>3</sup> Duranti, "Diplomatics, Part I," 8-14.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Frogner, "'Innocent Legal Fictions': Archival Convention and the North Saanich Treaty of 1852," *Archivaria* 70 (2010): 59.

While I do not discuss all these record types in this chapter, it is still worth noting the plurality of record types for both the archival labour needed to appropriately manage each one and the unique challenges and opportunities they might pose for researchers.

### Section One: Record Obligations

This section explores the type of records that Oblate officials associated with residential schools were obligated to create by regulations of the congregation, canon law, and the federal government. It also compares these mandated record types to the actual contents of an Oblate collection, the Fort Alexander collection, to determine overlap and discrepancies. It can be difficult to clearly determine the record obligations that Oblate officials needed to follow at a given point in time. For one, the various laws and regulations that formally govern the Oblates as a Catholic entity and as school employees underwent multiple changes during the operation of residential schools. This principally includes changes to the Oblate Rules and Constitution and the federal government's various regulatory tools throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as discussed in Chapter One. Cross-referencing all these documents would be too exhaustive for this research and likely not make much difference to this research overall. Also, it is difficult to locate and obtain copies of older versions of these documents. Finally, it is possible that Oblate officials had similar obligations to other entities and communities connected to the schools, such as provincial and local governments, leaders of other religious communities with school staff, First Nations governments, etc. For the sake of brevity, I focus on a few key regulatory documents that had the clearest and most direct authority over Oblate officials. It is more than possible that there are considerable discrepancies between the records examined and other regulatory documents not examined.

To discuss congregational record creation, I use the 1910 revisions of the Oblate Rules and Constitution, as this version was in place during most of the Fort Alexander Residential School's history. While there were further revisions in 1928 and 1966, the 1928 version had only minor changes from the 1910 one and the 1966 version came only a few years before the Oblates left most Manitoba residential schools.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the rules with the most evident impact on the composition of the Fort Alexander records are those granting Provincials considerable authority on missions' financial activities. R 630 stipulates that Local Superiors require the written permission of their Provincials to make transactions, write a contract, accept inheritance, impose a charge on their houses, etc., and that provincials themselves cannot issue permissions for these sorts of matters without consulting the Superior General.<sup>6</sup> As well, R 628 states that Local Superiors must inform Provincials about all decisions of their local councils and communicate through correspondence all other business about the governing of the house at least once a month.<sup>7</sup> There are similar rules governing permissions for construction and demolition projects at missions, such as R 631 and R 632.<sup>8</sup> This is heavily reflected in the Fort Alexander records, as a vast number of letters from Principals to Provincials or Provincial Councils involve requesting permission for various purchases (like automobiles) and construction projects.<sup>9</sup> There are many

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<sup>5</sup> Constitution and Rules," *Missionary Oblates*.

<sup>6</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 131-132.

<sup>7</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 131.

<sup>8</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 132.

<sup>9</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 234.M27D 1- Demandes au Conseil Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.; see also Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

other rules about financial records, such as Rules 576, 586, 587, 627, 629, and 671 to 682.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these types of requests, many letters function as informal reports about the status of the school and associated missions. Such reports were mandated by Rules like R 26 that required Local Superiors to write to the Provincial once a week about the status of the mission and ask for direction and perspective,<sup>11</sup> and R 571, where Local Superiors had to send a report about the state of their houses or residences to their Provincial two to three times a year.<sup>12</sup> Given that some of the Principals at Fort Alexander were simultaneously the mission's Local Superior, it is clear that these principals were consistently following these congregational rules on record creation.

It is important to note, though, that many records mandated by the Oblate Constitution were intended for the Superior General. In some cases, these would be records that Local Superiors would have created for Provincials anyway, such as R 570, where the Provincial must send the same reports he received from Local Superiors to the General Superior four times a year.<sup>13</sup> In other cases, these would be records about local missions but sent directly to the Superior General, such reports made by Provincials on their mandated annual visits to local Oblate communities (R 567) and annual correspondence from local superiors about their missionary work (R 572).<sup>14</sup> The Fort Alexander collection contains a few examples of Provincials making formal requests to the Superior General, such as a 1961 petition to construct

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<sup>10</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 118-141.

<sup>11</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 117.

<sup>13</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 117.

<sup>14</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 116-117.

a new church at the mission,<sup>15</sup> suggesting other record creation processes mandated by the congregation. As such, it is possible that some records ended up in both Provincial and General record collections, while others only in General collections unless copies were sent to the Provincial or other Oblate leadership. This distribution of records about schools and missions illustrates that not all records mandated by Oblate regulations would have ended up in the Manitoba Provincial collection.

Other constitutionally required record creation includes each Oblate house having to keep seven registers, including those for Expenses and Receipts, Mass Collections, General Chapter's Decisions, Acts of Visits, Local Council's deliberations, Deeds and Contracts, and inventories of communities' holdings. Provincial houses were also required to keep three additional registers for the Province's Expenses and Receipts, Deliberations of the Provincial Council, and a Transcript of the General Visitor's activities (R 637).<sup>16</sup> However, it is likely that these registers were used in the creation of archival documents in school collections proper. For example, the 1957 formula for a mission report requested by the province requests information about specific registers, such as the Council book, Codex Historicus, Mass register, and Acts of Visits register. It also requests info about reports from the Local Superior to the Provincial Administration about sacraments like baptisms, communions, and marriages. Though focused on the overall mission, the formula also requests information about residential schools, showing how the Oblates viewed their missions and schools and thus records about them as interconnected.<sup>17</sup> It is probable that

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<sup>15</sup> Amié Lizée to General House, July 19 1961, L 234.M27D 35, Deschâtelets 15, L 234.M27D 1-Demandes au Conseil Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>16</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 133.

<sup>17</sup> Mission Reports, 1957, L 231. M27R 23-24, Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 1-20, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

local Oblates would have used their registers to complete such reports requested from the province, suggesting the depth of mandated record creation within the congregation. From this comparison, it is evident that Fort Alexander school principals and Provincials were frequently following the congregation's rules on record creation, at least as found in the 1910 Rules and Constitution.

In contrast, Oblate officials' adherence to Canon law-based record creation processes is less clear. The 1917 code primarily mandates the creation of records documenting key sacramental events, such as baptisms (Canon 761, 777-779) and confirmation (Canon 798-800), as well as recording information about deaths (Canon 1238) and the dismissal of congregation members by a Major Superior (Canon 646).<sup>18</sup> Many of these activities, however, would have been recorded in specialized registers separate like those named above. Again, though, such information could have informed other record creation processes at missions like Fort Alexander. As well, it is possible that many children received these sacraments at schools themselves, as many schools like Fort Alexander had chapels,<sup>19</sup> or at nearby churches serviced by the same Oblate missionaries who operated the schools. Many archival documents in the Fort Alexander collection do contain sacramental information, such as extracts from a register from the 1860s showing baptismal info<sup>20</sup> or a Spiritual Report formula for the Archdiocese of St. Boniface from 1961, which mostly asks sacramental questions about the mission.<sup>21</sup> While Oblate missionaries

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<sup>18</sup> Peters, *1917 Code of Canon Law*, 231-375.

<sup>19</sup> National Research and Analysis Directorate, "Fort Alexander School Narrative," 7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Register, c. 1860s, L 231. M27R 1, Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 1-20, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>21</sup> Spiritual Report, c. 1961, L 231. M27R 24, Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 21-46, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

may not have created such records as part of their official positions and duties as school officials, at least from a government viewpoint, the sheer overlap of schools and missions' personnel and activities makes it difficult to cleanly separate these types of records from the practical administration and lived realities of the schools. Many of these sacramental records would have been designated for transfer to diocesan officials, though as Lesage notes the considerable overlap of Oblate and diocesan leadership and personnel in their Western Canadian provinces makes it difficult to distinguish between congregational and ecclesiastical officials.<sup>22</sup> The extent to which diocesan archives contain records of Oblate-ran schools is important to consider for further research. Besides sacramental records, Canon laws that required obtaining permissions from bishops and other ecclesiastical officials resulted in record creation. For example, the Archbishop of St. Boniface formally declared the erection of St. John's Minor Seminary while citing Canon laws 99 – 103, showing how certain mission activities related to the residential school system required ecclesiastical authority.<sup>23</sup> For the most part, collections like those of Fort Alexander contain little of records created by Canon law mandates outside of dedicated registers and records based on them.

The federal government's standards for record obligations and school management generally, often left up to the Department of Indian Affairs, was distributed across various regulatory tools, including legislation like the *Indian Act* and the regulations it enforced, Orders-in-Council, federal codes and guidelines, contracts, policy directives, etc., many of which underwent numerous revisions throughout the history of the school system.<sup>24</sup> A 1892 Order-in-

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<sup>22</sup> Lesage, interview, 18-19.

<sup>23</sup> "Canonical Erection", 21 October 1956, L221 M27R 1, Deschâtelets 14, L 221. M27R 1-4, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>24</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 36.

Council was the first clear assertion of the government's authority to impose standardized regulations for the schools.<sup>25</sup> From then on, the 1876 *Indian Act* throughout its subsequent revisions was the key piece of legislation regulating residential schools. Most of the provisions listed in the Act itself dealt with addressing attendance and truancy in response to parents and children's efforts to avoid the school system.<sup>26</sup> Regarding regulations enforced by the Act, revisions in 1894, 1906, 1927, 1951, 1952, 1970 all gave the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs the power to make regulations of standards for school buildings, equipment, teaching, inspection, and discipline.<sup>27</sup> It is unclear if standards for record creation and management would legally fall under these regulations. There are no such standards in either the 1894 *Regulations Relating to the Education of Indian Children*<sup>28</sup> nor in the 1908 *Regulations Relating to the Education of Indian Children*.<sup>29</sup> The 1953 *Regulations With Respect to Teaching, Education, Inspection, and Discipline for Indian Residential Schools* does provide some standards regarding record creation and management, such as "the preparation and dissemination of rules relating to the functioning of the school," "the submission of reports and returns required by the Superintendent," "the prompt submission of reports to the Regional Director of Family Allowances concerning the admission and discharge of pupils to and from the school," and "the

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<sup>25</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 164-495.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Indian Affairs, *Regulations relating to the education of Indian Children* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1894), <https://archives.nctr.ca/uploads/r/National-Centre-for-Truth-and-Reconciliation-NCTR/8/c/3/8c3126a0b91fe3af2926620211bd488a8ef4170d951d8b7e1fe05e5092228f41/46a-c002808-d0017-001.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Indian Affairs, *Regulations relating to the education of Indian Children* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1908), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/3140/1.html>

prompt and accurate entry of receipts and expenditures in the Cash Receipt and Expenditure Book”. Principals also had to inform the Department of any absences from their duties, which likely involved writing a formal letter or telegram. Item 13 of the regulations also lists “the accounting for funds, stock and equipment” and “the maintenance of records” under the operations that principals were mandated to maintain to the Department’s standards. Critically, though, these standards were not defined in the regulations themselves.<sup>30</sup> This Item at the very least indicates that Indian Affairs by 1953 did consider record-keeping important enough to standardize even if these standards were not legally defined for Oblate officials. Another regulatory tool was a 1910 contract between the government and various churches which established standards for admissions, health and safety, and child labour. This contract lapsed in 1916 but many schools still operated under the system it created into the late 1950s. Regarding records, the contract mandated churches to provide reports as required by the government on an ad hoc basis.<sup>31</sup> Certain health regulations required principals to create and send documents, such as health certification codes.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the per-capita funding system from the 1910s to the 1950s alongside efforts to make attendance compulsory could have maintaining and sending attendance records an important process even if this was not explicitly mandated by regulations.<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to determine how reflective the Fort Alexander records are of these governmental obligations or even how certain regulations would apply to this school. For

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<sup>30</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 40-42.

<sup>31</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 43-46.

<sup>32</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 46-47.

<sup>33</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 37-46

example, as the school opened in 1905, it is unclear if it ever fell under the 1910 contract and its rules on sending reports. Overall, there are very few formal reports specifically for the federal government in this collection. Most reports in general seem intended for church officials or both church and government officials, and most records sent to and from the federal government are more general correspondence between principals, provincials, Indian Affairs officials, and other government officials.<sup>34</sup> There are a few examples of government officials requesting documents from the Oblates, but it is unclear which specific regulation would have been used for such requests. Potential reasons for these discrepancies include the fact that some regulations stipulated school officials to record information in specific registers, such as the 1953 rule on keeping a Cash Receipt and Expenditure Book. Such registers may have stayed at the schools after the Oblates left or were sent directly to the government. It is also possible the Oblates and government officials considered the more general letters sent by school principals about the status of the schools as a type of report. As well, principals and Provincials may have sent these reports to government agencies without retaining copies themselves. As such, these records would be present in government archives but not Oblate Provincial collections. Copies may have also been sent to national Oblate leadership in Ottawa and thus end up in the Deschâtelets archives apart from Provincial collections.

While it is evident that many of these regulatory tools mandated certain instances of record creation, the TRC also notes that church officials often neglected to create and submit mandated records themselves, such as forms for inquiries on children's deaths mandated after

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<sup>34</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre - L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

1935 that were often filled out just by Indian Agents rather than principals directly.<sup>35</sup> As well, church officials often simply did not create and submit documents about significant events, with the TRC noting that it could not find any records that the principal at the Fort Alexander school informed Indian Affairs about the deaths of three children in 1928.<sup>36</sup> As well, many school records that were sent to the federal government could have also been destroyed. For example, a 1933 federal government policy allowed school returns to be destroyed after five years and reports after ten years, with 200,000 Indian Affairs records being destroyed between 1936 and 1944 alone. Health records were also regularly destroyed.<sup>37</sup> The lack of clear and consistent government regulations on record creation for school officials does not mean these types of regulations were not implemented, as school policy could often vary on a school-by-school basis at different stages in the system's history.<sup>38</sup> However, Oblate collections like those of Fort Alexander show little sign that its school officials created or at least kept many of the records mandated by governmental regulations. Alongside this lack of clear record-keeping mandates for the schools, the Department of Indian Affairs itself often had inadequate record-keeping systems for much of the time that schools operated. This was especially true for the field offices that would have been geographically closest to the schools, with local officers often developing their own record classification systems before the late 1940s.<sup>39</sup> While I do examine the Department's broader record obligations and archival processes in-depth, these inadequacies are worth noting

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<sup>35</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 8-9.

<sup>36</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Bill Russell, "The White Man's Paper Burden: Aspects of Records Keeping in the Department of Indian Affairs, 1860-1914," *Archivaria* 19 (1984): 71.

as a further complication into the broader network of obligations and custody that surrounded school records. Other relevant sources about Indian Affairs record-keeping and Government of Canada record-keeping more generally include works by Sean Darcy,<sup>40</sup> Edward G. Sadowski,<sup>41</sup> and Jay Atherton.<sup>42</sup>

Overall, it appears that Oblate school officials were adhering strictly to the record creation obligations mandated by the congregation itself. The fewer number of Canon law and governmental mandated records in Oblate collections is likely the result of fewer overall record creation regulations and, more likely, that many of these records would have been created for the purpose of sending them to officials outside the congregation, thus resulting in many of them not being in congregational archival collections. This reinforces the importance of understanding the multi-layered administrative environments that Oblate-ran schools operated in and viewing congregational collections within broader memory networks. While discrepancies between mandated records and actual collection compositions likely vary between schools, the example of Fort Alexander shows one instance where these discrepancies can be considerable depending on the entity in question.

## Section Two: Record Characteristics

Examining the characteristics of Oblate school records illustrates how the broader administrative, social, and cultural contexts that surrounded Oblate schools impacted the creation

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<sup>40</sup> Sean Darcy, "The Evolution of the Department of Indian Affairs' Central Registry Record-Keeping Systems: 1872-1984," *Archivaria* 58 (2004): 161-171.

<sup>41</sup> Edward G. Sadowski, *Preliminary Report on the Investigation into Missing School Files for the Shingwauk Indian Residential School* (Sault Ste Marie, Ontario: Algoma University College, 2006), [http://archives.algomau.ca/main/sites/default/files/2010-046\\_003\\_048.pdf](http://archives.algomau.ca/main/sites/default/files/2010-046_003_048.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Jay Atherton, "The Origins of the Public Archives Records Centre, 1897–1956," *Archivaria* 8 (1979): 35-59.

and form of records. In turn, these contexts and characteristics have implications for custody and management of school records, which I explore in this section and in Chapter Three. Finally, the records themselves can provide clues about the record-keeping and archival systems that these records have existed within, which in turn can help archivists better manage records that have past through these systems. An example of this are standardized formulas found in the Fort Alexander Collection, which indicate record creation processes that officials expected or requested even if not formally codified in official regulations.

One important context behind record creation and characteristics that I do not explore in detail is on-going Indigenous agency and resistance within the school system, I lack the insights and knowledge to properly discuss this topic in the necessary nuance and depth. Examples of this in the Fort Alexander collection include letters discussing children running away from schools or parents refusing to send their children and various documents from band governments and communities petitioning about school policies.<sup>43</sup> Survivors' accounts remain essential in understanding children's experiences, legacies of the school system, and often the reality of daily school administration that is not present in records produced by school officials. These accounts still guide my research with the Oblate records even if I am not citing them directly throughout. That said, I still reference some examples from Survivors' accounts that are relevant to record creation and management at the schools, as these reinforce Indigenous peoples' active roles in mediating the records and provide general insights about record histories. As I discuss in Chapter One, Indigenous peoples' work to seek justice for the residential school system has continued to impact the custody and management of school records.

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<sup>43</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre - L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The first characteristic I examine in-depth is the most common creators and audiences of the records. It is worth noting that out of the roughly 710 records related to Fort Alexander Residential School alone, there are around 550 items of correspondence, making it by far the most common record type in this collection.<sup>44</sup> Within this correspondence, most are letters sent from school principals or other school employees to the Provincial with fewer sent from the Provincial. There are substantially fewer letters between principals, bishops, and government officials and even fewer letters from or to female religious employees or local Indigenous leaders. There are very few letters directly from or to parents or children, with most records involving direct input from children being copies of workbooks or handouts. It is worth noting that staff members across the school system would encourage children to write letters to their parents, though would frequently block these letters depending on their subject matter, showing one example the presence of children's record-creation alongside officials' purposeful obscuration of these records.<sup>45</sup> Fontaine describes similar record-creation processes at Fort Alexander.<sup>46</sup> Kristine Lehew discusses the characteristics of children's records in more detail.<sup>47</sup> I stress that these disparities in record creators/recipients likely results in large part from the Oblates prioritizing their internal correspondence for record-keeping/archiving, the Oblates simply not receiving many letters that non-Oblate officials and community members were disseminating, and many records sent to diocesan and government officials ending up in their

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<sup>44</sup> Deschâtelets 14-15, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>45</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Survivors Speak*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Fontaine, *Broken Circle*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Kristine Lehew, "Scribbles in the Archives: Records of Childhood in Canadian Archives," (master's Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2020), 68-100.

corresponding archives. As well, the higher number of letters to the Provincial than those sent by the Provincial reflects the likely fact that most of the former were already kept at the Provincial offices and thus more readily accessible to be archived.

All of this considered, however, the large quantity of letters sent to the Provincial also suggests how the practical administration of schools impacted the composition of school records. As discussed before, principals/local superiors were often dependent on their Provincial for approving various financial activities and were required by congregational regulations to regularly report on the statuses of schools/missions. Given that many of the letters from principals include requests and informal reports, it does appear these records are primarily the result of principals' obligations to their Provincials as mandated by Oblate regulations. While I hesitate to conclude that internal Oblate structures mainly dictated school administration without consulting more governmental and diocesan sources, the current composition of Oblate school collections like Fort Alexander does focus on these internal Oblate structures. Recognizing this composition is significant, as for one it shows the significant power that Provincials had on school administration. This power can also be seen in how Provincials directly interacted with diocesan and government officials regarding activities and projects at the school, illustrated in one letter where a Provincial informs a principal about the Department of Indian Affairs requesting financial information about the school and provides a summary of a report that he sent to a government official.<sup>48</sup> As well, principals may have been willing to share certain information about the school to their Provincials compared to diocesan or government officials due to their

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<sup>48</sup> Irene Tourigny to Gaston LeBleu, 11 August 1958, L234.M27F 20, Deschâtelets 15, L234.M27F 1-Finances Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

shared personal, community, and spiritual ties within the Congregation. The earlier example of a Fort Alexander school principal not reporting the deaths of children to the federal government does suggest a hesitancy by Oblate officials to communicate such information outside the congregation. The internal nature of this correspondence also means that many letters lack standardized report/request formulas, instead being more informal and personal in style and tone, and are largely written in French, reflecting the pre-dominantly Francophone composition of the congregation in Southern Manitoba during their operation of residential schools.

There are several implications of these correspondence characteristics for archiving. In terms of custody, the Oblates are more likely to view these records as reflecting the internal activities of the congregation and its members and thus seek greater control over where these records are stored and how they are accessed and used. As well, the predominance of French-language correspondence and documents overall has likely influenced which archives that the Oblates have sent their records to. In terms of management, these records' characteristics pose several challenges that I have encountered in my work for NCTR. For one, much of the record creators' discussions about school activities are distributed across multiple less formally written letters rather than consolidated in formal reports. For example, certain details of a Provincial's letter might only make sense if read alongside the several letters sent by a principal that a Provincial is replying to. As such, it was important in my work to read through these letters collectively to identify patterns in school administration and events as to describe these records more fully for the sake of researchers having fuller access to these records. As well, I also described information about the religious topics, such as sacraments or spirituals retreats, that Oblate officials often discussed in their letters. While these topics are not seemingly relevant to school administration on face value, they can provide evidence about the movement of Oblates

and children to and from schools, such as for retreats or confirmation ceremonies, which could be useful for researchers trying to identify children in the records or verify the location of a particular Oblate. Overall, processing these types of letters on an item level required considerable time, resulting in fewer processed records that could be better managed to the associated archives' standards. As well, not only does working with these records require reading knowledge in French, but also use of specialized software like LibreOffice to prevent French characters from being corrupted when digitally describing these records. All of this illustrates how the broader context of the Oblates' considerable autonomy in operating residential schools has impacted the composition of their record collections and by extension their custody and management. This reinforces the importance of studying the congregation's internal administration and history in detail.

Alongside the Oblates' administrative autonomy, it is equally important to examine how records' composition and characteristics reflect Oblate schools' interactions with ecclesiastical and governmental authorities. In the Fort Alexander collection, these interactions are primarily found in correspondence between Oblate, diocesan, and government officials. For interactions with diocesan officials, correspondence from the St. John's Minor Seminary series offer several examples.<sup>49</sup> An illustrative example for government officials is the correspondence between various principals, Indian Affairs officials, the Provincial and national Oblate leadership about operating a federal tuberculosis preventorium at the school in the 1930s. The letters not only show the administrative dynamics between the congregation and the government but also show the interconnections between their record creation and archiving networks. The letters that exist

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<sup>49</sup> Deschâtelets 14, L 225.M27L 1- Fort Alexandre – Séminaire, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

within the Fort Alexander collection at le Centre du Patrimoine are labelled as being copies or having copies made of them.<sup>50</sup> Such copying makes sense given that these interactions involved several layers of Oblate and governmental leadership across Manitoba and Ontario. As such, a number of these copies have ended up in the archives of the federal government, Library and Archives Canada, and from there to the TRC and the NCTR. A good number of the same letters about the preventorium can thus be found in the Oblate collection at Centre du Patrimoine<sup>51</sup> and as digital scans on the NCTR public database.<sup>52</sup> It is also possible that letters sent to and from the Oblate leadership in Ottawa ended up in this leadership's collections in Deschâtelets. Despite this overlap, however, the NCTR public database lacks many of the letters between Oblate officials about the preventorium that are found in the Centre's collection.<sup>53</sup> This reflects the earlier point of how records collected by the Oblates themselves contain such internal correspondence. As such, the records as collected on the NCTR database lack the same details and context that is provided by this internal correspondence. This shows that while copies of many records about Oblate schools are distributed across multiple archives that are often more accessible than collections managed by the congregation, these collections managed by the

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<sup>50</sup> Letters, 1933-1937, L 235. M27L 188-239, Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>51</sup> Harold W. McGill to J. O. Ploudre, 26 April 1937, L 235. M27L 229, Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>52</sup> Harold W. McGill to J. O. Ploudre, 26 April 1937, R00007210 – Preventorium, Sub-folder 2055295 – Preventorium, School Files, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg, Manitoba, <https://archives.nctr.ca/R00007210>.

<sup>53</sup> L 235. M27L 288-239, Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

congregation still contain relevant information that could be critical to understand both Oblates' interactions with other entities and the lived realities at schools themselves.

Many correspondences also show the overlap of record creation between Oblate residential schools proper and other Oblate missions. For one, collections like Fort Alexander often contain records about day schools that operated before, after, or alongside residential schools. As well, as principals were also often Local Superiors, school collections also contain records from other Oblate missions under Local Superiors authority, including documents about day schools at these missions. The Fort Alexander collection has a 1957 report showing missions at Manigotagan and Hole River Reserve attached to Fort Alexander and a map showing at least five other missions along Lake Winnipeg attached to Fort Alexander in the 1960s.<sup>54</sup> Collections also contain records from or about other residential schools and missions located in the same province, such as a 1956 financial report from the mission at Notre Dame de Lourdes but a letter heading from Fort Frances RS.<sup>55</sup> Finally, Oblate missionaries stationed at missions adjacent to schools would often work at the schools despite not being recorded as having done so in official Oblate publications, such as the 2016 Pinet book. This is true for Fr. Apollinaire Plamondon, who is stated as serving as a boys' supervisor at Fort Alexander despite not being listed as a school employee.<sup>56</sup> All of this illustrates the considerable administrative and thus archival

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<sup>54</sup> Misson Report, 1957, L 231. M27R 24, Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 21-46, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.; Map of Oblate Mission, c. 1960s, L 231. M27R 30, Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 21-46, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>55</sup> Notre Dame des Lourdes Financial Report, 1956, L234.M27F 17, Deschâtelets 15, L234.M27F 1- Finances Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>56</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

overlap of different Oblate missionary entities. This overlap is also seen in the numerous articles and clippings from Oblate periodicals, such as *Ami du Foyer* or *Indian Record*, present in the collection,<sup>57</sup> which were likely either collected by officials at the schools themselves or integrated into school's collection after their transfer to Provincial headquarters.

The form of records also reflects broader administrative contexts and has implications for archiving. One example of this is the increasingly standardised formula for certain records from the 1940s onwards. In the Fort Alexander collection's series for requests to the Oblate Provincial Council, requests by school principals from 1903 to approximately 1928 are contained in letters without a standard formula. From 1948 to 1972, however, these requests started using standardized formulas that required information about the principal's Oblate house, the objective and motivation of the request, and proof of a vote from the local council.<sup>58</sup> While it is unclear which level of the congregation this type of standardized formula first came from, it is clear that certain forms of record creation and structure became more standardized at the Provincial level by the late 1940s. The smaller number of diocesan and government records in the Fort Alexander collection makes it difficult to identify similar patterns of record standardization for these entities. However, examples of financial report formulas sent to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg in 1969<sup>59</sup> and aforementioned record creation prescriptions in the 1953 *Regulations* suggests the church and state were similarly standardizing record forms for the Oblates. Other more

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<sup>57</sup> Deschâtelets 14, L 225.M27L 1- Fort Alexandre - Séminaire, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>58</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 234.M27D 1- Demandes au Conseil Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>59</sup> Financial Report, December 1969, L234.M27F 21, Deschâtelets 15, L234.M27F 1- Finances Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

standardized, or at least concretely structured, record forms from this time include reports, censuses of schools and local Indigenous communities, and surveys sent to school principals. This increased standardization perhaps reflects broader efforts by Church and government officials to more uniformly organize and administer the school system in the mid-twentieth century, which is evident with the development of COOIE and the existence of the 1953 *Regulations*. The archival implications of record form standardization include the consolidation of the Fort Alexander request forms into their own folders, which makes it easier to discover these types of records for both archivists and researchers. As well, standardized, type-written formulas in many ways increases the readability of these request records compared to the hand-written informal letters that often contain similar request information. In my NCTR work, such standardized forms were much easier and quicker to process. That said, these standardized forms leave little room for the more personal discussions found in the informal correspondence. As such, principals may not have communicated as many details about schools and the mission when making requests with these formulas compared to the fuller letters they wrote every time they made a request before.

The potential impact of changing record structure on record creation is also evident with changes of communication and information technologies used by the residential school system. This is most evident in the Fort Alexander Correspondence series, with most letters from the 1860s to the late 1930s being hand-written documents<sup>60</sup>, while most of the letters from the late 1930s to the 1970s were written with typewriters.<sup>61</sup> It is also possible that government officials

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<sup>60</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>61</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

were using typewriters more consistently before the Oblate principals did so at the school. One consequence of this shift to typewriters was the ability of Church and government officials to easily create multiple carbon copies (and later photocopies) of the same correspondence for multiple recipients. This has led to copies of the same records ending up in different archival collections as discussed above. Technological change also impacted what is potentially absent in the records themselves, as the Oblates and diocesan officials increasingly used more electronic communication technologies such as telegraph, radio, and telephone by the mid-twentieth century, especially when communicating to more remote missions in Manitoba.<sup>62</sup> As such, information about schools that may have once been recorded in written correspondence could have been communicated through phone and radio and thus not recorded in archival documents like those in the Fort Alexander collection. Fontaine notes that children would listen to a broadcast radio while he attended school.<sup>63</sup> The Fort Alexander records, though, do contain the occasional telegram and written letters from later decades reference phone conversations between Oblate, Church, and government officials.<sup>64</sup> Beyond impacting the composition of archival collections, these changing technologies have enduring implications for archivists and researchers. For one, type-written documents are often more easily legible than their handwritten counterparts, which can facilitate archivists and researchers' general work with these records as well as making these records more machine-readable. This in turn can facilitate digitizing the records. Many carbon copies and photocopies, however, are smudged or faded due

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<sup>62</sup> Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 265.

<sup>63</sup> Fontaine, *Broken Circle*, 142.

<sup>64</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 448-503–Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

perhaps to limitations of copying technologies of the time, making them sometimes more difficult to read than hand-written records.<sup>65</sup>

### Section Three: Record-keeping Regulations

In this final section, I discuss which regulations existed for record-keeping and archiving of school records while the Oblates were involved in the residential school system. This connects my discussion on the administrative contexts that impacted record creation, composition, and characteristics to my discussion on records' custodial and managerial histories in Chapter One. Overall, there are far fewer congregational, canonical, and governmental rules on record-keeping/archiving for the Oblates or residential school employees in general. In many ways, information about record-keeping at residential schools themselves is difficult to locate and an area that requires more research. This said, examining the rules that did exist can help in understanding what church and state officials did consider important to archive, and thus which records may have had a higher chance of being kept. As well, the lack of considerable regulations also reinforces the autonomy the Oblate Province of Manitoba possessed in keeping and archiving their records.

Regarding governmental regulations, the only explicit reference to rules for record-keeping at schools themselves is the 1953 Regulations' Item 13 that lists "the maintenance of records" as a responsibility principals had to maintain to the Department's standards. As noted before, the Regulations do not define these standards.<sup>66</sup> This Item at the very least shows the

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<sup>65</sup> Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 1-77 – Corresp. Générale Fort Alexandre through L 235. M27L 448-503– Corresp. Générale 1962 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>66</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Missing Children*, 40-42.

federal government had expectations for record-keeping towards the end of the Oblates' involvement with residential schools. The government's emphasis on school employees generating reports also suggests that the government was more interested in documents produced with school records rather than accessing school records directly.

For the Oblates, the most explicit and significant regulation for archiving is Rule 579 in the 1910 Constitution that states that the authenticity of records about the province, as well as registers and other writings of the same type, must be preserved by Provincials in the houses they occupy in order to transfer them carefully catalogued to their successors.<sup>67</sup> While this does apply only explicitly to the Provincial, this still has implications for school records given that such a large number of these records like those in the Fort Alexander collection are letters sent to Provincials that were likely stored at Provincial houses. The existence of so many of these letters and perhaps all other school records in current school collections is perhaps due to this Provincial-level rule and similar ones in succeeding revisions. Comparatively, the current 2018 constitution lacks such a rule and only has rules pertaining to the General Archives in Rome.<sup>68</sup> Again, though, there are not clear rules for record-keeping at the local level besides those about maintaining specific registers. One can also assume that the Provincial and other high-ranking Oblates had basic expectations about record-keeping at the schools given the number of reports that principals/local superiors were mandated to send. It is also possible that the regulation for Provincial archiving may have been informally adopted by principals in regard to their records.

The extent to which Canon law and other high-ranking Catholic regulations and documents on archiving apply to Oblate school records is debatable. Some archivists who have

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<sup>67</sup> Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, *Constitutions et règles* (1910), 119.

<sup>68</sup> Missionary Oblates, *Constitutions and Rules* (2018), 135-136.

managed Oblate collections like Gilles Lesage argue that canon law has not greatly influenced how the Oblates have stored and managed their archival collections over the years, citing the Oblates and other Catholic religious communities donating their records to public or community archives like the Provincial Archives of Alberta or Centre du Patrimoine as examples. He also states that the often very general nature of Canon law rules and regulations makes it difficult to understand how to implement them in practice. He suggests that Canadian legislation on privacy and access to information would have a greater role in imposing current restrictions on Oblate archival materials.<sup>69</sup> Though Lesage discusses regulations over current Oblate collections rather than those collections that existed at the schools themselves, the examples he cites does suggest that the congregation has had considerable autonomy from canonical regulations in terms of record-keeping and archiving. Alternately, Hurtubise argues, at least in the context of the 1983 Canon law code, that while Canon laws on archives applies only to ecclesiastical archives, canonists agree that these laws can apply to other archives such as those of religious institutes.<sup>70</sup> His lack of citations for this claim makes it difficult to accept its validity.

A perspective with perhaps greater proximity to the congregation's involvement with residential schools comes from an Oblate archivist for the Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan in the mid-twentieth century. In a letter written to support the province's archives, this archivist argued that numerous rules and laws from the Oblate Constitution the 1917 Code of Canon law, and the 1727 "Maxima Vigilantia" constitution could and should be applied to Oblate Provincial

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<sup>69</sup> Lesage, interview, 17-18.

<sup>70</sup> Pierre Hurtubise, "Le Devoir de Mémoire: Pourquoi il faut assurer dès maintenant l'avenir de nos archives religieuses," *Studia Canonica* 42, no. 2 (2008): 321.

archives.<sup>71</sup> While it is unclear how strong this archivist's legal argument would stand within the Church's legal framework, it is nonetheless an illustrative example of how an Oblate archivist considering the broader archival regulations, including Canon laws, in the context of Provincial archives, though not explicitly at the school or local level. The presence of this archivist's letter in the collection of the Lebret archive suggests that other Oblate archivists in Western Canada were aware of these archival regulations. At the very least this letter shows that concerns over the implication of Canon law and archival regulations for Oblate records has existed within the congregation, specifically in Western Canada.

Here I provide a brief overview of relevant Canon laws and other high-level Catholic regulations that could have been applied to the management of school records either at the school or Provincial level. While I repeat certain information from my overview of canon law in Chapter One, here I cover these regulations in more detail and highlight more explicitly archival regulations than in that chapter. The repeated information is meant to improve the readability of this overview. The highest-level of archival regulation within the Roman Catholic Church (at least the Western, Latin-rite Church) comes from Canon law and papal legislation. Oblate-ran schools and their subsequent archival activities have existed across archival frameworks in three high-level Vatican documents: Benedict XIII's 1727 Apostolic Constitution *Maxima Vigilantia*, the 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon law, and the 1983 Johanno-Pauline Code of Canon law and subsequent documents.<sup>72</sup> The 1727 Apostolic Constitution is generally recognized as the first "broad-spectrum directive for the administration of Catholic Church diocesan archives" and the

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<sup>71</sup> Letter from Jules Le Chevallier, c. 1930s, L 327. M27R 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>72</sup> Tyne Rae Petrowski, "Aditus Ad Archivum: Exploring Access to Catholic Diocesan Archives in Canada," (master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2016), 36-40.

basis for subsequent canons on archives in the 1917 and 1983 codes.<sup>73</sup> This would have been the framework that most Manitoban residential schools would have initially operated under, though only St. Boniface Industrial School (1891-1909) and Camperville Indian Residential School (Pine Creek Indian Residential School) (1891-1971) would have fallen under it for a significant amount of their times of operation.

The 1917 Code, as well as being the first combined code of ecclesiastical legislation since the 1300s,<sup>74</sup> established arguably the most important archival framework for considering Oblate-ran school records, as it was enforced during a significant amount of most schools' lifespans and during the closure of most schools. As such, most of the records created at and about schools and the immediate shift of school records from active to archival documents occurred under this framework. Canons 375 to 384 primarily deal with the creation and maintenance of diocesan archives, placing significant control of these archives under bishops. The Code's stipulation of the significant act of excommunication as punishment for purposefully interfering with archival records illustrates the importance of the archives, and perhaps archival power, in the eyes of the Church of this time.<sup>75</sup> It is also important to note that Canon 304 § 1 stipulates that Vicars and Prefects Apostolic are "equally bound by the laws concerning the constitution of archives that bind Bishops", meaning that the aforementioned canons also applied to the apostolic vicariates in which some Oblate-ran schools operated.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Petrowski, "Aditus Ad Archivum," 36-38.

<sup>74</sup> Petrowski, "Aditus Ad Archivum," 36-38.

<sup>75</sup> Petrowski, "Aditus Ad Archivum," 38-41.

<sup>76</sup> Peters, *1917 Code of Canon Law*, 131.

Canon 383 appears to be the most relevant to Oblate archives, as it instructs bishops to create duplicate inventories of the archives of various Church entities within their jurisdictions, such as “cathedral, collegial, or parochial churches [and] confraternities and pious places” with these entities and the dioceses each retaining a copy, and that no original documents can be removed from these archives unless under certain circumstances. Canon 384 § 2 also instructs “chancellors of Curias, pastors, and others who take care of archives” to follow the rules set forth by their “legitimate ecclesiastical authority” concerning the sharing and dispersal of record copies and to consult their local Ordinaries (in most cases a bishop) over uncertainties about these policies.<sup>77</sup> While Petrowski argues that religious communities would have to adhere to these canons and that bishops of a given jurisdiction would serve as the “legitimate ecclesiastical authority” these communities as per Canon 384 § 2,<sup>78</sup> the actual text of each canon, as translated into English by Edward N. Peters, does not mention religious communities specifically or other related terms like order, congregation, religious institute, etc.<sup>79</sup> The uncertainty over if religious services at residential schools or in nearby communities would have counted as “parochial churches” under Canon 383 further complicates this. As well, while there are canons instructing other Church entities to send certain records to diocesan archives, there does not appear to be any canon specifically mandating religious communities to do so.<sup>80</sup> All these legal uncertainties highlight the difficulties in clearly defining what if any canon laws applied to Oblate school records during the operation of residential schools.

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<sup>77</sup> Peters, *Code of Canon Law*, 152.

<sup>78</sup> Petrowski, “*Aditus Ad Archivum*,” 40.

<sup>79</sup> Peters, *Code of Canon Law*, 152.

<sup>80</sup> Peters, *Code of Canon Law*, 446-453.

As for school records from the Oblates' departure from the school system to the present day, the main regulatory tools would be the different versions of the Oblate Rules and Constitution, Canadian privacy laws, and both the 1917 and 1983 Canon law Codes. I again do not explore the various revisions to the Oblate Constitution, but the small number of archival regulations across the versions I did consult indicate little regulatory concern over how Oblate officials chose to organize their records. Canadian privacy law legislation, first passed at the federal level in 1983,<sup>81</sup> appears to have the highest degree of influence over accessing at least some records in Oblate collections, as stated by Lesage and the Oblates themselves.<sup>82</sup> I do not explore the implications of these laws in-depth, but this topic is definitely worth more research, with Petrowski offering great insights into privacy legislation in relation to diocesan archives.<sup>83</sup> Finally, in the 1983 Code, archives are regulated by Canons 482 to 491 for the Latin-rite entities.<sup>84</sup> Most of these canons are similar to their 1917 counterparts, such as Canon 491 § 1 mandating copies of records from "cathedral, collegiate, parochial, and other churches" within a given diocesan territory be kept in both their original location and in diocesan archives without reference to religious communities' archives.<sup>85</sup> The 1983 code differs from the 1917 code with Canon 491 § 2 instructing bishops to construct historical archives with "documents having historical value".<sup>86</sup> The 1983 code also lacks the 1917 canon on archives adhering to the rules of

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<sup>81</sup> Hayward, Robert J. "Federal access and privacy legislation and the public archives of Canada." *Archivaria* (1984): 50.

<sup>82</sup> Nick Boisvert, "Catholic group says privacy laws complicating the release of documents from Sask. and B.C. residential schools," *CBC News*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/oblates-privacy-records-1.6083742>.

<sup>83</sup> Petrowski, "*Aditus Ad Archivum*."

<sup>84</sup> Petrowski, "*Aditus Ad Archivum*," 38.

<sup>85</sup> Petrowski, "*Aditus Ad Archivum*," 43-48.

<sup>86</sup> Petrowski, "*Aditus Ad Archivum*," 48-49.

their “legitimate ecclesiastical authority”, suggesting a shift towards more decentralized archival administration alongside broader post-Vatican II de-centralization. While the absence of this canon does not necessarily clarify the legal relationships between religious and ecclesiastical archives, it does perhaps remove a layer of complication to determining that relationship. It might therefore be possible to interpret the absence of this 1917 canon as increasing religious communities’ autonomy over their archives. One can speculate that the Oblates themselves may have such an interpretation with their current collections, which in turn might impact how they have been dispersed and managed separately from ecclesiastical authorities. One another notable high-level document on Church archives is the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church’s 1997 encyclical *The Pastoral Function of Church Archives*, which provides more prescriptive guidelines than concrete regulations.

In considering all these forms of regulations on Oblate school records, one can conclude the considerable autonomy that Oblate officials have had in the management of their records. This in turn suggests that such internal control has had a disproportionate impact on record custody, management, and policies, which I explore in Chapter Three. Alongside my discussion on record obligations, creation, and characteristics, it is evident that while the Oblates have and continue to be subject to broader Church and Canadian state regulations concerning their records, in addition to pressure from Indigenous activism, the congregation retains considerable control over many facets of their records. This once again reinforces the need to examine the Oblates in depth to better understand their records as well as helping archivists to understand and respond to the congregation’s rhetoric about “external” restrictions on their records. Ultimately, understanding these various regulatory regimes provides a basis for archivists and researchers to consider what records could have or should have been created and collected.

### **Chapter Three: Oblate Archival Practices and School Records' Custody and Management**

This chapter focuses on the archival systems and contexts that Oblate-ran Manitoban residential school records have existed in throughout their custodial histories. The first section provides a summary of the primary collection of these records at Centre du Patrimoine, tracing the movement of records from schools to various archival repositories. This serves as a clear overview on the current collection that will make the following sections more comprehensible. The second section examines broader Catholic archival practices both during and after the operation of Oblate-ran schools, starting with high-level Church archival regulations before tracing the development of Oblate archives in Canada specifically. This will show the broader contexts that may have impacted the custody and management of school records. The third section sketches the detailed custodial histories of different school record collections across several archives before examining these archives' management of these records. This will illustrate how and why school records are situated across a network of archival institutions with different management practices.

#### **Section One: Summary of Centre du Patrimoine's Custodial History and Management**

I begin with a summary of custodial history, composition, and policies of Oblate Province of Manitoba collection held by Centre. This overview is meant to concisely show the complex flow of records between different record-keeping entities. Later sections explore the intricacies of these movements and entities in more detail. See the flowchart on page 79 for a visual representation of this custodial history.

# Custodial Histories of Records from Oblate Province of Manitoba

Created by Jackson Anderson, June 2023

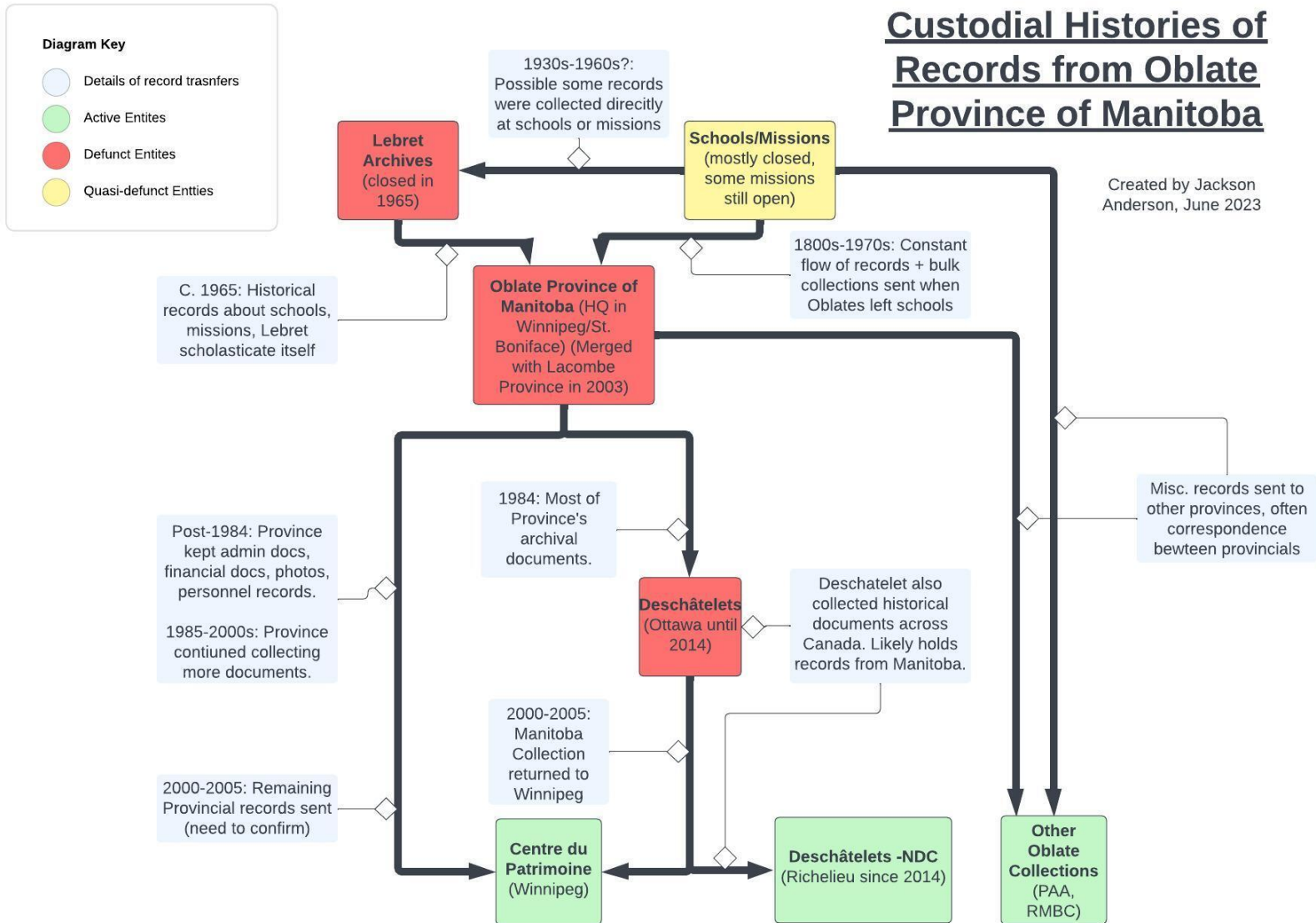


Figure 2. Custodial Histories of Oblate Records

The first major record-collecting entity would have been the Oblate Province of Manitoba's archives held at the Provincial headquarters, which had several locations across modern-day Winnipeg throughout the province's lifespan. Most of the residential school records held by the Provincial headquarters would have been transferred directly from the schools and missions as part of day-to-day administration from the 1890s to 1970s, with larger collections likely sent when the congregation left various schools. However, it is worth noting that prior to the creation of the Manitoba Province in 1905, the Oblates of the Vicariate of Red River would have sent many of their records to the Archdiocese of St. Boniface given that the archbishops were often simultaneously the main Oblate authorities prior to 1904.<sup>1</sup> The provincial archives also received more historical records pertaining to schools from the Lebrét Archives (discussed below) following that institution's closure around 1965. Finally, the province received some of the archives of the Vice-Provinces of Keewatin-Le Pas and Hudson's Bay when these two were merged into the province in 1983.

In 1984, the Manitoba Province transferred most of their records to the congregation's Archives Deschâtelets, which at that point was located in Ottawa. Archives Deschâtelets also held various records from and about the Manitoba Province prior to the 1984 transfer.<sup>2</sup> The province however kept its active administrative records, personnel records of living or recently deceased Oblates, nearly all of its financial records, and a sizeable photograph collection which included photos taken at residential schools. The province also continued to produce and collect records.<sup>3</sup> From 2000 to 2005, Archives Deschâtelets transferred the 1984 accession to the newly

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 9, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Gaston Carrière, "Archives Deschâtelets – 1983," in *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien* (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986), 1: 67-80.

<sup>3</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

built Centre du Patrimoine in Winnipeg. In 2006, Deschâtelets also sent the Centre around 1,000 photographs, though it's unclear if these were in part or in whole from the 1984 accession.<sup>4</sup> Around 2000, the Manitoba Province (later part of the Lacombe Province after 2003) began transferring many of the records it kept or produced after 1984, with Centre du Patrimoine documenting all these transfers in an acquisition file.<sup>5</sup> The Centre currently holds the 1984 collection sent to Deschâtelets in the *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, where most residential records are held.<sup>6</sup> In 2014, Archives Deschâtelets moved to a new building in Richelieu, Quebec, which also hosts the archive of the former Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province (itself a merger of the former Quebec and Montreal Provinces).<sup>7</sup> Archives Deschâtelets-NDC likely still holds various records from the former Manitoba Province, such as the personnel records of early Oblate missionaries, records from Keewatin-Le Pas, and records pertaining to the Manitoba Province in the COOIE records.<sup>8</sup> As well, other major Oblate collections, such as the Alberta-Saskatchewan Province collection held by the Provincial Archives of Alberta<sup>9</sup> and the various provincial collections at the Royal Museum of

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<sup>4</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 9, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> "Les Archives Deschâtelets – NDC – Historique des Archives," *Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://www.omi-qc-on.com/archives--historique>.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 9, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> *Finding Aid - Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), Lacombe Canada fonds (PR0003)*, Edmonton, Alberta, Provincial Archives of Alberta, last modified March 10, 2023, <https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/downloads/missionary-oblates-of-mary-immaculate-lacombe-canada-fonds.pdf>, 2043.

British Columbia,<sup>10</sup> also contain records from the Manitoba Province, though often as correspondence between provincials. While I focus on the records that were sent to Deschâtelets and eventually returned to Winnipeg for the rest of this chapter, it is important to consider those records that were not transferred as both connected yet distinct from those that were. Finally, on a general note, how concepts such as “fonds” or “collection” have been used across the various archives varies greatly. However, many of these archives do appear to use the individual Oblate provinces as the equivalent of a fonds or collection, as is the case with Centre du Patrimoine.

As the primary repository of the Manitoba Province’s records, I examine le Centre du Patrimoine’s history, the process behind its acquisition of the Manitoba Province accession, and its current management of the collection. The Centre is operated by the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, one of the largest Francophone heritage organizations in Manitoba. Originally storing its records in the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, the Société historique de Saint-Boniface constructed the Centre du Patrimoine in 1998 as a dedicated archival and heritage building.<sup>11</sup> The Centre is located in the St. Boniface region of Winnipeg, coincidentally at the same address as one of the former Provincial Houses of the Oblate Province of Manitoba. The Centre primarily collects records from and about various Francophone and Metis communities and organizations across Manitoba.<sup>12</sup> This includes collections of pre-dominantly Francophone religious entities, such as the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, various female religious congregations, and the Oblates.<sup>13</sup> The Centre’s acquisition of religious records reflects broader

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<sup>10</sup> *Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate fonds: Research Guide*, Victoria, British Columbia, The Royal British Columbia Museum, last modified May 17, 2023, [https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/OMIfonds\\_ResearchGuide\\_External.pdf](https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/OMIfonds_ResearchGuide_External.pdf), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Lesage, interview, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Lesage, interview, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Hurtubise, “Le Devoir de Mémoire,” 328.

trends identified by Hurtubise of dioceses and communities with limited funding for archives disseminating their records to public and non-Church community archives with available resources, citing le Centre du Patrimoine as an example.<sup>14</sup>

Lesage offers insight into the specific contexts and reasons behind the transfer of the Manitoba Province collection from Deschâtelets to Centre du Patrimoine. One of these was the creation of the Centre itself, which Lesage argues allowed the SHSB to better promote archival preservation and encourage potential donors to deposit their archives.<sup>15</sup> He elaborates that the Centre's initiative to have the Grey Nuns donate their records led to a greater incentive to see if other religious communities would donate their records.<sup>16</sup> The Centre met with other religious communities, including the Oblates, to discuss the importance of keeping their records in Manitoba for both researchers to access them and to better document and promote these communities' histories in Manitoba. It was from these discussions that the Oblate Province of Manitoba considered transferring their records to the Centre.<sup>17</sup> Following the Centre inviting the Oblates to donate their records in the early 2000s, Lesage states that the Oblates were "very positive with regards to that option and eventually decided that they would transfer their records".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hurtubise, "Le Devoir de Mémoire," 325-326.

<sup>15</sup> Lesage, interview, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Lesage, interview, 20-21.

<sup>18</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

Lesage also notes that the Centre's efforts to obtain the Grey Nuns' archives was supported by other Francophone heritage organizations like the Association of Quebec Archivists, though the Grey Nuns at the time chose to centralize their archives in Montreal.<sup>19</sup> As well, the Métis National Council and the Manitoba Métis Federation financially supported the transfer of the 1984 records from Deschâtelets to St. Boniface.<sup>20</sup> This reinforces how the Manitoba records' custody was in part influenced by broader archival processes concerning the records of religious communities occurring in Manitoba as well as support from a broader network of Francophone and Indigenous organizations. The SHSB's status as a non-profit corporation that can receive donations and apply for government grants that Oblate and other church archives may not have access to could have also influenced the Oblates' decision.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Lesage states that the Centre's physical building made it logistically possible to bring back the Oblates' archives from Deschâtelets back to Winnipeg.<sup>22</sup> From this we can see how broader efforts to acquire the records of other predominantly Francophone Catholic entities in Manitoba influenced the Centre's acquisition of the Manitoba Province collection. This reinforces the long-term significance of the Oblates' broader religious and cultural-linguistic contexts to the custodial histories of their records.

Regarding which Oblate records the Centre holds, it is important to note that the 1984 custodial transfer from the Manitoba Province to Deschâtelets altered the composition of the province's collection, with Lesage stating that while most archival records "from the time of Taché" to the 1970s were sent to Ottawa, records needed for active administrative purposes were

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<sup>19</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 9, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Lesage, interview, 20-21.

<sup>21</sup> Hurtubise, "Le Devoir de Mémoire," 328.

<sup>22</sup> Lesage, interview, 6.

kept in Winnipeg. In addition to these records, the province also retained the personnel records of living or recently deceased Oblates, nearly all of the province's financial records, and a sizeable photograph collection which included photos taken at residential schools. Lesage states that archival materials kept at the Manitoba Oblate house were later transferred to the Société historique de Saint-Boniface,<sup>23</sup> which likely would have included these records. As well, Lesage notes that the only portion of residential school records that would have been kept in the Winnipeg Oblate house would have been financial records.<sup>24</sup> As such, many records from or about residential schools would have been managed differently than those sent to Deschâtelets which in turn might impact how the Centre can manage them. The Centre notes that the Oblate Province of Manitoba continued to collect records after this transfer, with Lesage, the archivist of the Oblate Province of Manitoba at the time, developing a classification system for administrative archives to facilitate filing and research in 1992.<sup>25</sup> Lesage notes that this classification system is "with the working documents for the continuing processing of the Oblate collection".<sup>26</sup> Lesage also notes that several researchers continued to access the photographs kept by the province while he was working for the Oblates in Manitoba, asserting these records were unrestricted.<sup>27</sup> It is also worth noting that following the 1983 merger of the Manitoba Province and with the Vice-Provinces of Keewatin-Le Pas and Hudson's Bay due to declining membership, records from the former Keewatin-Le Pas Province either remained in Northern

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<sup>23</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> Lesage, interview, 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 9, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

Manitoba, were sent to Provincial headquarters in Winnipeg, or sent to Deschâtelets.<sup>28</sup> All of this illustrates that what Manitoba Provincial records the Centre currently houses have a multiplicity of custodial and management histories caused by the 1984 transfer.

The 1984 accession at the Centre forms part of the *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation fonds*.<sup>29</sup> The Oblates and the SHSB also negotiated the deposit of records collected by the Manitoba Province after 1985 alongside records of individual Oblate fathers and brothers into the Centre. After concluding a deposit agreement, the Oblates sent the first major deposit of records in November 2000. The Oblates continued to send records, making 27 accruals from 2000 to 2005, and signing a new five-year agreement with SHSB alongside a monetary evaluation of the fonds in November 2005.<sup>30</sup> Lesage notes that Deschâtelets did not initially send its collection of description index cards for the Manitoba collection alongside the records themselves, possibly due to the time needed to separate cards related to this collection from the cards of other collections. The Centre did receive these cards several years later, but they are still currently unprocessed.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that the Oblates retain ownership of their materials stored at the Centre,<sup>32</sup> granting them considerable power over the management policies discussed below.

Regarding management, Lesage states that because most of the Manitoba Provincial records were already organized at Deschâtelets, the Centre did not make any major re-

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<sup>28</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation collection*, 4-6.

<sup>31</sup> Lesage, interview, 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 15, 2023.

organizations.<sup>33</sup> This corresponds with both the comparison between the 1983 inventory and the current Centre records and the retention of the Library of Congress codes likely added at Deschâtelets. While the Centre has continuously processed these records through various projects, by and large it has retained these records' previous arrangement systems. Lesage also notes that the Centre was created during the emergence of archival digitization, which allowed the Centre to make their archival materials more accessible through their online InMagic database overtime.<sup>34</sup> This highlights the Centre's distinct position in terms of using digital technologies to manage the 1984 accession, as Deschâtelets and previous Oblate archives would have managed these records in mostly pre-digital environments. This is also distinct from the NCTR, which operates within a heavily digital archival environment, such as extensively using digital copies of records at other archives. Through my NCTR work, I have had to navigate a complex web of non-digital and digital records and associated metadata created by these pre and post digital environments.

Lesage states that the Centre's processing of Oblate records has been done progressively over time as this work has depended on funding programs and project funding that has been received over time.<sup>35</sup> Processing projects with Oblate records has included digitizing photographs or entering photograph descriptions into the Centre database to make these more accessible.<sup>36</sup> The Centre has continually processed records from this fonds since the initial accrual in 2000, often with a focus on making residential school records more widely accessible.

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<sup>33</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Lesage, interview, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

Between 2002 and 2004, the Centre hired staff through Young Canada Works to process several thousand photographs in the collection. In 2004, the SHSB received a subvention from the government of Canada to create a new section on their website called “Au pays de Riel” on the Oblate Province of Manitoba, which focused on residential schools. This project was able to make numerous documents from the Oblate fonds available online as well as permitting the digitization of many documents. In 2020, the Centre reboxed and reorganized 190 boxes of non-processed Oblate records, processed around 13 meters of textual documents, and created a temporary finding aid to facilitate their access. In 2021, the Centre digitized and databased 982 photographs that had been transferred from les Archives Deschâtelets in 2006 (acquisition 2006 03 09).<sup>37</sup> It is evident that the Centre’s ability to process Oblate records has benefited from numerous funding opportunities from the provincial and federal government, particularly through Young Canada Works. The Centre’s ability to leverage this type of funding might be another factor for the Oblate’s continued relationship with this institution. Lesage states that the Centre did receive requests from the TRC for copies of Oblate records, particularly photographs at one point, but claims that a lack of funding made this difficult. At some point, the Centre was able to digitize some photographs and make them accessible on their website.<sup>38</sup> Lesage notes that the Centre also processed records that had remained with the Manitoba Provincial leadership, as these records had been transferred directly from the province’s administrative record-keeping system to their archives and likely contained duplicates or records with little archival value.<sup>39</sup> Lesage states that several types of records in the Centre’s broader Oblate collections, such as

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<sup>37</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Lesage, interview, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

financial records or relations with external entities, are still being processed.<sup>40</sup> Finally, in 2021 the Oblate Lacombe Province began funding a digitization project for records related to residential schools.<sup>41</sup>

It is unclear how much of this processing work, especially in response to the TRC, has been dictated by inconsistent funding and labour or by the Oblates and the Centre not prioritizing this work. The Oblates passing much of the archival labour onto the Centre certainly complicates how the two institutions can coordinate processing priorities given their other respective financial and labour obligations beyond this one collection.

The description document for the fonds lists the following access restrictions set by the Oblates and the Centre in both French and English:

- 1- The archives preceding 1930 are accessible to researchers registered with the SHSB and according to the access regulations in force at the SHSB;
- 2- Archives more recent than 1930 cannot be consulted without the authorization of the designated representative of OMI Lacombe Canada for the archives;
- 3- Notwithstanding 1) and 2), all iconographic documents (ie photographs, drawings and paintings), all maps and all architectural plans are accessible to researchers registered with the SHSB and according to the access regulations in force at the SHSB
- 4- The personal files of the Oblates are not accessible until 50 years after their death or if the date of death is not known, 100 years after the date of creation of the last document.
- 5-Sound recordings are generally accessible to the public, except for those which are restricted at the request of the interviewees. Also, access to some recordings will be closed until consultation takes place with the Indigenous communities that are documented in the recordings.<sup>42</sup>

These restrictions show the complexity of accessing school records through the Centre, as certain records are fully open, some require permission from the congregation to access, and some are

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<sup>40</sup> Lesage, interview, 13-14.

<sup>41</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 5.

completely closed. Also, the congregation and the Centre's shared responsibility for mediating access further complicates research efforts, illustrated by my own efforts to gain access which required some lengthy back-and-forth discussions with both organizations. While the current arrangement between the Oblates and the Centre allows for overall more processing work to be done and houses the records closer to many of the communities impacted by residential schools run by the Manitoba Province, the shared nature of this arrangement also complicates how both organizations can commit to making these records accessible.

To conclude, it is evident that the Centre has continuously been processing the records of the 1984 accession to make them more accessible to researchers, principally through description and digitization projects. While I do not explore how these projects may have intervened in the composition, arrangement, or metadata of these records, these potential interventions are worth considering. It is also worth reiterating that while the Centre is responsible for day-to-day management and project work of these records, the Oblates retain considerable control over key policies governing these records. While I do not propose a different model for how these records should be governed and managed, it is always worth noting that the Oblates continue to play an active on-going role regarding their records even as many of them reside in non-Oblate archives.

## Section Two: Catholic Archiving; Broader Contexts and Practices

### *Oblate Archiving in Canada*

I focus on the congregation's archival practices at several key institutions in Eastern Canada, namely those in Ottawa, and in the Oblate Province of Manitoba. Exploring early archival activities in Eastern Canada provides insights into the practices that informed later activities in the Manitoba Province as well as relevant background information on the Archives

Deschâtelets. Eugène Lapointe, an Oblate historian, suggests that one of the earliest efforts to consolidate Oblate records into an archive occurred after an 1876 visit by assistant-general Louis Souillier, who called for a comprehensive history of the Oblate Province of Canada by an annalist of the province. To accomplish this, he recommended Oblates across the province to submit their local documents to such an annalist. This seems to reflect broader archival trends towards documenting Church history as described earlier in Chapter Two, though it is unclear how this impacted Oblate archiving in Canada. Prior to 1951, Saint-Pierre-Apôtre in Montréal, the administrative centre of the Canada-Est Province from 1848-1951,<sup>43</sup> housed old documents of the province. Under the tenure of Provincial Gilles Marchand from 1936-1944,<sup>44</sup> Father Félix Choquette created the first classification for these documents. In 1953, the province completed a dedicated building for its archives as an annex to its new rue du Musée provincial house. In 1947, the provincial named Fr. Jean-Louis Bergevin as the provincial archivist. In 1951, Fr. Jean-Charles Lapensée became the provincial archivist and in 1952, the administration paid for him to take a course on archival administration at American University in Washington, D.C. After Lapensée, several archivists served as provincial archivists, often sharing their archival duties with other responsibilities. At some point Donat Levasseur created a classification for the archives' documents, though it is unclear how much this altered or replaced the existing system.<sup>45</sup> These examples from the early Oblate provincial archives demonstrate how the

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<sup>43</sup> “Les Archives Deschâtelets – NDC – Historique des Archives,” Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée.

<sup>44</sup> Donat Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée - Essai de synthèse, Vol 2 - 1898-1985* (Montreal, Quebec: Maison Provinciale - Oblats de Marie Immaculée, 1986), 108, fn 43.

<sup>45</sup> Eugène Lapointe, “Histoire des archives oblates de l’Est du Canada,” Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, last modified January 14, 2016, [https://www.omi-qc-on.com/files/ugd/6aa982\\_d8d06a2e62b0438daaf2f327c8a8451d.pdf](https://www.omi-qc-on.com/files/ugd/6aa982_d8d06a2e62b0438daaf2f327c8a8451d.pdf), 3.

congregation in Eastern Canada was dedicating personnel and resources to develop professionalized archival infrastructure and practices, if even just for a single provincial archive.

Compared to other Oblate provinces, there is not much information about the Manitoba provincial archives throughout the twentieth century. The information that does exist is mostly from the 1970s and early 1980s, during which many residential school records were transferred to the provincial archives and from there sent to Deschâtelets. However, there is information about another archival institution that served to collect records from across the province during most of the mid twentieth century. As this archive was located at the Scholasticate Sacré-Coeur in Lebret, Saskatchewan, I refer to it as the Lebret Archives. There is considerable documentation about this archive, ranging from constitutions and research requests to a 1938 script for a theatrical production about the archive itself.<sup>46</sup> The Lebret Archive originated in the 1930s when an Oblate Father considered founding a dedicated archive at the Lebret Scholasticate after working for the Archives of the Archdiocese of Quebec and the St. Joseph's Scholasticat Archives in Ottawa. This Oblate Father received support for this proposed archive from Oblate officials inside and outside Canada, including a Cardinal.<sup>47</sup> This shows the early influence of Oblate and broader Catholic archiving in Eastern Canada on Oblate archiving in Western Canada and the congregation's interest in archiving on an international level. In 1935, the Superior of the Scholasticate granted permission to develop this archive, which included purchasing a dedicated document cabinet. It is clear that the Oblate archivists and the Scholasticate leadership, like their

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<sup>46</sup> Script for theatrical production, c. 1938, L 327.M27 R 96 ex. 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327.M27 R 96-, Divers, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>47</sup> Report on the Lebret Archive, c. 1938, L 327. M27R 4 ex. 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

counterparts in Eastern Canada, attempted early on to treat this archive as a serious and professional endeavor, including establishing a formal constitution for the archive, formalizing the positions of Director, Sub-director, and Archivist,<sup>48</sup> and mandating archival staff to be proficient with typewriters.<sup>49</sup> The Lebret archive participated in a larger network of Oblate archives and researchers across Canada. This included archival staff corresponding with the Archivist of the St. Joseph's Scholasticate (what became Archives Deschâtelets) in Ottawa<sup>50</sup> and an archivist for the Oblate Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan.<sup>51</sup> The archives also assisted in numerous requests from researchers within and outside the congregation as late as 1965, with at least one request concerning residential schools.<sup>52</sup> The archive likely closed alongside the Scholasticate in 1965.<sup>53</sup> Lesage states that once the Scholasticate closed, all of the archival records went to the Provincial headquarters and from there to Deschâtelets.<sup>54</sup> It is also possible

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<sup>48</sup> "Coutumier des Archivistes," c. 1930s, L 327. M27R 6, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>49</sup> Report by Eméric O Drouin, 1938, L 327. M27R 5 ex.1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Eméric O Drouin, October 21, 1937, L 327.M27R 37, Deschâtelets 30, L 327.M27R 29-95 – Correspondance, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Jules Le Chevallier, c. 1930s, L 327. M27R 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from requestor, May 7, 1965, L 327.M27R 95, Deschâtelets 30, L 327.M27R 29-95 – Correspondance, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>53</sup> Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Lesage, interview, 14-15.

that the scholasticate in St. Norbert, Manitoba that replaced Lebret may have inherited some records as well.<sup>55</sup>

The early archivists intended the Lebret archive to collect historical records ranging from textual documents, photographs, and “donated” objects about the congregation in general and the Oblate Province of Manitoba in particular. The archivists argued that historical documents would preserve information about “heroic” Oblate missionaries that would teach future Oblates about “apostolic zeal” and demonstrate challenges that previous Oblates were able to manage.<sup>56</sup> This mandate on historical records is reflected in the archives’ collections by 1938. This included Oblate and other church Periodicals, such as *Ami du Foyer* and *Indian Missionary Record*, Oblate episcopal documents, brochures and geographic maps, photographs, and documents about relations with other educational institutions and other Oblate jurisdictions. The most relevant type of records to residential schools is the documentation on Oblate houses, which involved the archivists visiting schools like Marieval and Lebret to identify historical documents about their associated missions, collecting all available records about the Manitoba Province, and compiling a biographical series on the province’s personnel.<sup>57</sup> Various documents such as the undated constitution indicate that the archive did have a series for residential school records.<sup>58</sup> While it is

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<sup>55</sup> Yvon Beaudoin, “Saint-Boniface, Manitoba, Canada,” *The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, accessed June 1, 2023. <https://www.omiworld.org/lemma/saint-boniface-manitoba-canada/>.

<sup>56</sup> Report on the Lebret Archive, c. 1938, L 327. M27R 4 ex. 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>57</sup> Report on the Lebret Archive, c. 1938, L 327. M27R 4 ex. 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>58</sup> “Constitutions des Archives”, L 327. M27R 3, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

clear the Lebret archive did not focus on collecting the same type of administrative documents found in the Deschâtelets collections for specific schools and missions, it is also clear that this archive was actively seeking numerous forms of documentation from or about residential schools across the province. The archives documentation of school records also suggests that there was an overlap of school and mission records at certain schools, which is reflected in the Fort Alexander collection. It is also possible the Lebret archivists impacted the composition and arrangement of the records at the various schools they visited. This can be glimpsed in an undated copy of the archives' constitution that outlines the procedures for sending researchers to obtain or create catalogues of records at major Oblate missions and houses.<sup>59</sup> This adds another potential layer of archival intervention in these records' custodial histories.

Based on the Lebret archives' mandate on historical documentation and available list of records, most residential school records from Southern Manitoba were likely not sent to this repository. This is evident with the Fort Alexander collection, where nearly all the dozen documents with a "Les Archives' Scholasticat du Sacre-Coeur Lebret, - Sask." stamp mark are newspaper articles detailing the history of the school and minor seminary.<sup>60</sup> It is probable that such records were sent to the school or Provincial headquarters for historical research or collecting. However, the presence of the Lebret archive is still significant for exploring the Oblate archival apparatus that existed when residential schools operated. For one, there is a chance that the archive received more records from other schools based on those schools' particular circumstances. As well, the Lebret archivists who visited schools to document their

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<sup>59</sup> "Constitutions des Archives", L 327. M27R 3, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>60</sup> Deschâtelets 14, L 231. M27R 1-20, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

records may have influenced or directly participated in these schools' record-keeping systems. This might also be true for the more administrative records of the Manitoba Province as a whole, as the archivists' correspondence with the archivists of other Oblate provinces suggests they had some interest in provincial records. Finally, the mere presence of an archive with a dedicated staff, constitution, mandate, and storage space shows that Oblates in Western Canada were engaging in professional archival practices to some extent, even if focused on historical documents.

As noted earlier, there is not considerable documentation on the Manitoba Provincial archives until the 1970s. There are, however, references to individual Oblates working in the provincial archives through a 2016 collection of short biographies of Oblates who worked in Western and Northern Canada. The most direct reference to a designated Provincial archivist is with Br. Roméo Cloutier, who is listed as working as "provincial archivist of Manitoba" in St. Boniface from 1978 to 1982, in addition to working in an archive in Rome from 1958 to 1968.<sup>61</sup> This strongly suggests that the Oblate Province of Manitoba had a dedicated archive, or at least archivist, prior to the province's records being transferred in the early 1980s. It is also possible that Br. Cloutier applied his decade-long experience working in other church archives when managing the Manitoban collections. The existence of archives in St. Boniface is also supported by a 1978 dissertation that cites several records from the "Archives provincial des Oblats, Winnipeg". These citations also suggest the Oblates at the time allowed some form of public access to these records and had organized these collections enough to facilitate such access.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, 266.

<sup>62</sup> David Mulhall, "The Missionary Career of A. G. Morice, O.M.I.," (master's Thesis, McGill University, 1978), xv.

Aside from the Lebret archive, the 2016 biographical book also references Oblates working at an archive in The Pas, Manitoba, though it is unclear if this refers to an Oblate archive or a local municipal/community archive,<sup>63</sup> and an archive at the “*Mazenod Hse*” in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.<sup>64</sup> There are also references to other Oblates working as archivists and archival researchers at various institutions in Eastern and Northern Canada.

One final point is how the ebb and flow of the congregation’s membership over time impacted the Oblates’ capacity to manage their records at the provincial level. Lesage notes that each Oblate Province in Canada typically had a member serving as the archivist when the congregation had more members prior to the 1980s. Archives like Lebret or Deschâtelets could also rely on nearby or associated institutions such as the Lebret Scholasticate or Oblate residences for personnel to assist archivists in their work. In the 1990s, for example, the Deschâtelets archivist, Romauld Boucher, was assisted by retired Oblates from the Deschâtelets House.<sup>65</sup> With the congregation’s declining membership by the 1980s, Oblate archives saw a decrease both in volunteer work and even in dedicated archivists, with the Province of Manitoba having no archivist by the time Lesage was working with the province in the 1980s. This lack of archival staffing has influenced the custodial histories of other provinces’ archives, such as the Alberta-Saskatchewan Province’s decision to send their records to the Provincial Archives of Alberta.<sup>66</sup> Finally, it is important to note that Lesage states that the congregation had a general

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<sup>63</sup> Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, 294.

<sup>64</sup> Pinet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée à la Rivière-Rouge*, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, 936.

<sup>65</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 15, 2023.

<sup>66</sup> Lesage, interview, 17.

record-keeping system that was likely recommended to all Oblate houses in the world, which the Oblate Province of Albert-Saskatchewan did use.<sup>67</sup> While I do not discuss this prescribed system due to my inability to locate a copy of it and the fact that the Manitoba Province did not use this system, the presence of a congregation-wide archival framework, however universally it was followed, is worth noting.

To sum up, the congregation in both Eastern and Western Canada had the willingness and resources to develop professional archival practices in the early to mid-twentieth century. By the early 1980s, however, the limited personnel and resources impacted the Oblates' capacity to manage their different archival collections. Despite these logistical limitations, the congregation or at least certain members maintained some enthusiasm for their archives, as is evident with a series of symposiums on Western Oblate Studies in the late 1980s and 1990s. These symposiums organized by the congregation hosted and later published various presentations on Oblate history and Oblate archives themselves. In addition to illustrating how individual Oblates and the larger congregation were responding to residential school activism of this time (the second symposium was deliberately held in Edmonton to coincide with the Oblate Conference of Canada's 1991 apology for residential schools),<sup>68</sup> these symposiums featured several Oblate archivists detailing the histories, content, and policies of their archives, including Archives Deschâtelets and the Oblate collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.<sup>69</sup> This willingness to provide such detailed descriptions suggests both increased research interest with these collections at this time and archivists' openness to facilitate this research. At the very least, the amount of time and

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<sup>67</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond Huel, introduction to *Western Oblate Studies 2/Études Oblates de l'Ouest 2*, ed. Raymond Huel (Lewiston, N.Y./ Queenston, Ont: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 1-5.

<sup>69</sup> *Western Oblate Studies 1/Études Oblates de l'Ouest 1*, ed. Raymond Huel (Edmonton, Alberta: Western Canadian Publishers / Institut de recherche de la Faculte St-Jean, 1990), 143-161.

resources that the Oblates dedicated to these symposiums shows some degree of enthusiasm amongst the Oblates in advertising their archival collections to researchers. Based on the tone and content of the early symposiums, though, this “enthusiasm” was centred on the expectation that their archival material would support celebratory narratives of the Oblates’ roles in nation-building and Christianization. This push for archival openness and broader public awareness could constitute a type of “rhetorical history strategy”, where corporate entities attempt to shape and promote particular historical narratives about themselves.<sup>70</sup> This early enthusiasm is in marked contrast to the congregation’s on-going hesitancy towards further opening their archives after increased public awareness and legal challenges over harms caused by residential schools increased throughout the 1990s. Though this enthusiasm has greatly declined, it is clear that members of the congregation had already been considering questions over the accessibility of their archives by this time.

While it is important to recognize that archival practices are impacted by changes in the congregation’s membership levels and available resources, or at least those resources the congregation is willing to spare, it is equally important to recognize how the Oblates have had long-established professional infrastructure and practices for managing their records. The Oblates were and remain active in shaping the policies and practices that surround their records, residential school documents included, regardless of their logistical capacities. As such, archivists must consider the inertia of these layers of purposeful and systematic interventions into record collections alongside administrative negligence and lack of resources to understand the state of these collections.

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<sup>70</sup>Andrew Smith and Daniel Simeone, "Learning to use the past: The development of a rhetorical history strategy by the London headquarters of the Hudson’s Bay Company," *Management & Organizational History* 12, no. 4 (2017): 350.

### Section Three: Custodial History and Archival Management

This section reviews the various custodial movements of school records from both schools themselves and the Manitoba Provincial archives to the Archives Deschâtelets and the Centre du Patrimoine. Alongside these custodial histories I also discuss these archives' management policies and practices that have mediated school records. Regarding custodial histories, Lesage says that the "parcelling off" even a single province's records across different repositories creates uncertainties about what records are "missing" from a particular collection, which in turn impacts management of these records.<sup>71</sup> This comment raises questions about how Oblate collections have been "dispersed" or "fragmentated". Several archival studies scholars have discussed how to conceptualize record collections, such as, Gracen Brilmyer on "wholeness" in archives,<sup>72</sup> Terry Cook on "Fonds",<sup>73</sup> and Samuel's "Who controls the past?"<sup>74</sup> on complex record environments. For this section, I am not trying to re-construct a once "complete" or "whole" collection of school records. For one, this concept is limiting given broader memory networks that school records exist within. These networks include the dozens of schools and missions operated by the Oblates, the offices of congregational, ecclesiastical, and state officials, and the memories of children, their families, and their communities. Just for the congregation alone, a 1986 inventory by Deschâtelets archivists catalogued several collections relevant to Oblate history in Western Canada. This included collections in Deschâtelets, the

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<sup>71</sup> Lesage, interview, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Gracen Brilmyer, "Toward a Crip Provenance: Centering Disability in Archives through Its Absence," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 9, no. 1, article 3 (2022): 1-3

<sup>73</sup> Terry Cook, "The Concept of the Archival Fonds in the Post-Custodial Era: Theory, Problems and Solutions," *Archivaria* 35, no. 35 (1993): 33.

<sup>74</sup> Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *The American archivist* 49, no. 2 (1986): 110-114.

General archives in Rome, Province of Manitoba, Provinces of St. Joseph (Montreal), Keewatin, Mackenzie, Grouard, Assumption, St. Paul (Vancouver), and the Dioceses of McLennan and Whitehorse.<sup>75</sup> The sheer number of institutions with relevant records makes reconstructing a singular collection both flawed and simply impractical. Instead, I document the layers of custodial movements that records have gone through to show these records' complex custodial histories. As well, I describe potential discrepancies in these record collections across the different archives as examples of how different custody and management regimes may have impacted the composition of the records. Fundamentally, documenting these different custodial/managerial regimes helps archivists better understand the composition and metadata of their collections and thus better manage their collections and address possible discrepancies.

#### *From Schools to Provincial Archives*

It is difficult to determine the record-keeping and archival processes at residential schools themselves. Lesage offers some insight into what records would have been kept at schools and when they would have been transferred or not to the provincial leadership. For instance, letters sent from school principals to Provincials would have been kept at the province's administration office, while responses from Provincials would have been kept at schools, at the Provincial office as copies, or even in associated Oblate institutions like the Gravelbourg College. These observations reflect the composition of the Fort Alexander collection, where there are more letters from Principals than from Provincials. Lesage also states that certain records that were kept at the schools, such as *Codices Historicus*, would have been transferred to the administrative

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<sup>75</sup> Romuald Boucher, "Avant-propos," In *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien* (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986), 1:1-2.

office when the Oblates left a school and placed with that school's records. It is likely that other records necessary for schools to function under different administrators would have remained at the schools. Lesage elaborates that whatever records were transferred from schools would be "part and parcel" of the types of records of a particular school at the administrative office.<sup>76</sup> Oral histories from First Nations communities also provide insight into the removal of records from schools, with histories from Cowessess First Nations describing records being removed from the Oblate school and sent to Winnipeg in the 1970s.<sup>77</sup> From these insights it is possible to observe the complex movement of records between the schools and the Provincial administration as well as the possibility that certain records left for successive administrators may have never been integrated with dedicated congregational collections.

By the time the Oblates had withdrawn from most Southern Manitoban residential schools in the 1970s, many of the records from these schools would have been transferred to the Oblate provincial archives in Winnipeg. It is difficult to trace the custodial histories of each school's collection given the lack of documentation and the sheer number of schools. Regarding this archives' management practices, Lesage states that the congregation had a general record-keeping system that was likely recommended to all Oblate houses in the world. He speculates that this system was followed to various degrees by different Oblate provinces but argues that it was only followed very generally by the Oblate Province of Manitoba before the 1984 transfer and then not at all during its more recent years of operation. He states that the archives of the Oblate Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan were organized using this same classification system,

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<sup>76</sup> Lesage, interview, 11-12.

<sup>77</sup> Bryan Eneas, "Sask. First Nation announces discovery of 751 unmarked graves near former residential school," *CBC News*, June 24, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/cowessess-marieval-indian-residential-school-news-1.6078375>.

with these records now residing in the Provincial Archives of Alberta with a published guide detailing their organization.<sup>78</sup> While it would be worthwhile to discern the system from this guide, this is beyond the scope of my research. For some provinces, such as Keewatin-Le Pas, the Oblates would arrange records in categories such as chronologically, by subject matter, or by specific institutions including residential schools, and retain these same record categories used at the provincial archives when transferring them to Deschâtelets.<sup>79</sup>

However, Lesage does state that the provincial archivist/record manager would have organized the Manitoba Province's records in a similar manner to those in the Albert-Saskatchewan collection, in terms of following the province's administrative structure. This would have included larger categories with records pertaining to the Provincial such as correspondence and reports, relations with other provinces, the General Chapter, and the Canadian Conference of Oblates, relations with external entities like dioceses, other religious communities, and different levels of government. These categories would be further sub-divided with such divisions varying between Oblate provinces. Such sub-divisions included financial records, publications, periodicals, parochial records, educational and training institutions, missions, and residential schools.<sup>80</sup> Alongside this, Lesage suggests that the Provincial office may have organized its records based on on-going administrative needs or a Provincial's personal approach to record-keeping. He also suggests that archives that received Provincial records may or may not have retained the organization of the province based off of their classification or access standards. He cites records concerning national Oblate leadership as an

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<sup>78</sup> Lesage, interview, 9-10; Brian M. Owens and Claude Roberto, *A guide to the archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan*, (Edmonton: Missionary Oblates, Grandin Province, 1989).

<sup>79</sup> Lesage, interview, 11-12.

<sup>80</sup> Lesage, interview, 10.

example, as Provincials may have organized such records produced from their interactions with the Conference with other records of the province, but that archives may have relocated records about the Conference to a dedicated Conference collection.<sup>81</sup> All of this is to say that record-keeping and archiving at the Provincial level could often be based on personal preferences or situational needs rather than mandated or encouraged standards. Lesage's observations reinforce the Manitoba Province's considerable autonomy in managing their records and archives while also implementing aspects of broader Oblate archival practices.

An inventory of the Oblate Province of Manitoba's archives completed by Romauld Boucher, O. M. I. in June 1983 provides some of the only information on what records were accumulated by the province and how these records may have been managed. The existence of this inventory raises several questions. For one, as many records from the Oblate Province of Manitoba's archives were transferred to Deschâtelets in 1984,<sup>82</sup> this inventory appears to present the composition and arrangement of the records prior to the transfer. However, it is also possible that Boucher arranged this inventory to match the arrangement system of Deschâtelets or another archive, with the actual provincial archives having a different system. It is also possible that Boucher or other archivists re-arranged the provincial records in preparation for their transfer to Deschâtelets. Lack of further documentation makes it difficult to deduce the actual managerial process, but this inventory does show both the existence of some archival system mediating these records prior to their transfer and at least an effort to impose some form of arrangement and description.

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<sup>81</sup> Lesage, interview, 16-17.

<sup>82</sup> *Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba /Délégation collection*, 4.

The inventory organizes the records based on specific missions, Oblate residences, and Oblate journals. Under each mission and residence, there are dates, record types, number of records, related persons, and brief descriptions of different records and record collections.<sup>83</sup> The inventory provides extensive info on records from Fort Alexander, providing lists of files or series with dates used as titles and describing record types and number of records per file. It also provides titles and dates of specific item-level documents.<sup>84</sup> This mission-based organization contrasts with the administration-based system described by Lesage. As such, it is possible this inventory does not accurately reflect the Provincial archives' actual arrangement at the time. However, it is difficult to properly compare these arrangement systems as the Manitoba Province may not have consistently followed the prescribed administration system.

Comparing the 1983 inventory's section on Fort Alexander to the Fort Alexander collection at the Centre du Patrimoine can shed further light on managerial changes and continuities and discrepancies in record composition between the different archives. Through this comparison, one can conclude that many files have matching contents, date ranges, and record types and that the order of these matching files are generally the same. In many ways, the 1983 inventory reads as an exact description of how the Centre folders are arranged and described in their current containers. A major discrepancy, however, are the number of items listed in the 1983 inventory compared to what is in the Fort Alexander collection. In general, the 1983 inventory lists more records than what is in the Fort Alexander folders, such as the 1983 folder

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<sup>83</sup> Romuald Boucher, "Manitoba – 1983," In *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien* (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986), 2:0-32.

<sup>84</sup> Boucher, "Manitoba," 2: 6-7.

“Fort Alexandre. General - 1933-1937” listing 131 items while the Centre folder “L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre” only lists 91 items.<sup>85</sup>

There are several explanations for these discrepancies, such as the Centre folders occasionally having unlabeled documents or multiple copies of the same item that the 1983 inventory included in its total but that subsequent archivists did not. That said, the number of these unlabeled or duplicate documents typically does not exceed 7-10 per folder.<sup>86</sup> This leaves discrepancies of 40 to 50 items unexplained. There are also entire folders in the Centre collection that lack a direct equivalent on the 1983 list, such as “L 234.M27D 1 – Demandes au conseil – Fort Alexandre” (40 records, 1903-1972) and “L234.M27F 1- Finances Fort Alexandre” (20 records, 1906-1969).<sup>87</sup> However, it is possible that records from these folders were included in other folders on the 1983, possibly also explaining some of the discrepancies. As I have focused on a file-level comparison for Fort Alexander records, I do not make any conclusions about how the 1983 list and the Centre’s broader Manitoba Province collection compare as a whole, though in general the records in the Centre collection have a similar location/institution-based organization style as the 1983 list.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Boucher, “Manitoba,” 2:6-7; Deschâtelets 15, L 235. M27L 150-241– Corresp. Générale 1933-1937 Fort Alexandre, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>86</sup> Boucher, “Manitoba,” 2:6-7; Deschâtelets 14-15, L 231. M27R 1-20 through L 236.M27B - 20-24 - Bulletin 1979-1983, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>87</sup> Boucher, “Manitoba,” 6-7; Deschâtelets 14-15, L 231. M27R 1-20 through L 236.M27B - 20-24 - Bulletin 1979-1983, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>88</sup> Boucher, “Manitoba,” 0-32.; Deschâtelets 14-15, L 231. M27R 1-20 through L 236.M27B - 20-24 - Bulletin 1979-1983, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

From this comparison, it is evident that the 1983 inventory generally matches the current arrangement of the Centre Fort Alexander collection, at least on a file-level. It might therefore be possible that the 1983 inventory is a more accurate representation of how the Manitoba Provincial archives had arranged and described residential school records prior to their transfer to Deschâtelets in 1984. However, the fact that the inventory was made one year prior to the transfer suggests that it was created with the transfer in mind. As such, Boucher and the archivists at the time may have either inventoried the records to the standards set by Deschâtelets or even physically re-arranged the records to match these standards. The discrepancies in the number of records also raise the possibility that some records were de-accessioned or transferred to other collections either before Deschâtelets or from Deschâtelets itself. There are many other explanations for these differences like those I've discussed above, but these remain a clear example of the composition of records changing from one catalogue to the current collection. As such, this might be the clearest possible evidence of intentional alterations to this collection's composition that I have encountered in my research. Concretely determining the reasons for these discrepancies would require more research into the Provincial archives and Deschâtelets' managerial history, but they remain a strong example of the potential gaps that exist in these records' custodial histories despite the rigorous archival work done by the congregation that is evident with the 1983 list itself. At the very least, this example shows just how unclear the boundary between negligent mismanagement and intentional mediation can be.

In addition to the 1983 inventory, there is an undated inventory entitled the "Index des Archives Administrative du R. P. Provincial" in the records of the Lebret archive. It is possible that this inventory was made as a reference for Lebret archivists and researchers to work with the records in Manitoba Provincial Archives. The fact that the list is described as the archives of the

“Reverand Père Provincial” suggests that it only describes the Provincial’s personal records rather the province’s records as a whole. As well, the presence of this inventory in the Lebret archives’ collection strongly suggest that it was created before the archives closure in the 1960s. The inventory is organized with titles in alphabetical order and includes series on Indian Affairs with sub-series on Residential Schools and Days schools, relations with dioceses, the General Chapter, and other Catholic organizations, the province’s general administration, and a sub-series on specific missions and schools, including Fort Alexander Residential school from 1931 to beyond 1950.<sup>89</sup> There is some overlap with the 1983 inventory and this undated version, though this inventory lists a broader range of record types and does not list as many details of individual series or files, making it difficult to compare with the Centre collection in the same depth as the 1983 list. In general, though, this undated inventory more closely matches the type of administration-based organization that Lesage states was suggested for Oblate houses to use than the current arrangement of the Centre collection.

Without more evidence it is difficult to conclude whether this undated inventory or the 1983 inventory more accurately reflect the state of the Provincial archives prior to 1984. It is possible that the likely earlier undated version described the records as they were prior to the closure of the Lebret archive in the mid 1960s, while the 1983 inventory was better positioned to reflect the records as they were closer to their transfer to Deschâtelets. Given that many school collections would have been transferred after the mid-1960s following the Oblates’ departures, the composition and thus arrangement system of the Provincial archives may have drastically changed between when these two inventories were made. The influx of so many schools,

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<sup>89</sup> “Index des Archives Administrative du R. P. Provincial,” L 327. M27R 11 ex. 1, Deschâtelets 30, L 327. M27R 1-12 – Archives: Const. | Coutumier, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

mission, and scholastic records in the late 1960s may have forced the Oblate archivists to adapt a previously administration-focused system to accommodate a broader range of record types. Further research could identify and examine the congregation's recommended record-keeping system in detail, as well as compare the Manitoba Province inventory to the published of Albert-Saskatchewan Province inventory. Regardless, all of this shows the uncertainties of the Provincial archives management of school records prior to their transfer to Archives Deschâtelets.

#### *Les Archives Deschâtelets - NDC*

Les Archives Deschâtelets-NDC, currently located in Richelieu, Québec, is the primary and largest central repository operated by the Oblates in Canada. An overview of this archive's development is helpful for understanding its current management practices, the broader history of Oblate archiving in Canada, and the impact of administrative and jurisdictional changes on Oblate archiving. Like the Montreal-based provincial archives described in the Oblate archiving section, the Scolasticat Saint-Joseph, an Oblate seminary located in Ottawa, functioned as an archival centre for the congregation's history and began conserving documents sometime around 1911. A subcommittee of l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste helped to further develop the Archives du Scolasticat Saint-Joseph as a distinct entity within the seminary, with Fr. Léo Deschâtelets effectively creating it by the 1927-1928 academic year. By 1929, the Archives under Deschâtelets had a designated space and operated autonomously from the seminary, with indexes gradually being developed to facilitate research. Deschâtelets served as director until 1943, accruing a great number of records, both originals and copies, about the Congregation's broader history. After Deschâtelets became the Congregation's Superior-General in 1947, the

archive was renamed Archives Deschâtelets in his honour.<sup>90</sup> Given Archives Deschâtelets' early efforts to collect records from outside Eastern Canada, the records of Oblate-run schools in the Manitoba Province may have fallen under this mandate. However, it is unclear to what extent Archives Deschâtelets was collecting residential school records in general during their primary period of operation, especially given the institution's focus on historical records. However, Archives Deschâtelets' efforts to collect on a national and even global scale reflects an increased archival tendency to consolidate the congregation's records that began with assistant-general Louis Souillier's 1876 visit. This acquisition precedent may have influenced Oblate officials' decisions to transfer provincial archives like those of the Manitoba Province to Deschâtelets in the later twentieth century.

Regarding management, Archives Deschâtelets had developed systematic processing practices by the mid-twentieth century, with Lapointe describing teams of priests working daily under the director and chief archivist to produce indexes and classify documents. From these activities, the archives were able to produce an annual report on accomplished work and projected work for the upcoming year. Like the provincial archives, Deschâtelets' archival program mirrored aspects of increasing archival professionalization of the time. Oblate archivists themselves showed an awareness of this broader professionalization and distinctions between the congregation's archives, with Émilien Lamirande remarking in a 1951-1952 report that the administrative archives of the Provincial House fell under the conventual definition of archives as articulated in Muller, Feith and Fruin's manual while Deschâtelets functioned more as a collection of manuscripts, comparing this arrangement to various public and educational archives

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<sup>90</sup> Lapointe, "Histoire des archives," 3-5.

of the time.<sup>91</sup> Though aware of the broader archival landscape, Deschâtelets still kept the bulk of its archival labour within the congregation. This reliance on internal labour led to the decline in Deschâtelets' activities by the end of the 1960s due to decreasing membership at the seminary and in the congregation as a whole.<sup>92</sup>

Deschâtelets was further impacted by other broader changes in the congregation at the time, most notably the 1957 division of l'Est du Canada Province into the Saint-Joseph (Montréal) and Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire (Quebec) Provinces and the Vicariat des Missions François-Xavier. In 1968, le Conseil provincial de la Province Saint-Joseph designated that Archives Deschâtelets would administer historical documents of St. Joseph Province while the Provincial Archives of Montreal would hold its administrative documents. In contrast to Deschâtelets' earlier broad collecting mandate, the records of other provinces were to be kept in their own archives.<sup>93</sup> This administrative mandated division between historical and administrative records, however, appears to reflect an existing distinction identified by Lamirande in the early 1950s, suggesting that Oblate leadership was as much adapting to established archival practices as much as they were prescribing new ones. This continuity of Deschâtelets' existing practices also appears evident in its continued efforts to collect materials about Oblate history across Canada, including those on Canadian Oblates working in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The "1989 Constitution" specifies this objective to collect records about Oblate activities across Canada, noting "spécialement dans le Nord-Ouest canadien".<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Lapointe, "Histoire des archives," 6 fn12.

<sup>92</sup> Lapointe, "Histoire des archives," 6.

<sup>93</sup> Lapointe, "Histoire des archives," 6-7.

<sup>94</sup> Lapointe, "Histoire des archives," 7.

This suggests both that Deschâtelets' archival practices did not always follow high-level congregational policy, or at least initial policy in this case, and that Deschâtelets continued to collect records from Western Canada during and after the closure of most residential schools in Manitoba. This again reinforces the considerable autonomy that Oblate archives had with their policies and management. As well, while I focus on the record collection sent from Manitoba Province in 1984, it is still important to acknowledge that Deschâtelets received and managed many records from Western Canada across its administrative history, further broadening the memory networks within which school record existed. Understanding these custodial and management practices is further complicated by the 2004 reunification of the Saint-Joseph and Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire Provinces and the creation of the Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province. The current NDC Province covers most of Eastern Canada and thus most of the territory of the former Canada-Est Province.<sup>95</sup> This led to the merger of the former Saint-Joseph Provincial Archives of Montreal and the former NDC Provincial Archives of Quebec that had been created around 1968 after the 1957 division. To further complicate matters, the Archives of Quebec was split between Montreal (for administrative documents) and Deschâtelets (for historical documents), with records being re-classified into the Montreal system and likely the Deschâtelets system. However, most of the overall documents went to Montreal, with only some going to Deschâtelets due to storage limitations at Montreal.<sup>96</sup>

To address this merger, the Oblates hired archivist Nathalie Parant, who noted difficulties that occurred during the merger. This included failing to adhere to “respect des fonds”,

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<sup>95</sup> “Les Archives Deschâtelets – NDC – Historique des Archives,” Missionaries Oblats de Marie Immaculée.

<sup>96</sup> Lapointe, “Histoire des archives,” 8.

understood in the sense that the archives of one provenance should not be mixed with those of another provenance. One example that Lapointe cites is the integration of documents about living Oblates from both former provinces.<sup>97</sup> It is difficult to determine how Deschâtelets and the different Oblate archives over the years have defined and used the concept of “fonds” in managing their collection, a problem exacerbated by the broader archival community’s on-going difficulty in the defining the concept also. At the very least, the example of mixing select records from formerly independent provinces would seem to contradict the principles of provenance and original order that archivists often use to define fonds and respect des fonds.<sup>98</sup> In 2011, the newly merged Montreal collection, from here on out the NDC collection, was sent to a designated archival space in la Maison oblate de Richelieu in Richelieu, Quebec.<sup>99</sup> This relocation accompanied the provincial administration’s move to Richelieu, with the NDC archives possessing records “produced and received by the Provincial Administration since 1841”.<sup>100</sup> In 2014, the Deschâtelets Archives moved from the closing Maison Deschâtelets (formerly the Saint-Joseph scholasticate). Due to a lack of a suitable location in Ottawa, it was relocated to Richelieu to share facilities with the NDC archives, creating Deschâtelets-NDC. Each collection has kept its distinct identity, such as Deschâtelets retaining its library-based classification system and Montreal its hierarchal series classification system.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Lapointe, “Histoire des archives,” 7-8.

<sup>98</sup> Cook, “The Concept of the Archival Fonds,” 24-25.

<sup>99</sup> Lapointe, “Histoire des archives,” 8-9.

<sup>100</sup> “Les Archives Deschâtelets – NDC – Historique des Archives,” Missionaries Oblats de Marie Immaculée.

<sup>101</sup> “Les Archives Deschâtelets – NDC – Historique des Archives,” Missionaries Oblats de Marie Immaculée.

While not all these custodial and managerial developments would have directly impacted the Manitoba Province collection given these records were only at Deschâtelets from 1984 to 2005 at the latest, these developments show complex custodial environments that this collection was managed in for nearly two decades. Such environments reflect broader trends in the consolidation of religious archives in Canada as discussed by Hurtubise, who cites Deschâtelets and the Centre du Patrimoine specifically.<sup>102</sup> It is unclear to what extent these broader developments impacted that Manitoba Province collection but knowing that and when these developments occurred can help archivists identify possible instances when the records were impacted.

There are several possible reasons behind the transfer of the Manitoba Province's records in 1984. As noted, the congregation's declining numbers at this time made it difficult for Oblate provinces generally to staff their archives, making transfer to a dedicated and funded repository perhaps a desirable option. Lesage suggests that the Oblate Province of Manitoba's anticipated 1984 relocation to a new headquarters building with a smaller space also contributed to their choice to transfer a major part of their archival records to Deschâtelets.<sup>103</sup> Lesage also states that most of the archives of the Oblate Province of Manitoba were transferred to Deschâtelets in part because Ottawa had the main Oblate house for Western Canada.<sup>104</sup> All these reasons appear plausible from an administrative standpoint and reflect both broader congregational trends and the Manitoba Province's distinct circumstances of the time. This also reinforces Deschâtelets' importance as an archival hub for the Western Canadian Oblates alongside their local archival

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<sup>102</sup> Hurtubise, "Le Devoir de Mémoire," 229-230.

<sup>103</sup> Lesage, interview, 7-8.

<sup>104</sup> Lesage, interview, 4-5.

institutions. Why the province chose not to transfer the bulk of their records to a more local public or community archive like the Alberta-Saskatchewan Province would be interesting to explore in further research.

In addition to records splitting off from the 1984 accession, Archives Deschâtelets also had other existing collections related to Manitoba Province by the time the 1984 collection arrived. In the forward to the 1986 Deschâtelets inventory, Romauld Boucher, O. M. I., states that a large part of the Province of Manitoba's archives were in Deschâtelets at the time of writing.<sup>105</sup> The inventory also describes records from or about the Manitoba Province in other collections. This includes a separate Oblate Province of Manitoba series in the Deschâtelets records themselves, which according to the inventory contained newspapers, provincial administration documents, records of individual missions, maps, circulars, maps, finances, Oblate educational institutions records, personnel records, reports to the General Chapter, relations with dioceses, and records on canonical visits.

Under Fort Alexander, records include a 1911 contract for the school with Department of Indian Affairs, copy of a plan, and document about a 1957 canonical visit.<sup>106</sup> Based on these types of records compared to the Fort Alexander collection at the Centre and the 1983 Manitoba Province inventory, these series appear to be an accumulation of records sent to the Oblate national leadership and later to Deschâtelets for archival deposit rather than the 1984 accession itself. This inventory also suggests consulting the series on St. Boniface and the Canadian North-West for more records related to the Manitoba Province,<sup>107</sup> and an inventory on Montreal

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<sup>105</sup> Boucher, "Avant-propos," 1:1-2.

<sup>106</sup> Boucher, "Manitoba," 2:67-80.

<sup>107</sup> Boucher, "Manitoba," 2:80.

Province also includes relevant records through its interactions with the Manitoba Province, including a 1961 newspaper article about St. John's Minor Seminary.<sup>108</sup> Though the 1984 accession was not formally integrated into other collections about Manitoba Province based on available sources, its records did inhabit the same custodial and managerial spaces as the other collections described above. Given that the Deschâtelets archivists did not always adhere to "respect des fonds", there is a possibility that records from the 1984 collection could have been re-arranged with those other collections, either intentionally or accidentally. This is entirely speculation, but other archivists' observations on the congregation's willingness to mix records of different provenances suggests a considerable chance of such re-arrangement happening.

Regarding the basics of Deschâtelets' management of school records in the 1980s and 1990s, Lesage notes that the archive used the Library of Congress classification system alongside a system of index cards to describe each individual item, with information on names, locations, and subject matter.<sup>109</sup> Indexes of the records were also stored in a database.<sup>110</sup> He also states that the records were organized into sections, citing the records of Fort Alexander residential schools specifically as having been stored physically together in their own boxes.<sup>111</sup> Lesage argues that this arrangement and description system made the records well organized and easy to access while a researcher.<sup>112</sup> Deschâtelets' focus on item-level description is evident with the records at the Centre, as records in this collection are individually labelled with a Library of Congress

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<sup>108</sup> "Montréal," *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien* (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986), 1:12-15.

<sup>109</sup> Lesage, interview, 9.

<sup>110</sup> Lesage, interview, 13-14.

<sup>111</sup> Lesage, interview, 9.

<sup>112</sup> Lesage, interview, 9.

code.<sup>113</sup> While comparing these index cards and database to the records at the Centre or to other inventories might reveal changes and continuities in composition and management, these index cards currently remain unprocessed at the Centre.<sup>114</sup> Lesage notes that a microfilming project in the 1940s or 1950s microfilmed records of different provinces and some diocesan records, with Deschâtelets likely still holding this microfilm.<sup>115</sup> While some sources suggest that Deschâtelets may have also used microfilm in the early 1980s, it is unclear if any of the 1984 accession would have been microfilmed.<sup>116</sup> The archives' use of the Library of Congress system and index card system reinforces the extensive archival labour that the Oblates were willing to perform to make these records manageable and accessible. Besides the addition of the file codes, it does not appear that Deschâtelets made any considerable changes to the arrangement of the 1984 accession based on how closely the 1983 Manitoba Province inventory matches the post-Deschâtelets records at the Centre. That said, it is possible that archival interventions did occur at Deschâtelets.

Regarding Deschâtelets' access policies, Lesage argues that the archive did not impose major restrictions for researchers while he was working there, asserting specifically that some First Nations peoples conducted research there. He states that the Oblates began restricting access to researchers when court cases against the congregation increased, believing with some uncertainty that "Deschâtelets closed the doors completely". Lesage suggests that one of the

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<sup>113</sup> Deschâtelets 14-15, L 231. M27R 1-20 through L 236.M27B - 20-24 - Bulletin 1979-1983, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Province oblate du Manitoba / Délégation, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives (SHSB), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>114</sup> Lesage, interview, 13-14.

<sup>115</sup> Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 15, 2023.

<sup>116</sup> Gaston Carrière, "Archives générales – 1983," In *Inventaire des Archives Oblates – Histoire Oblate de L'Ouest Canadien* (Archives Deschâtelets: Ottawa, 1986), 1:0-2.

reasons for these restrictions was for the Oblates to concentrate resources on copying residential school records in their collections,<sup>117</sup> likely for legal purposes. It is difficult to cross-reference these arguments about changes to access policy without documentation or the personal accounts from the Oblate officials responsible for these policy changes. That said, Lesage's point on the archives' fairly open access policy seems consistent with Deschâtelets' extensive managerial practices to make their records accessible to researchers. However, it is always important to consider how more open access policies reflect what was convenient to the congregation at a given time rather than long-term commitments to openness. Lesage's observations on the more closed-off policies during increased legal challenges perhaps show how conditional the congregation views access to its records. Access is thus an area of Deschâtelets' managerial history where active policy changes likely had a greater impact on the accessibility of records than passive negligence towards record processing. While it is still important to consider to what extent all residential school records in Deschâtelets were accessible, as well as to question the broader meaning of record "accessibility", archivists can examine the history of Deschâtelets' managerial interventions to better discern which policies and practices have impacted the accessibility of the records.

To conclude, the example of the Manitoba Province collection at the Centre du Patrimoine demonstrates the complex custodial and managerial networks that the school records of a single province has been through. Many of the Oblates' decisions over the custody and management of school records reflect the key characteristics that helped define school administration and the records themselves, including congregational autonomy and Francophone Catholic identity. These decisions could also be informed by broader archival thinking and

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<sup>117</sup> Lesage, interview, 9; Gilles Lesage, personal communication to the author, September 15, 2023.

practices within the larger congregation and the Catholic Church. However, many of these archival decisions ultimately reflected the logistics and pressures of different circumstances that the congregation found itself in, from declining membership to lack of storage space. Such situation-based decisions are important to consider when examining the congregation's on-going archival responses to activism.

## Conclusion

The current state of many Oblate residential school record collections is often the result of layers of mediation by the congregation. This mediation has resulted from numerous historical contexts and actors, ranging from the Oblates' spiritual and cultural origins in the early nineteenth century to the congregation's on-going responses to Indigenous activism over residential schools. The congregation's control over record processes has never been absolute, with children who attended schools, their families and communities, ecclesiastical and state officials, and contemporary researchers all influencing these processes in various ways. However, the Oblates' pervasive autonomy in managing school records remains key to understanding the contents, contexts, and custodies of these records over time. Fundamentally, the better researchers and archivists can understand the Oblates in relation to their records, they can better understand the records themselves in ways that enable research, especially for Survivors and others seeking truth and justice over residential schools.

Contextual knowledge about the Oblates and their records can enable practical research by informing how archivists and researchers can envision which records can or could exist outside of given collections. To paraphrase James Lowry, in the absence of records either through removal or destruction, people can imagine a multitude of records existing.<sup>1</sup> By knowing the various contexts and agents behind the creation and archiving of school records, archivists and researchers can better "imagine" what records could be absent from certain collections, and by extension where they could exist. Knowing that a school fell within different Oblate province

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<sup>1</sup> James, Lowry, "Radical empathy, the imaginary and affect in (post) colonial records: how to break out of international stalemates on displaced archives" *Archival Science* 19 (2019): 195-196.

overtime, for example, can inform which archives researchers can go to if their desired records are absent in a certain collection. As well, understanding principals' record obligations to different Oblate officials could assist archivists and researchers in identifying discrepancies between these obligations and the contents of collections, in turn leading to efforts to locate these "imagined" records or determine if they were destroyed or never even existed and the reasons behind this. Such contextual information from the archives currently holding the records can also be used in conjunction with Survivor and their communities' memory systems, such as oral histories from Cowessess First Nation about the removal of school records as discussed in the introduction. Finally, by not documenting this contextual information, archives holding Oblate collections risk creating misunderstandings about the existence of records, which could create barriers to research.

In addition to this information about Oblate school administration and archival practices, archivists and researchers can also document the congregation's various promises on record access to hold the congregation accountable going forward. As part of his 1991 apology for residential schools on behalf of the Oblate Conference of Canada, Fr. Doug Crosby pledged "to support an effective process of disclosure vis-à-vis Residential Schools [...] [and] offer to collaborate in any way we can so that the full story of the Indian Residential Schools may be written, that their positive and negative features may be recognized, and that an effective healing process might take place".<sup>2</sup> How well the Oblates have followed through on this promise from more than thirty years ago remains contentious, especially as the congregation continues to hold

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<sup>2</sup> Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, "AN APOLOGY TO THE FIRST NATIONS OF CANADA BY THE OBLATE CONFERENCE OF CANADA." *OMI Lacombe*. Accessed November 18, 2023. <https://omilacombe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AN-APOLOGY-TO-THE-FIRST-NATIONS-OF-CANADA-BY-THE-OBLATE-CONFERENCE-OF-CANADA-w-intro-1991.pdf>.

off releasing certain record types, like personnel records, even after signing a formal agreement with the NCTR in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Tracking these promises over access can hold the Oblates accountable and be used to leverage further access in further negotiations.

While I do not assume that my research will help Survivors and other Indigenous researchers with their specific research needs, there are several ways it could be of use. Knowing which Oblate Province a specific school operated in, for example, could help Survivors more easily locate records about specific Oblate staff, such as known abusers, to hold these staff members accountable. For communities conducting searches of potential grave sites, identifying which Province and related Oblate collection would possess cartographic and architectural records from a particular school could greatly facilitate these search efforts. I acknowledge, though, that the conclusions I have reached from my focus on the Manitoba province and Fort Alexander Residential School may not be applicable for Survivors and communities connected to other territories and schools. At the very least, I hope that my research can indicate the potential value that examining the Oblates in depth could have for Survivors and other Indigenous researchers.

There are, of course, many other contexts and actors that impact Oblate record collections which I have not explored in detail. Further research on the influence of children themselves, their families and communities, religious sisters and their own religious communities, and the different layers of government record-keeping on Oblate school collections would all greatly nuance the research I have presented. As well, it would be critical to examine collections from

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<sup>3</sup> Shari Narine, “Still a ‘battle’ to get Indian residential school records to identify lost children,” *Windspeaker.com*, January 18th, 2023, <https://windspeaker.com/news/windspeaker-news/still-battle-get-indian-residential-school-records-identify-lost-children>.

other Oblate provinces in a similar depth as I have for the Manitoba collection, as the exact contexts of these collections could have varied significantly based on different geographic locations, composition of Oblate officials and staff, and individual officials' administrative decisions, amongst others. Applying a similar analysis to the other Christian churches involved in residential schools could also lend insights into these organizations' own distinct histories and approaches to archiving school records. Such studies could also lead to comparisons between different church entities that could further nuance understandings of these entities' archival practices. Research exploring how the TRC and NCTR have worked with these collections and their on-going projects would also be useful. Finally, other researchers with better insights on implementing archival decolonization could identify the unique challenges of Oblate collections and develop strategies to make these collections more accessible to the needs of Survivors and other researchers. While I do not prescribe any of these strategies, I hope this research can at the very least serve as a resource for these broader efforts.

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## Appendix A: Interview Transcript

Project title: Thesis Research Interview with Gilles Lesage for “Records of Manitoban Residential Schools in Oblate Archives”.

Interviewee: Gilles Lesage

Interviewer: Jackson Anderson

Date of recording: 2022-05-10

Language(s): English, French

Place of Recording: Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Session: 1 of 1

Length of Session: 02:14:02

Audio file:

Audio Quality:

### **Interview:**

00:00:00 - Jackson Anderson (JA): Alright, slate [claps hands twice to slate recording file]. Alright, and we can begin. Hello. My name is Jackson Anderson, and I am interviewing Mr. Gilles Lesage for my MA thesis in Archival Studies entitled “Records of Manitoban Residential Schools in Oblate Archives”. This thesis is being completed with the Department of History at the University of Manitoba under the supervision of Dr. Greg Bak. Today is Tuesday, May 10th, 2022. We're meeting remotely over a video teleconferencing program, Zoom. We are located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Can you please state your full name?

00:00:54 - Gilles Lesage (GL): Gilles Lesage.

JA: Thank you. Before we start, I need to get your permission for the interview. Do you consent to participate in this interview?

GL: I do consent.

JA: Alright. And do you consent to have this interview recorded?

GL: Yes, I consent.

00:01:13 - JA: Okay, thank you. Alright. So, in this interview, I'm interested to hear your life story. In the first stage of the interview, I will ask you to relate your life story as fully as possible. Take as much time as you wish. I'm interested - we are interested in the details, stories, anecdotes, anything that is important to you. Uh, your life story does not have to be in

chronological order. Ah, you may begin anywhere you want, with your grandparents, your parents, your childhood, or anything else that's important to you. Please take as much time as you need in responding to my questions. Include anything that is important to you in your responses. You do not have to answer any questions that you're not comfortable answering. We can turn off any of the recording devices at any moment during the interview. I may write down some additional notes and follow-up questions during the course of the interview. In this first phase of the interview, I will keep quiet to get you space to tell your life story without, without being directed by my questions or interests. My responses to you will be non-verbal, nods, smiles, eye contact, to ensure good audio quality. We will, after, after that, we'll come to my more specific questions around more specific topics later in the second phase of the interview. Before we start, do you have any questions?

00:02:40 - GL: No. Um, I'm just thinking about the life history. I will, I may not necessarily mention much about my ancestors, not because it's not important to me, but [laughs] I think it can get very long and not necessarily useful.

JA; Right. [Inaudible].

GL: But anyway, I'll see what I - I'll talk about as much as I can, what the main experiences in my life were, I guess.

00:03:26 - JA: Okay. For sure. All right. So, let's begin. So, first phase. So please tell me your life story in your own words. If you prefer not to discuss your early life, your family life, your, you know, your ancestry, that's okay. Instead, if you want to, you can just describe what led you to get involved with records keeping in the first place.

00:03:53 - GL: Okay. Well, I will start with the beginning in the sense that I was born on the 28th of December 1949, in Treherne, which is a small town close to Notre Dame de Lourdes. I was born in Treherne because there was no hospital in Notre Dame at the time. I grew up on a farm. I was the eldest in the family. We, I had 19 brothers and sisters, so we were a large family. Grow, growing up on a farm in the fifties and sixties when things changed a lot and radically, to some extent. Going from a horses in the early years to tractors and huge combines working large areas as opposed to a small family farm doing mixed farming. At the age of 12, I went to St. Boniface College as a resident in the Minor Seminary, which was here in St. Boniface too. So I started in grade eight and I did, actually I was part of the last class who did the classical course of the Jesuits, including studying Latin, which went from grade eight to the third year of university, which meant that by the end of that stretch, I had a BA from the University of Manitoba in Latin Philosophy. If there's anything that I could pinpoint that might have, that explained that I went into records management and archives eventually would be the fact that when I was on the farm, I often would put order into the tool shed, making sure that things were all in a proper place and easily accessible. But anyways, that's [laughs] an aside. During my studies I, um, wasn't clear as to what exactly I wanted to do. But one thing that did happen during my final years at St. Boniface College was through conversations with a friend, we decided that we would go to Europe after graduation and travel for a year, and we thought we'd do it as students because it's a lot cheaper. So we registered at the Université catholique de

Louvain, and I registered in philosophy because they offered a Bachelor of Philosophy in one year. And so I thought, "Well that's perfect, I'll, I'll be a student and then we can travel as much as possible. Anyways, I got very interested in the courses and stayed for another two years. So, I basically was a student in philosophy at the University catholique de Louvain, Institut supérieur de philosophie for three years until 1973. Again, if there is anything I can pinpoint in that period that was of interest in terms of leading to archival studies was the course I took on hermeneutics by Paul Ricoeur, who basically was working with what, what does a text mean or what is the meaning of a text. And, in, in an essay I wrote for that course, I took the approach of seeing - I took the approach of, um, the theory of performative language, where the text is doing something as opposed to strictly recording something. And in the process of writing this up, I remember asking myself questions such as, why have certain documents, why are certain documents still available today, and others have disappeared over time, on a long period of time. And so that was another interest which led me to, well, who, it didn't lead me to go into archives, but it did link up with an interest for archives. And um, after that, I taught philosophy for one year at the University of St. Boniface or at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface as it was then known. And, after that first year, which I found quite difficult because I went straight - I was 23 years old - I went straight from studying to teaching full-time, and there was no, there was really nothing prepared ahead of time, so I kind of had to build up courses as I went, and that meant three courses which were given in sessions of three periods per week.

Anyways. After that first year, I went back on the farm. My father was slowly retiring and me and two of my brothers decided we would take over the farm. So, we farmed until 2, 1982. After which I, I mean, with the crisis of the early 80s and the interest rates going up and everything else, it meant that we were in a bad spot financially. Anyways, we, we sold part of the farm. Two of my brothers stayed on, and I started looking for another job [laughs]. I ended up being hired at the St. Boniface Historical Society. And that's when I started working more, well, directly with archives. At the Historical Society, at that time, the Society was involved in just about all areas of heritage, including managing a small museum collection, managing a small archival repository. Also I was working with organizing a series of conferences every year, publishing a newsletter, and also working at promoting the preservation of historical buildings. So, and then doing some genealogical work because that was a lot of, lot of the requests that were coming in had to do with genealogy. So, it meant that it was a very, varied kind of work, plus overlooking the management of also the Riel House, which was another, um, which was a contract that the St. Boniface Historical Society had with Parks Canada.

And in 1990, I left the St. Boniface Historical Society, and eventually - then at that time started looking for another job. And that's when I was hired by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to work in their- what they called at the time Bureau du Patrimoine, which would be the Heritage Office, kind of thing. And then, and so, I also, but then at that time I was working just part-time with them. I was also working on contracts with other organizations or individuals. One of them being, um, doing some archival work on a collection which was the Georges Forest fonds. Those records were still at the Forest house but were totally disorganized. So, I did the initial organization of the records and various summary description or inventory of what was in those records. And the records were then stored until they were later deposited at the Centre du

Patrimoine and processed, the final process was, process work was done. Um, and just to finish off, after, - I was with the Oblates from 91 about, well I started in the fall of 1990 but left in 97 when I started working again with the Centre du Patrimoine at that point with the Société historique de St. Boniface, in, which was in the process of, um, securing funding and eventually moving into the Centre du Patrimoine, funding for the construction of the Centre du Patrimoine, moving into the Centre du Patrimoine. Then from 97, 98 to 2020, I was archivist at the Société historique de St. Boniface. And in 2002, I then became executive director again, which was for a second time [laughs]. And I then was there until my retirement in 2020 and, in 2020. May, first of May 2020. So, in a nutshell, that's my life story.

[I could add that during my work at the Oblate of Mary Immaculate, I also took the course work towards a master's degree in archival studies in the Joint master's program of the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg. I also did an internship at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. I did that internship working with two other students at setting a first internet site for the Hudson's Bay Archives. Among the courses I took was one with Jennifer Brown on the First Nations.]<sup>1</sup>

00:15:10 – JA: Excellent. Thank you. And just to clarify, do you mean May 2000 or May 2020?

GL: May 2020. I'm sorry. Yeah.

JA: Okay, just wanted to double-check.

GL: No, no [laughs], it makes a big difference.

JA: Yeah [laughs].

GL: I would have retired before becoming Executive Director [laughs].

JA: [Laughs] Okay, no, perfect. Thank you. Ah, just to return to the kind, kind of three major parts of your career. So, becoming kind of the archivist at St. Boniface in the 80s, archivist at - with the Oblates, and then archivist/director at the Centre du Patrimoine. Ah, and more focusing on the latter two. Was kind - what was the process of you becoming, you know becoming an archivist with Oblates? And then, is there anything or any sort of details from that time that are important to you that you want to mention?

00:16:30 – GL: [Pause] Well, actually, like after I left the Société historique de St. Boniface in 1990, I was looking for work and I had taken on a few contracts, but they were limited in time, and they weren't full-time. I was - I was asked, I think it was Alfred Fortier, the executive director at Société historique de St. Boniface at the time, who told me that the Oblates were looking for someone to work for the- , actually, it wasn't presented as working for the archives as much as working or helping out with the planning of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Western Canada. And so, when I started discussing the contract with the Oblates, I kind of added into it managing their archives because I wanted to stay active in the archive

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<sup>1</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

world. But it did involve spending most of my time doing research on the history of the Oblates and participating on a number of their committees. For example, they had the Oblate History Project, Western Oblate History Project, which had been set up in the late 80s, and was funding research by a number of different researchers and holding colloquiums every second year. So, the first one, I went to was in 19, 1991, which was in Edmonton, and included participating in the pilgrimage of Sainte-Anne, which was a huge pilgrimage where a lot of First Nations' people participated in. And it was at that time too that the Oblates made an apology to the First Nations for the residential schools. So I kind of came into this really without knowing anything about residential schools at that point when I first started with them, except for maybe having read in the papers, the first articles that had come out as a result of Chief Phil Fontaine's, you know, declaration about the abuse he had suffered in Fort Alexander Residential School. So, um, it was quite the experience, well the "experience", it was quite an opening up of a whole area that was really not known to me, which was something I had not really heard much about before. So that's how I came to work at the archives. But again, I'd like to mention that the work, which meant that I had to go to Ottawa a number of times to do research because most of the archives of the Oblate Province of Manitoba, had been transferred to the Deschâtelets archives in Ottawa, which was the main, um, house of the Oblates in Canada, for Western Canada anyways. And, all of the records of the residential schools, or practically all of the records for the residential schools were in the Deschâtelets Archives. The only portion of it which would've still been at the Oblates house in St. Boniface were the financial records. So, I spend some time just getting to know what was in the archives and how those archives were organized in Deschâtelets. [Pause].

00:21:49 – JA: Alright, thank you. Is there anything else?

00:21:54 - GL: No. It's just, I mean, I think this is how I came to work at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Manitoba for the Province of Manitoba. And, you know, just to underline the fact that it was mostly for, to do research and to plan for events of the 1995 anniversary, which was the 150th anniversary.

And so- well, the other thing I could mention is to - at the same time, because the Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique, the Canadian Catholic Historical Association— it has the English equivalent. But anyways, they held symposiums or Congresses every year, and so it was planned that they would hold one in St. Boniface in 1995. And so I also was a member of the board of that Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique for those years. Because of the fact that the joint symposium of the Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique and the Western Oblates Studies Project was going to be held jointly in St. Boniface.

00:23:40 - JA: Okay, yes, and I read through copies of those four - I think there was only four of those Oblates conferences.

GL: Yeah, they - the 91 one was the second. I'm not sure the published proceedings of the first one.

JA: I believe they did do the first one too. I think I read it. Okay. Yeah, and the fourth of those, fourth of those collections, I did see your name as - in the acknowledgments, as one of the organizers, for the one that was held in St. Boniface.

GL: Yeah.

00:24:30 - JA: Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Then just to kind of continue, on the, your career trajectory, so – can you talk about how your time with the Oblates ended and then how you went back to St. Boniface Historical Society?

00:24:57 - GL: Yeah, I- as preparations were being made for the for the transfer of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, which was located at the time at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface to the Centre du Patrimoine, when I first started again to work at the Société historique de St. Boniface, the Centre du Patrimoine was, the construction was not started, but things were being lined up in order to secure the funding and get that project underway. So, there were still a few issues that had to be resolved and one of them had to do with securing confirmation from some major potential donors of archival materials. Their final approval of depositing their archives in the Centre du Patrimoine was required in order to get final funding approval. So those two were the CBC French station Radio-Canada archives, and the other one was the archives of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. So one of the first, um, tasks that I had at the Société historique when I started was to write up an, um, argument, un mémoire, like we say in French, in order to argue the importance and value of depositing the archives of the Archdiocese at the Centre du Patrimoine. I guess one of the situations of the archives at the Archdiocese of St. Boniface was that there was really no one that was working with the archives proper. There was no archivist. And there had been some work done in - before the - before 1997 to organize and describe at least some of those materials. One of them was Lionel Dorge who did a very detailed indexing of every record for the period of Provencher, Taché and Langevin, and then a more summary description of the archives of the Beliveau period. To this, there was also a large volume of archives of the Maurice Baudoux period, which was the, um, succeeding bishop after Beliveau, who, which were really not organized, which had been stored in the basement of the Major Seminary in an area where there were electrical cables and water pipes going through. I mean, it was maybe in one of the worst areas for them to have been stored. So, it was possible to make an argument visually and descriptively as to the importance of making sure that the archival material was in a proper archives. And so, that, um, consent on their part to transfer in deposit their archives at the Centre du Patrimoine was obtained with Bishop Hacault at the time. And that brought about confirmation for the funding, um, at government levels, which would have been provincial and federal, given that with those institutional confirmation there was sufficient material and important enough material to warrant the construction of the Centre du Patrimoine. Guaranteed funding- came through and the building was constructed. So I was also sitting on the construction committee, which was overseeing the construction project. And so that's how I first started working at Société historique de St. Boniface at that time. Also working on certain basic policies regarding the management of the archives of the Centre du Patrimoine.

00:29:53 – JA: Okay, thank you. Just a quick note [Pause]. In general, how do you view the work you've done at the, le Centre du Patrimoine and any other organizations you've worked for?

GL: How do I view?

JA: Yeah. What's your perspectives, how you feel about the work you've done?

00:30:36 - GL: Oh. Well, it was a stimulating environment in the sense that, I mean, initially, we were moving into a, you know, a brand new establishment, brand new building, and we were in a situation where we could acquire a lot more material because we had the space for it. Before moving to the Centre du Patrimoine, the St. Boniface Historical Society was located in the College-Université de Saint-Boniface and had very limited space. Actually, it was just full, there was no space to add anything, at that point. And so moving to the Centre du Patrimoine meant that it was then possible to do a lot more promotion of the preservation of archives and encouraging people to deposit their archives at the Centre du Patrimoine, which, you know, kept coming in afterwards until, until I left, and some of those were very large collections from religious women, congregations. But it also meant that it became possible to bring back the archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from Deschâtelets to the Centre du Patrimoine, and, and build up, really, an archives which could, could meet with its mandate, which was to document and make available the archival, documentary heritage of Franco Manitobans and Metis people. And maybe just to add onto this, the other important collection that was transferred to the Centre du Patrimoine, were the records of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph, which was the French-speaking Metis organization in Manitoba, which had been active from the 1880s to the present, and still very much active today. And so that archival collection was quite important. It contained records from the Société historique métisse, which had been created in order to publish a book on the history of the Metis nation from the perspective of the Metis, and, that contained documentation that they had acquired over the years, including quite a few letters of Louis Riel and letters of other Metis people. There was an interview of Gabriel Dumont, which was not an audio recording but a - written recording of the interview. So that was also quite important. And alongside that was also the fact that we were entering a new era in terms of making archives available to the public through digitization. So, just because of this new digital era this was a big change in the practice of managing archives. In 1997, I think 98, but anyway, it's around that either 97, 98 - it was before moving to the Centre du Patrimoine, we had set up a website for the St. Boniface Historical Society, which was really a very simple site making known that it existed and that there were certain services being offered which were "dot dot dot dot dot", it was a very basic entry on the "information highway". But it was the first entry into that new world of the virtual world [laughs], as it later came to be known. And so when we moved to the Centre du Patrimoine, that's also when we started to look at using the InMagic database to manage acquisitions, but also to make the descriptive tools available electronically and eventually on the Web. At first it was only an in-house software, but very early on they came out with a web version of it. So one of the things that was also planned into the new building was to have a web server. And so we had the internal administrative server and then alongside it, a web server, which, in which we were able to transfer the database information of the InMagic software as a web version, which then made that database available on the web. And that's how it got started. The InMagic version became more and more, um, complex, but also made a lot more information available. So not just the descriptions became available, but it was possible to add images and then later on to add audio and PDFs, and then later on, to add video including also large documents that could be zoomed in. And by that time, it was, it had become obvious that given the fact that we had no IT personnel or programmers or, we had, we didn't have access to that those kinds of services, we had to outsource. So we made a contract with Andornot in

Vancouver who were setup to be able to make the web version available and manage it on a full-time basis, which was a big, a lot help for us. Anyways. So this is how the database became more and more, um, made materials available, more and more of it overtime.

[It also became an internal management tool such as to manage the genealogical research requests.]<sup>2</sup>

00:38:17 – JA: [Pause] Thank you. [Pause] Uh, okay, so - now that you've spoken about, just gave me a brief overview of your overall career, I wouldn't mind getting into the more specifics of your time at le Centre and maybe also a little bit of your experiences at, with the Oblate, if relevant. Uh, so kind of, of my next list of questions deal with the custodial, man - managerial histories of Oblate school records. So, could you provide a brief overview of your, of your work experience with Oblate school records?

00:39:17 - GL: Um, yeah. Okay, just to go back a little bit to the, I guess what would have been the transfer of the residential school records over time. In 1984, the Oblates moved from Winnipeg to St. Boniface, and because of that move, they moved into a place where they had less space, and so they decided at that time to send to the Deschâtelets Archives in Ottawa a major part of the archival material that they had accumulated over time, in 1984. Basically, almost everything which was not still required by the administration of the time. And so, all of the records, or practically all of the records of the residential schools, but also of all the other records of the period of Taché up until the 1960s, 70s, was sent to the Deschâtelets Archives. The only portion which was not, or some of- the personnel records would have not been, not as many of the personnel records would've been transferred just because, um, some were still living, and so those files were still required in St. Boniface, or others had, were deceased but had fairly recently. So those records were also kept. And then the financial records were all kept. Practically no financial records had been transferred to Deschâtelets. And so when I started working at the Oblates, and – oh yeah, the other thing that was kept in St. Boniface were the photographs. There was a fairly large collection of photographs, and those would've included photographs of the residential schools, both the buildings and the people, Oblates or student photographs, or activity photographs, at the residential schools. And when I started working at the St. Boniface Historical Society, one of the things that did happen at one point was any archival material that was in St. Boniface at the Oblates house was transferred to the Centre du Patrimoine.

And I guess, an important thing to note at this point, I mean, since the 70s, the number of Oblates of the congregation was progressively diminishing, and, that had an impact at the, um, at the administrative level - if you take the Oblates of Western Canada, they, up until the 60s, they had created a number of different provinces. The province of St. Boniface would've been the oldest one, but then over time, would've been partitioned into a number of different provinces. And then by the 80s, because numbers were diminishing, the idea of joining provinces together came up. And so one of those was the Keewatin-Le Pas Province, which at that point (in the 1980s) was joined to the Province of Manitoba. And so, in terms of the records, this meant that some

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<sup>2</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

records of Keewatin Le Pas were transferred here in St. Boniface, some records were also still in Keewatin-Le Pas, and some of their records were in Deschâtelets. And [pause], so, so, initially at the St. Boniface Historical Society, what we received was what was still remaining in St. Boniface. And as time went by, and as more records were coming in, um, the St. Boniface Historical Society started to do a promotion towards the other religious congregations to think about and possibly deposit their archives at the Centre du Patrimoine. One of the, um, initiatives at that time was to see if the Grey Nuns would transfer their archives to Centre du Patrimoine, and that became the incentive to also see what the other congregations were intending to do. And as we were doing this, we also invited the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which was really the major and almost the only male religious congregation in St. Boniface. And they were very positive with regards to that option and eventually decided that they would transfer their records, that they would bring back the records of the Province of Manitoba from Deschâtelets to the Centre du Patrimoine. This is something that was done around 2002, I'm not sure exactly of the year, but it's around that time. [Pause] I'm not sure I'm still answering the question [laughs].

00:46:24 - JA: No, no, it's perfect. I think you're delving into some subsequent questions I had about the custodial histories of the school records.

GL: Yeah.

00:46:40 - JA: You've just, you've just had so much, I just wrote down a few things. [Pause] Okay. [Pause] Just to elaborate on kind of your personal experiences. Did you ever work with school records when you're working with the Oblates and then when you were the archivist and maybe also the director, what was your experiences? Again, you don't have to go into the -, I prefer if you don't go into the contents, but just – yeah.

GL: Yeah. Well, when, when I was working with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and was doing some research in Deschâtelets, the archives were organized according to the Library of Congress system, more or less, it was a very complicated system. But they did have index cards for every document, which meant that by going through the index cards, which were by name, by location, and by subject matter, it made the access fairly easy to those records which were indexed. Plus they were also organized by sections. So, for example, all the records of the residential schools of Fort Alexander would have been in a, physically in a single area or one box or two boxes or whatever it was. So, in that sense, it was fairly easy to access. And, initially, it was open. I saw First Nations people doing research there. There were, there were really no restrictions initially. But when court cases started to pile up, that's when access became restricted. I believe, though I'm not sure now, it may be that Deschâtelets closed the doors completely. And one of the issues was also the fact that they were doing copies of the records for lawyer's requests and also for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And so I think while that was being done, there was really limited access. So that was for that period. And then in terms of access to records in, when I was working with the Oblates themselves. Well, obviously there was not often requests for records because they were in Deschâtelets. And I think, well the only requests I saw were the ones for the photographs and that was really not restricted, so as far as I know those were viewed by a number of people. I can't be sure how many, but it was a limited number. Like there was never a lot of requests coming in at the Oblates of Manitoba.

And then at the St. Boniface Historical Society - well, that would've been the same thing, like the records were transferred and there was a contract with the Oblates establishing what the restrictions to access were. So, photographs were not under restrictions. So those were always available and there would be a number of people who would come, a number of people from the First Nations came occasionally and viewed those photographs. And that would've been pretty much the most that were accessible. Many had been described and entered in the database.

All those records from Deschâtelets were already organized, so no reorganization was done, but the other thing too, you know, part of it was restricted, I think, until 1926 or something like that. So it meant that it was also a portion of it that was not available to the public, unless someone would come with special permission from the Oblates. So, the work, the major work that was done with the Oblates archives overtime was digitizing the photographs or some of the photographs, or at least entering the descriptions of the photographs into the database to make those more easily available, and doing some processing of the archives that were at the Oblate Province of Manitoba, because those had never really been processed and they were transferred more or less from the record-keeping system that was in place in the administration to the archives, and without any real processing done, there, there could be duplicates, there was materials that were promotional of- no or little value. So there was some selection that had to be done in that sense. And then also organizing it so that it fit, it would fit into the general record keeping system that I think was probably recommended to be used in all Oblates houses in the world, but I would imagine was more or less followed by different Oblates Provinces, but certainly not followed at the Oblate Province of Manitoba for the more recent period. And, and that classification system would have compared to the one that was used by the Provincial Archives of Edmonton, where the archives of the Oblates Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan after it had closed were donated, when there was a re-organization of provinces in western Canada. And, so those were organized in the same kind of classification system. And were- and that guide to the Oblate, to the records of the Oblate Province of Saskatchewan and Alberta was published. So it's readily available. Of course, it was only possible to do some work on the basis of funding programs or funding, project funding, that would come in over time. And that processing of the Oblate records was done progressively, and is still underway.

00:55:19 – JA: [Pause] Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Just wanted to quickly follow up on kind of different classification systems. So you say that at Deschâtelets the US Library Congress system, Saskatchewan-Alberta, they used this kind of more centralized, global, ah system that the Oblates recommended. For Manitoba before they were sent to Deschâtelets, was there any classification there, any system there?

00:55:56 - GL: Before they were sent to Deschâtelets, there was an archivist working with the records. I guess he would have been a combination of records manager and archivist. And the records would've been organized somewhat in the same fashion as the ones in Edmonton, [pause] in a very general sense, the records would be organized following the administrative structure. So, there would be records pertaining to the Provincial, so incoming and outgoing correspondence, and some reports, communiqués, or circulars to the Oblates of the Province would be part of that section of the records. And then there was the portion which would be the

relations between the Oblate Province of Manitoba and the other Oblates, so, other Oblates provinces, or their General House in Rome, or the Conference of - Conférence oblate du Canada - Canadian Conference of Oblates, which was kind of a national level organization representing the Oblates of all of Canada. And then they would've been external relations, the Oblates with the different dioceses, the Oblates with other religious congregations, be they male or female, and then the non-religious relations, Oblates with the governments, be, be it local, municipal, provincial, federal, or, I guess that would be it. And so inside these large categories, it would be subdivided. But that could take on different subdivisions according to different provinces. And in some cases, better organized or not as well organized. But the financial records were also another big portion of this, because it was a fairly large organization, and because they were involved in a lot of different activities. From publications such as books, to publications of a variety of newspapers, to administering parishes, to mission work, residential schools, training institutions such as a scholasticate or the juniorate, and then also teaching in universities, managing the Gravelbourg College. So all of that was basically under the administration of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. And it meant that it was a fairly, in terms of administration, it was a fairly elaborate and complex system.

JA: Okay. Thank you. [Pause] Uh...

00:59:52 - GL: Maybe just because - it's something that is important and it's easy to, it can easily be out of sight, is the changes that occurred in the boundaries of the provinces. I mentioned earlier about Keewatin-Le Pas, and then- you see Alberta-Saskatchewan at one point included portions of Keewatin-Le Pas, and then that was integrated into Keewatin-Le Pas. So, in cases where there were residential schools, for example, if you take, Cross Lake, that was in the Keewatin-Le Pas Province, but then when Keewatin-Le Pas was reintegrated into the Province of Manitoba, even if the records were created under Keewatin-Le Pas, it became in a way under the jurisdiction of the Province of Manitoba. So, what can happen sometimes is if someone says, okay, the residential schools of Manitoba were under the management of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, then all of the records should be with the records of the Oblate Province of Manitoba. But in fact, those stayed in Keewatin-Le Pas for a long time. I think now they're in Deschâtelets, but I'm not sure. But it just meant that because of these organizational changes, the records could be transferred over or not transferred over. They could be transferred in different places. The case in point is the fact that already in the 1970s, archives were donated to the government of Alberta.

01:02:09 - JA: [Pause] Alright. Thank you. I think that's also dipping into some of my other questions too. Just to continue our discussion about the custodial histories. For the Manitoba Province, and maybe also Keewatin-Le Pas if you know, where were records, where were the records eventually ended up in Winnipeg and St. Boniface and then that were sent Deschâtelets, where did, where were these records coming from?

1:02:50 - GL: The ones that were sent to Deschâtelets?

JA: Yeah. Like, but, so - the ones you said that were accumulated in Winnipeg and then moved to St. Boniface, and then Deschâtelets.

GL: Yeah.

JA: Where would these records be stored beforehand before being centralized?

1:03:07 - GL: Well, some of them were generated- I mean, if you take residential schools, for example, the correspondence from the director of the school to the Provincial would have been stored at the Provincial house for the Oblate Province of Manitoba [This would have been with the Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface, then with the Juniorate of Saint-Boniface, then at the Provincial House in Winnipeg (East Gate house)].<sup>3</sup> And from what I remember, I don't think there were copies of responses from the Provincial to the director or there may have been. I think it would depend. But anyways, so some of those records were kept in the administration office, and copies or responses would've been sent out, either in the residential schools or for example at the Gravelbourg College or whatever. What would have happened over time when the Oblates left the school - I'm not sure what - I mean there are records such as the Codex historicus, which would have been kept in the school, that would have been transferred back to the administrative office, which normally would have been placed with the records of that school. But there may have been records because, I mean, some of the schools where the Oblates left in the 1970s, the administration or the management, some of those schools kept functioning. And so I would think some of the records stayed in the school. But whatever would have been transferred to the Provincial House normally would have been added to whatever records that were there already, of that particular school. And then when those records were transferred over to Deschâtelets (from East Gate), they would have been bundled up under those categories. And, I'm saying this because that's what happened to some of the records of Keewatin-Le Pas. They were all packaged into either chronologically, for correspondence, for example, or by subject matter, and then put in boxes and then shipped to Deschâtelets. So, when we speak about, for example, the residential school records, there are the records that are the files of the school itself, which would include the codex historicus and would, would include some correspondence and whatever. But then there's also the correspondence of the Provincial where you would have correspondence in there which would pertain to the residential school. So, it's not it's not all in one spot or in one physical location. And the other thing too, that happened over time, at one point the directors of the schools were negotiating with the Provincial because they would often request for either a car or truck or for somebody to come and do some work or for financial assistance or whatever. So, those transactions were done or were negotiated with the Provincial of the Province, of the Oblate Province. Then there were also transactions done with the federal government, with Indian Affairs, and at one point, the Oblates decided that it was getting much too complicated to have all the directors and the Provincials each pulling [laughs] their weight, and decided to coordinate all of this through one Commission [COOIE later renamed as Indianescom (The Oblate Indian and Eskimo Council)],<sup>4</sup> which was in Ottawa, which was a commission pertaining to all, all issues related to the First Nations, would come through the Commission. The Commission, with the weight of the whole Oblate organization throughout Canada, figured it would be in a better position to negotiate with the federal government. And so that - those

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<sup>3</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

<sup>4</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

records would be in Deschâtelets, [but not as part of the Oblate Province of Manitoba but as a series of its own.]<sup>5</sup> So again, it's just to say that there was a certain level of documents which would be identified with the schools, which are in a physical location of its own, and then the records that would be part of other levels of administration, and then some that would be in that commission which was established to deal with the federal government.

01:09:00 – JA: Okay. That's, that makes sense. And, would you say it's possible that when the governments took over the administration of different schools from the Oblates that there would be records, there would have been records that were made by the Oblates, even just between the Oblates as you say that would've been perhaps kept at the schools, and then when those schools closed down, those records may have gone to government archives.

01:09:36 – GL: That's possible. I mean, that's a period where I was not, witness [laughs]. I was not a witness to what was going on. Because that would have happened in the early 70s, when - between 69 and 72, I think, the Oblates would've been pulling out of most of the, if not all of the residential schools. And then at that time, whatever was transferred to the Oblate Province of Manitoba would've become part of the records that were transfer to Deschâtelets. But what was actually not transferred or stayed in the schools, I can't, I can't really tell, except that I would think some of those records were probably necessary for the school to continue to operate.

JA: Okay, thank you. [Pause] So, we've talked a lot about the custodial histories of the records. Is there anything else about those histories you wish, you to want to discuss? And maybe one more question I have about that, you've already kind of answered a bit of it, kind of the reasons why records were transferred to different archives the way they were.

01:11:16 – GL: Hmm hmm. Well, I mean, one of the reasons I think with the fact that changing, changes were happening in the, the jurisdictional if you want, the organization of the, of the Oblates. As different provinces were either created or then later on amalgamated to other provinces, which kept going until fairly recently. So yeah, the lack of recruits meant that also the numbers were diminishing and so that would have impacted on the structure of the province, Oblate provinces of Canada because they are required by a canon law to have a certain number of Oblates per province, and when that number becomes too low, they have to start thinking about the next step. [There is also the fact that with Vatican II and he changes occurring in the Church followed by the various Synods, a certain number of members left the congregation].<sup>6</sup> [Pause] And I think to probably, as a lot of activities in society became more and more, went into the hands of lay people as opposed to church people, that would also have impacted on what was going on in the congregations themselves. So for example, with the Jesuits when St. Boniface College and became, went under the jurisdiction of the diocese and the Jesuits at that point left. It's the same time period. And I mean, in all of this, may also be explained in the context of the implications of Vatican II.

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<sup>5</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

<sup>6</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

01:13:30 – JA: Okay [pause]. So, kind of these administrative changes that impacted recordkeeping, would you say that they can reflect larger changes in Canadian Catholicism, Catholicism at a global level?

01:13:54 – GL: Yeah, I think so. I think it was - the sixties was really a period of major questioning at all levels, and certainly it was happening in religious congregations too. [Vatican II (1962-1965) itself was an "aggiornamento" a revision of the Church practices in view of the changing times, the changes in society. It was a time of questioning the institutions. Ivan Illich, a catholic priest published *Celebration of Awareness A Call for Institutional Revolution*, and also *Deschooling Society*].<sup>7</sup> Underlying all of this is the question to what extent the Church is a reflection of society and to what extent the Church influences society. Something might have, it's possible to do a lot of speculations. And I'm not too sure if anybody has really studied this more, in more detail. In the 60s you also have the rise of the liberation theology, and certainly the Oblates, we're aware of that. I mean, there were Oblates in South America. What kind of impact did this have on the Oblates in Canada? How - to what extent would that have questioned, made them question their own ministry? It's possible. And would that explain, for example, the fact that certain Oblates left the Oblate congregation and that others stayed. I mean it's speculation, but there are things that were going on at the time and it may have had an impact. I mean, that's without talking about the rise of First Nations organizations. Or in all, in all areas of society. With the Blacks in the States or with the homosexuals in San Francisco. I mean, you had major questioning of society as a whole. And it would be hard to imagine that it wouldn't have had some impact on what was going on in congregations and in the Church generally. [And this is not bringing up the changes that occurred as a result of Vatican II.]<sup>8</sup>

01:16:09 - JA: Okay. Yeah, I think, I think that is definitely a very, very big question, and I could write my entire thesis about that.

GL: [Laughs] Or a [inaudible].

JA: Or an entire book, seriously, if we are being honest.

GL: Yeah.

01:16:25 – JA: Okay. Thank you for that. I appreciate that insight. Okay. So, moving on to another question about the archival management of these records. So, can you speak to how they were managed by Deschâtelets and then by le Centre du Patrimoine? Stuff like description, how they are being processed, access and use agreements.

01:17:00 – GL: Well, yeah, the archives of Deschâtelets, as I had mentioned, had index cards, which was very similar to the index cards that had been done for the archives of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. Plus, they also had a database where all of these indexes had been entered. So when they transferred the archives, they didn't at that time transfer the index cards because I think that they were still in use there. And the whole of the archival materials in the Deschâtelets

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<sup>7</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

<sup>8</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

Archives were indexed in that fashion. So, they had not at that time, I guess, separated the cards to gather them with particular series, or in this case, for example, take all the cards of all Oblate Province of Manitoba and put them with the records of the Oblate Province of Manitoba. They did eventually send them a few years ago. But those up till now have not been available for use. So it's not, still not used today. Eventually, it could be something that could be entered in the database, just like the ones for the Archdiocese had been, which would give the same kind of access. And then they are organized to some extent according to location for some other records, and then according to institutions for other kinds of records, and then by levels of administration, which is in, at a certain level is kind of what all Oblate records are organized under. So the way that the archives which were not processed, and are being processed up till now, is to keep that same classification structure as the records are being processed to make sure that they are in the proper classification system that they should be in [like the archives of Saskatchewan-Alberta were].<sup>9</sup> And so those were done for the records by locations and are practically completed, and for the Oblate administration locally, this is practically completed. And there is still a lot, well, there's still the lot of the financial records. But also of the, for example, lot of records of, with regards to the more spiritual activities, which was also part of the records that were being kept over time, which is not fully processed yet. And then some of the records pertaining to relationships of the Oblates with the governments and with external institutions or dioceses, that section is still in the process of being completed. And eventually, that would be entered into the InMagic database or if the, it is ever replaced, it would be in the other database.

01:21:10 – JA: Okay, thank you. Nice, one quick side question. So going through some of the records at le Centre, I've noticed that on some of them they have a stamp that says, I forget the exact name, but it's referring to the, I think it's the Scholasticate that was at Lebrét.

GL: Oh Yeah, yeah.

JA: And [inaudible] on it says in quotation marks “Les Archives”, “Archives”.

01:21:42 – GL: Yeah, that would've been, at that time, it would have been the archives kept by the scholasticate. But when they close the scholasticate, all of those records would have been transferred to [the Oblate Province of Manitoba, probably at the Juniorate in St. Boniface or Eastgate in Winnipeg,]<sup>10</sup> and then from there, they would have been transferred to Deschâtelets.

JA: Okay, and what was that - were these archives, like, just for the official documents from the scholasticate or could, or were they, were from other residential schools from across the Province in there?

01:22:20 - GL: Oh, I don't think so. I think it would be strictly the Scholasticate records. I mean there was a Lebrét Industrial School and then Lebrét Residential School that was close by. But I don't - normally I don't think the school records would've been transferred to the scholasticate, they would've been separate in the sense that the scholasticate had their own archives. I don't think it was keeping records or archives from anywhere else except those pertaining to the

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<sup>9</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

<sup>10</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

administration of the Scholasticate itself. And then the residential schools would have had their records in the residential schools. And then anything that would be exchanged between externally would've been between the administration of the Oblate Province of Manitoba, there would've been very little reason to have a relation between the administration of the Scholasticate and the residential school. The only thing that would've maybe happened, in the Scholasticate, there was quite a few Oblates who were professors teaching to the scholastics, and some of them would have been called upon to do studies in the missions or in the schools, for example. I know Guy de Bretagne in the late 40s, did quite an extensive study of the residential schools, and so he would have gathered information which he would have kept or sent to the Provincial House. But as far as I can tell, he never gathered any records. He created a record [laughs] of his study of the residential schools but didn't collect materials as far as I know, anyways.

01:24:40 – JA: Okay. Yeah, I just - when going through those records, I just wasn't too sure if, if that Scholasticate archive, maybe even in an unofficial way, was just a place where schools would send some of their records.

01:24:00 – GL: Well, not that I know of or that I noticed. I mean, it's not impossible, but I don't, I don't know. And just to get back to Guy de Bretagne. One thing that was happening too, occasionally, well, every year the Oblates had a kind of retreat or Congress. So all the Oblates of the Province, or most of them, would gather for the retreat, and alongside the retreat, they would also have kind of a study session. [Computer notification sound] And that could be - excuse me, I'll just get my plugged because my computer is running low.

[Pause – interviewee retrieves laptop plug]

01:25:47 – JA: For sure.

[Pause – interviewee plugs in laptop]

01:26:08 – GL: Okay. Sorry about that. It's back on [laughs].

JA: No worries.

01:26:15 - GL: Yeah, so in the late 40s, there was at least one of those which dealt specifically with residential schools. So, there was a lot of public, uh, published material that would have been circulated at that time amongst the Oblates. I don't know if it really went beyond. But those records, I mean, obviously would be pertaining to residential schools, and not necessarily kept in residential schools themselves.

JA: Okay.

GL: This would have occurred at the Oblate Province level, so it would have been in one of the institutions of the Oblates.

01:27:01 - JA: Okay. That makes sense. Excuse me. All right. So just for the sake of time, I'm just going to move on to a few other questions. So just very briefly, based on your experience at le Centre, how do you feel that these custodial histories, the ways records are transferred across

different archives and then these different management practices across these archives, how do you think they impact how people can manage the records, so how archivists manage the records, and then how researchers can use the records?

01:27:49 – GL: Yeah, managing the records. Well, I would, I would say one of the major concerns would be to try and speak to what extent it's possible to gather at least all the records of one province in one space. Just because it- the more it will be parceled off, the more it becomes difficult to manage because you have no idea what it is that is missing. Then to what extent that what you would have is actually - reflects significantly what was going on and being documented. But at the same time, it's something that is significant, that the records are traveling around. I mean, why are they traveling around, and why is that happening, and what are the motivations behind that? Because you can, I mean, is it just strictly lack of space, so we move them, or is it because there's no interest, it's not useful for anyone. We're storing them somewhere else. Or is it, you know, a number of other reasons are possible. But again, I think from the perspective of someone doing research on a particular residential school or residential schools generally, it would be difficult to focus only on the archives of the Oblates. Because what you're getting is the administrative level of the schools, and you would need to also go through the archives of the women religious congregations who were there, because they also kept records and sometimes they kept more detailed records, for example, in the journals, than men were, would [laughs]. And I mean there are things like, for example, Canadian Oblates, were not writing in the same way and as abundantly as a French Oblate from France would. So those kinds of differences also, intervene. And then, well, you also have the government records, and they're all essentially linked together, and to get a more complete picture, it has to be the combination of all those. So for people who are doing research, I think it's important to know where things are. And then well, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made evident, the testimonies are also very important. So - which reminds me [laughs], one of the things that was done at the Oblates when I was working there was to set up an oral history project to document the personal experience of some Oblates, which would have been on a lot of variety of different topics, but some of them had been working in residential schools, would have brought their perspective on this. But it's just to say that that's another area of documentation that is also essential.

01:32:05 – JA: [Pause] Okay, Thank you. And then would you also see the different management practices, like the different classification systems, can that also impact how people have managed and used the records, do you know of any specific examples?

01:32:30 – GL: [Pause] Well, I think in terms of how those records were kept in the provinces, would have been more or less well-organized. And I think what would happen is that the, the, the needs of the day would have dictated to some extent how those records were organized and kept. As they are being transferred into archival institutions, than a more rigorous, maybe a more structured, classic- classification system is followed or used. Which I mean to some extent maybe is what should have happened initially but didn't [laughs], and then was used to organize and make those records more accessible. I mean, the logical divisions of the administrative system makes a lot of sense for understanding the way the administrations operated and also the

way that they interacted between each other. Speaking from the provincial level, the Oblate province level. And so, sometimes records are, for example, and this is maybe an example which makes it a little bit clearer, the Provincial of the Oblate province would be the one who represents the Oblate province at the national level with the Oblate Conference of Canada. So, he would have all the records, like the, he would have the minutes and correspondence with the Conference and reports that have been either produced at the conference level or produced for a certain meeting at the Conference. But all of those records would've been initially in the hands of the Provincial. But it's easy to see how that might be organized a certain way in the Provincial's office, which you would probably be organized according to his own way of thinking. And then it may be transferred over to a more centralized office. Where, again, it may be either left as it is or maybe that part of the COC, the Canadian Oblate Conference, would have been placed with the other COC materials, but not necessarily. But then once it gets to the archives, you can see how at that point it may be organized that way because in the general structure of the relationships of the organization, it does make sense. It becomes easier to access anyways. Otherwise you'd have to, you'd never know where to search because it could be in one place or another. [This can also be the case with the Commission set up by the Oblates to negotiate with the government.]<sup>11</sup>

01:36:17 – JA: Okay, okay that makes sense. All right, so moving from our questions about the different custodial and management histories, I just want to- I have a couple of questions about Oblate archiving in Canada in general, which I think you've already mentioned a bit. So, what do you know about the history of archiving by the Oblates in Canada?

01:36:46 – GL: Well, not much more than what I've said. One thing that is certain is that at one time when the personnel was, when they had many more members, they would I think most of the time, if not all the time, have someone who had the function of the archivist for each Oblate province. And possibly even for particular institutions such as the Scholasticate. For example, the Scholasticate evidently had someone who was working as an archivist or had that function. [Pause] And, in Deschâtelets, which was also the residence of a lot of retired Oblates, they had the advantage of having a lot of Oblates available to do projects, like description projects or transcription projects, and a lot of that kind of work was done under the supervision of someone who was the archivist for the archives in Deschâtelets. And I think that that would have been the case, up to the point where they started to have less and less members [though diminishing numbers because of lack of recruitment could have been compensated by the increase in retirement and the availability of retired for volunteer work].<sup>12</sup> That meant, as it happens in all organizations, one of the first place you cut is in the archives [laughs]. And so, there would have been less people available to work in the archives, in some places there might not even be an archivist at one point. And, when I started working at the archives in the Oblate Province of Manitoba, there was nobody there before- at the time when I went there, there was no one there as an archivist. And then like we saw with the Oblate Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan, at that point, they had to decide what to do with the archives, and a decision was taken that it would be

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<sup>11</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

<sup>12</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

donated to the archives of the Province of Alberta. But that has not happened a lot in terms of transferring the archives into a public institution, and donating them. But this is what's being done now, as the congregation is getting smaller and smaller, and resources are getting, in terms of personnel resources, are diminishing all the time. They have to take a decision as to what's going to happen to the archive. And that may result in another movement, another movement of archival materials. Hopefully, which will then be permanent.

01:40:00 – JA: Okay. Thank you [background noise]. Okay, and then how would you say that Oblate archiving relates to other forms of Catholic Church archiving, maybe both in Canada or globally. Would, do you know if, for example, Oblates archives or at least Oblate collections like the school records at the Centre, would those fall under canon law regulations?

01:40:35 – GL: Oh. That is a very good question. It would fall under - I think that is what the contract with the Oblates would specify to the extent that it would. As far as I know, there are more stringent regulations on diocesan archives, then there are on congregational archives. I know that, for example, some of the women religious congregations have donated the archives, and that the canon law has not been an issue. The considerations for canon law have not interfered. Then if you look at the Oblate archives, the fact that they've given archives to the government of Alberta. Obviously, there was no, nothing prevented them from doing that in terms of canon law. And in terms of restrictions that that would have been imposed, I think in the end, it has to do with legislation, local legislation in terms of privacy and access to information. I don't think there's anything that would really fall under canon law. I know that where maybe the issue is a little bit less obvious, possibly, is with regards to, for example, if the Mounted Police wanted to seize records. I know that at that point canon law may interfere, but that's a whole other issue. I mean, it also has to do with whether or not Canada has a treaty with the Vatican and what the implications are, what kind of restrictions or not it imposes on the jurisdiction of canon law as opposed to the jurisdiction of the law of the land.

01:43:01 – JA: Right, okay. And then possibly-

GL: That's another thesis [laughs]

01:43:10 - JA: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. Or even just being able to- or even just Canada wanting access to the records, you know, is it, the Church, treated just like a religious corporation almost, or is it like the Vatican as a sovereign state, even?

01:43:30 – GL: Yeah, yeah. Well, the Vatican is a sovereign state.

JA: Exactly. But is it, which, which capacity would the government had to negotiate in?

GL: Yeah, that's another thing. I mean, even, even if you take dioceses, even the way the diocese is structured in terms of property ownership varies between Quebec and the other provinces. And so to some extent, some of this is totally dictated locally. Because I mean, I think you've seen the rules and regulations in canon law. Sometimes they're very general. There is not too clear exactly

how it would actually be implemented. [International questions are another thing as we see with the Canadian request to extradite Johannes Rivoire from France].<sup>13</sup>

01:44:30 - JA: Very true. I read through a couple of the canon books and can be it can be complicated for sure. Okay. Thank you. Moving on to my other question, I think you've somewhat answered this before, but how would you say overlapping church boundaries, so both the religious jurisdictions, but also the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, how would that impact the creation of school records and also how the records are managed by the Oblates?

01:45:07 – GL: Well, I'm not sure it would have impacted a whole lot in terms of the management of the archives. Because in the Catholic church, the management of residential schools was totally transferred to the Oblates. The dioceses interfered very little, if at all. In terms of canon law, the only thing you could say is that the Oblates had a certain, um, obligation towards the diocese. In other words, the answer to the bishop in terms of his sacramental powers, to the extent that any and all congregations cannot be on the territory of a diocese without the permission of the bishop. He is the final authority if you want. But then not too sure how much of an account the Oblates would have to give to the bishop as to what they were actually doing. Obviously, there were conversations regularly about what was going on because dioceses would also depend on the Oblates in order to have priests in certain parishes. So, there were certainly ongoing conversations with regards to different activities of the Oblates, but to what extent that would have been the case with, with the residential schools, it's not clear. That being said, it's certain that anything pertaining to sacraments, that was a diocesan responsibility. In other words, an Oblate even if he was a priest, would not, for example, be able to confess without the permission of the bishop. He would not be able to give any of the sacraments without the permission of the-, sometimes it might have been just a formality, but the bishop was in fact the final authority on this. And records pertaining to sacraments were normally, should be transferred to the diocese and not to the Oblate archives, which overtime did happen, and in some cases, because, for example, if you take you Keewatin-Le Pas, the diocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, I think just about every priest was also an Oblate. So, between the Oblate Province of Keewatin-Le Pas and the Diocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, [laughs] the distinctions were often very blurred.

JA: Okay.

01:48:06 – GL: So, in that sense, it's a- the Oblates were very much, especially in Western Canada, were very, very important for dioceses, and could operate fairly easily without the intervention of dioceses. I mean, I know in one case someone explained to me, you know, one Oblate Provincial negotiates with five different dioceses. So, it gives him a lot of power because he might say, well, no, we can't send Oblates to you because we've had a request from such and such. And so in those negotiations, the Oblates were more in demand than, than otherwise. At least for a certain period of time.

01:49:07 – JA: Okay. No that's, that's very interesting about the relationship between the jurisdictions. And could there be a case where, let's say a school principal who was working in

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<sup>13</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

Manitoba, let's say their school in one year is in, was in the St. Boniface archdiocese, but then when the Winnipeg one was erected, and instead of writing letters to the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg now, like do you think they would have a major impact on record creation and record management at all?

01:49:46 – GL: Well, I don't think so. Again, because they were very much independent in terms of their area of activity. I mean if their, for example, with the Diocese of Gravelbourg, they were managing the College of Gravelbourg. They had a relationship with the University of Ottawa, which at one point was also managed by the Oblates. And they would give BAs through the University of Ottawa, at the Gravelbourg College. So there was this network of Oblate organizations across Canada, which meant that-, I mean, obviously they had a certain, they were under the bishop's authority to some extent, but it was not something I think that could easily impact on what they would do or not do. Or at least they had a lot of freedom to being able to manage things as they wanted to. They- and in terms of the records, I think there was always a very clear delimitation between what was Oblate and what was not Oblate. And in terms of the relationship between different jurisdictions, it may get classified differently in offices, but in terms of how it would operate, administratively, it, it was very clear cut.

01:52:00 – JA: Okay, makes sense. Alright, that's most of my questions about Oblate archiving. Now, I just a final group of questions about specific archival projects related to Oblate school records, and primarily they're, how they're related to activism by school Survivors and Indigenous communities more than generally. So, have you been involved with specific projects that have worked that work with or have worked with Oblates school records? And if you have, can you describe your experiences?

01:52:47 – GL: Well, I think maybe the first one had to do with the- I'm trying to think of the exact name of the project. [Redacted]. And so, because there was a lot of photographs of Fort Frances, and the residential school there, and there were some, maybe [Redacted] used some from Kenora and Macintosh too. So [Redacted] came and spent a lot of time doing copies of those photographs which were then used in the publications. And copies of those are at the St. Boniface Historical Society. And then [Redacted] - and then there was another project where they came to digitize the *Indian Record*, and so they spent some time doing that, and their publications are also available. And then, other than that, while I was there, it had mostly to do with individuals who would come and often want to view the photographs. Sometimes it would have been to do some genealogical work, or family history work, and- but with institutions as such, or with projects, I'm not aware that with any, any other, with First Nations, that there would have been, because there were a lot of projects with Metis, but not with First Nations.

01:55:10 – JA: Okay, and then when you were at le Centre du Patrimoine, were there, did you do any project to put these records, or these type of records?

01:55:22 – GL: Ah, well, what I just mentioned was when I was at the Centre du Patrimoine.

JA: Okay, sorry, I didn't-

GL: At the Oblates, there was very little, if any. I don't know. There weren't any project as such. And if there would have been requests, the requests was have gone would have gone directly to the Provincial, and then he would've decided. But there were individuals who did come, for example, to view some records. In one cases, it was someone who came with [pause] a social worker or a psychologist. I'm not sure, but it had to do with dealing with the experiences of the residential school. But in terms of projects by organizations, I don't- there weren't any while I was at the Oblates and then at the Centre, it would have been the ones I mentioned. But in terms of projects, there was like digitization projects of photographs, processing the materials, and acquiring, getting, getting the records in. Which includes also the women religious congregations who had archival records pertaining to residential schools. And so, in those cases with women religious, it was basically all very well-described when it came in. So that wasn't a lot of work to do, except making those descriptions then available through the database.

JA: Okay, sorry, go ahead.

GL: I'm sorry, and doing some digitization of the records because they weren't done either.

01:57:30 - JA: Right. Okay, okay, perfect. You bring up acquisitions and I forgot to ask earlier, can you describe the process of how you actually acquired the record- the Manitoba provincial school records from Deschâtelets to St. Boniface?

01:57:50 – GL: Yeah, well, I talked about it a little bit. It was at a time when we were negotiating with the Grey Nuns for the transfer of their archives. And at one point, it seemed like that was something that was going to materialize and that they would be transferring them. But all of a sudden they changed their mind and it went to Montreal. And so, at that point, we made a lot of, well, to say it simply, we made a big fuss about it [laughs], and one thing that was done was to write up a *mémoire* [a brief]<sup>14</sup>, an argument to say it should stay in St. Boniface. We also sought the support from different organizations, and we got the support of the Association of Quebec Archivists, we got the support of Gabriel Moss, I think, from the- he was at that time, I think President of La Commission franco-québécoise sur Les Lieux de Mémoires Communs in Quebec, for Francophones. Anyways, we had a broad support to argue and put pressure on the Grey Nuns to keep the records here [laughs]. But it didn't work. But then the thing we did do at one point is have a meeting of all the representatives of the women religious congregations, which included the Oblates at that time, to talk about the importance of those records, the importance of keeping them here as opposed to sending them, in some cases that could have gone to France, for example, if it went to the Mother House. And to argue about also the importance of making it available, in the end, I mean, those records are made to make- to be made available for research, but also to- the point was made that their activities in Manitoba, if they are going to be known and promoted, have to be documented, and the documentation has to be available. So anyways, it was in the course of those discussions that I think the administration of the Oblate province of Manitoba, they started to think about whether or not they should transfer the records from Deschâtelets to St. Boniface. And they were the ones who made the initiative at that point to let us know that they would be ready to do that. And at that time, we

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<sup>14</sup> Additional post-interview comments added by interviewee.

were also working very closely with the Metis National Council and the Manitoba Metis Federation on Metis research project, and acquiring documentation to make research on the Metis more easily available, more available, including getting records from Keewatin-Le Pas, but also, they ended up supporting us financially for the transfer of the records from Deschâtelets to St. Boniface. So yeah, that's pretty much how things went.

02:01:42 – JA: Okay. And how much of activism over residential schools at, at that time, was that, influenced you or anyone else's decision or arguments to relocate the records here?

02:02:00 – GL: Well, that would've been part of it. I mean, it wasn't the only reason. But it was certainly part of it. There was a lot of interest for residential schools in the 90s, and then it's kind of diminished, and occasionally there would be requests to see records, not necessarily for- I mean some people came to see photographs, for example, because they knew there would've been members of their family in the photographs, and they had no pictures of them. So it may or may not be with, you know, pertaining to residential schools. [Redacted]. And, but, there weren't many requests. I think there was a lot more research being done in the 90s as opposed to the early 2000s. What else? [Pause] But yeah, I- the Oblates did mention that one of the reasons they were transferring the records was for purposes of reconciliation.

02:04:00 – JA: Okay. Did they give a detail about that? Like, did they give explanation behind that?

02:04:10 – GL: Ah, no. There was no, I mean it was an intent, it was not, nothing specific in terms of how that was going to happen. And, I mean, the thing at the Centre du Patrimoine, with limited resources in terms of financial resources, and available funding for projects, for digitization, for example, there were a number of things that could be done, but then also other things that were limited just because we didn't have enough, enough personnel. And, also- but I mean, one of the things that was done to was to at least put on the website information on the residential schools that had been managed by the provincial- Oblate Province of Manitoba. And again, that would have meant, meant residential schools in southern Saskatchewan, southern Manitoba, and north-western Ontario, because of the fact that this was limited to the Oblate Province of Manitoba.

JA: Okay.

GL: Yeah, those were the main, I guess, those were basically the projects that were done with the records at that time.

02:05:50 - JA: Okay. Alright, maybe- I want us to go back to the first couple of questions. So, when you became director of le Centre, were you dealing directly with communities and Survivors trying to access records or were you doing, or was that more of when you were the main archivist?

GL: You mean that the St. Boniface Historical Society?

JA: Exactly, yes.

02:06:26 – GL: Yeah. Well, I would've been, but again, as I said, this was usually only on an individual basis, and lot of the time, that was request for access, but was not at least not specified that it was for residential schools. [Redacted]. What we were more involved in terms of projects was with the Metis.

02:08:02 – JA: Okay. Alright. I just have one or two more questions. I think you kind of have answered this, but do you feel that reference requests for Oblate school records have been impacted by different forms of activism over the years? I think you were saying that like in the 90s there was an increase in references, but not so much in the 2000s. Would you say that maybe by, [clears throat] excuse me, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, either during this process or after it was, it's final report was published, did you see any increases or changes in requests for the school records?

02:08:58 – GL: When- during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the requests were for- there were meetings that were organized that, for example, at the Forks, and the women religious congregations or some of them anyways, organized albums with photographs to make them available to the people who were there. And, for the Oblates, I mean that's something that could've been done, but there was no nobody available to organize this and process this and make them available. So, but again, it would have been at the initiative of the archives. There was no requests. Well, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there were number of requests for copies of documents. At one time, they were interested in the photographs and the thing is we were not funded, like we didn't have the funding and the Oblates were not involved in that. So, we made available- there were images available on the web through the database which were made available, and at that point, it would've been a question of who would have done the work.

02:10:53 – JA: Okay, okay fair enough. Just one more question. Do you know how Survivor and community researchers have responded to the work, Either what you've done as kind of your day-to-day work as the archivist or director or to any specific projects with school records?

GL: Can you repeat the question, please?

JA: Yeah, sorry. Basically, how have Survivors or communities who have researched with records, how have they responded to your work at le Centre?

GL: You mean generally?

JA: Yeah. In general.

02:11:45 – GL: Well, I think it was appreciated. I know for donors, they were very appreciative of the fact that there was a place to donate them and that there was interest to preserve and make accessible those records. I think most organizations, like Francophone organizations, have transferred the records, except for those who would have an archivist in their own institutions such as the St. Boniface University. And the Union nationale, like I mentioned, which is the only French speaking Metis organization, have transferred their archives. So, in that sense, I think it was quite appreciated. And a lot of projects were done using the archives. People had easy access

to the extent that they could use the archives, do research with the archives, copy archives. That was not a problem.

02:13:08 - JA: Okay. Alright, just, we're towards the end of our time, so I think unless there is anything else you want to mention, either in response to questions I've asked or anything you want to mention in general, we can probably conclude our interview for today.

02:13:28 – GL: Yeah, no, I think I don't have anything to add. Or at least I don't think if anything I should ask, add [laughs].

02:13:40 – JA: Okay. Alright. Alright, so I will conclude us here. This concludes my interview with Gilles Lesage. I am Jackson Anderson and it is May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

[02:14:02 – Interview ends]

Note:

This transcript includes feedback sent by the interviewee. The majority of this feedback is spelling corrections or minor clarifications found throughout the entire transcript. However, the interviewee also provided additional information relevant to the original interview. I have noted these passages with footnotes.

## Appendix B: Sample Consent Form

Note: Contact information has been removed to comply with MSpace submission standards.

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**Research Project Title:** Research Interview for “Records of Manitoban Residential Schools in Oblate Archives”.

You are invited you to participate in a research study conducted by the Principal Investigator Jackson Anderson (Graduate Student in the Joint Master’s Program in Archival Studies and History at the University of Manitoba). Jackson can be reached at [removed] while his research supervisor, Dr. Greg Bak, can be reached at [removed].

As we previously discussed, you are invited to participate in a 1-to-3-hour long interview as part of the research for a master’s thesis on the records of Manitoba-based residential schools operated by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The purpose of this research interview is to produce data to be used for a M.A. Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Greg Bak. This thesis will fulfill requirements for a Master’s in Arts in the Archival Studies stream of History in the Joint-Master’s Program of the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg. Data that I intend on producing includes the custodial and management histories of Oblate residential school records across various archival institutions and contextual information about these archives that may not be evident in textual documentation from or about the archives but that the participant may know through his working experiences. You will be asked questions about your experiences and perspectives related to the custodial and management histories of Oblate school records, the history of Oblate archiving in Canada alongside broader Catholic archival policies and practices, and archival projects working with Oblate school records. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. It is always up to you to participate or not as you choose, before or during the interview or the follow-up, if it should occur.

Please note that you are there only intended participant for this study. There is no pressure for you to participate and you have the right to decline your participation. If you decline, I will look for another appropriate participant.

The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed with your consent. As this interview will likely occur during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, it will be conducted remotely as to protect the health and safety of everyone involved. We will select an audio-video teleconferencing service such as Zoom or MS Teams over which we will conduct and record the interview. Our service of choice will be based on what provides the best overall technical quality and our technical set-ups. I will record the interview using either a built-in recording system or a third-party recording software, again depending on technical quality and technical set-ups, as well as a Zoom H4n Handy Recorder that I will place beside my computer's audio in case of technical failure.

You have the option to waive your anonymity and use your real name in data produced by the interview. You also have the option to remain confidential. If you choose to do so, your name and location will not appear in the transcript or be referenced in any material obtained from the interview. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name. If a third party is mentioned by name, or if information mentioned would make it easy to identify a person specifically, I will remove this from my data or ask the person(s) to sign a consent form before I can include the data in my thesis, any other publications, and deposit of interview files in archives. All the audio recordings and transcripts will become the property of Jackson Anderson who will keep the contents on a UM Teams folder which will only be accessed through his password secured computer. To ensure respect for you is always maintained, you will not be discussed in public, but my supervisor Dr. Greg Bak will have access to all data and confidential information through UM Teams due to University of Manitoba regulations. There are, however, limitations to confidentiality, given that you will be the only participant and that the specific expertise and work experiences you may relay in the interview might allow for someone to identify you.

You will have the right to review the interview, either as an audio file or as a transcript file. I will offer to send you the audio files one to three days after the interview and the transcript files after transcription is complete, about three to four weeks after the interview. I will use the UM-licensed, web browser version of the Yuja Video service to generate a first draft of the transcript that I will then manually edit. I will share these files with you remotely through Sharepoint. As I anticipate submitting my final thesis draft in October 2022, you will have up until that month to review the interview files and submit feedback. If I do not receive a response from you before that deadline, I will use the original files for any of the submissions that we agree to in this form (i.e. deposit in archives, inclusion of transcript as an appendix to thesis). All files will still be edited to ensure your confidentiality if you select that option.

All audio recordings, transcription files, and research notes will be stored on a secured UM Teams folder. The memory card of the audio recorder will be emptied after the recordings have been uploaded. I will retain copies of these files until the completion of research and the depositing the recordings into any archives that you consent to. After this, I will remove all data from UM Teams. Estimated date of data deletion is 10-2022. I will retain a copy of this consent form on a secure UM Teams folder. If you choose not to waive your anonymity, I will edit all files accordingly and delete any data that includes your name and location.

To review the immediate post-interview data process, I will download onto my computer an audio file of the interview from our teleconferencing service of choice, move this file onto the secured MS Teams folder, and briefly review its audio quality. Please note that some of these services such as Zoom automatically produce video and other non-audio files of recorded meetings. I will delete all these additional files once I have retrieved and stored the audio file. I will also upload the files from the hand recorder and wipe the recorder's memory at this stage. Next, I will upload a copy of the audio recording to UM Yuja video in a web browser to generate a first draft of the transcript. Once the transcript is generated, I will download it, store on the Teams folder, quickly review its quality, and remove the audio file from UM Yuja.

The research results will be disseminated through my M.A. thesis, which will first be reviewed by the defense committee before being made publicly available on MS Space. This thesis will satisfy requirements for me to complete my M.A. in archival studies. Prior to submitting the final draft of my M.A. thesis, I will offer to provide you a summary of how the interview has been incorporated into the thesis. This would include direct and in-direct quotes from the interview, my interpretations of different interview content, integration with the interview and other relevant sources, and a copy of the interview transcript as an appendix to the thesis if you consent to its inclusion. I will share this with you remotely through Sharepoint. As I intend to submit the final thesis draft in October 2022, I will provide these files at some point in early September 2022. You will have two weeks after I share the files to review and request any changes. I will also inform you of any relevant edits I make to the thesis draft between sharing the files and this deadline. After incorporating your feedback, you can request a copy of the thesis in its final state. If I do not receive a response from you after the two-week deadline, I will submit the thesis as it is, though it will still be edited to ensure your confidentiality if you select that option.

With your consent, a copy of the transcript will be included as an appendix for my M.A. thesis. If you provide consent, a copy of the interview audio clip and transcript will be stewarded in the archives of le Centre du Patrimoine and the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation. You can place restrictions on how interview files can be access and used through access/use agreements with either archive. If you wish to do so, we can contact these organizations to negotiate and finalize these agreements.

A potential benefit for participating is the opportunity to reflect on and share your personal experiences as a working archivist in your words. Archiving your interview may also be beneficial for both the le Centre du patrimoine in having an in-depth record of their organization's history from your perspective and for the National Center for Truth and

Reconciliation in having access to details about the custodial and managerial histories of major residential school record collections.

There are also several potential risks associated with participating. As asking questions about residential school records may lead to discussions about the history and legacies of the residential school system, there are emotional risks in having these discussions given the nature of these subjects. To minimize emotional discomfort in discussing these subjects, I have designed the research questions to focus on the institutional histories and policies surrounding school records rather than on the experiences and trauma of Survivors and communities. As well, as both this interview and my broader research relates to histories of colonization and genocide against Indigenous peoples, there is a potential for my research to misrepresent Indigenous experiences and perspectives and perpetuate harm against Indigenous peoples. To minimize harm to Indigenous communities, especially residential school Survivors, I have designed the research questions to focus on the institutional histories and policies surrounding school records rather than on the experiences and trauma of Survivors and communities. As well, I will request of you prior to the interview to not identify, directly or indirectly any children, vulnerable individuals, and other third parties that have not signed a consent form. If a third party is mentioned by name, or if information mentioned would make it easy to identify a person specifically, I will remove this from my data or ask the person(s) to sign a consent form before I can include the data in my thesis or any other publications. Finally, to mitigate any general harm for you as a participant, all the interview(s) will be arranged at your convenience and may be concluded at any time at your request. You can also decline to answer any question(s) or withdraw from the study without consequence two weeks before I submit the final copy of my thesis. As I anticipate submitting my thesis on October 10, 2022, the deadline will be September 26, 2022. As explained, you will be given the opportunity, within a set limit of time, to review the thesis to increase the participation, share authority with participants, and ensure errors or misinterpretations of the information that has been provided can be rectified prior to publication.

If any of these risks arise for you, you can contact the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Adult Mobile Crisis Service (204-940-1781) or the Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-800-721-0066).

If a problematic situation arises, I will consult with my supervisor, Dr. Greg Bak, and if needed, will contact the Human Ethics Officer at the UM for guidance and conflict resolution strategies.

You have the right to withdraw from the study without consequence two weeks before I submit the final copy of my thesis. As I anticipate submitting my thesis on October 10, 2022, the deadline will be September 26, 2022.

Please note that the the University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any**

time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. You will have opportunities to review the recording and transcript and identify areas for exclusion or subsequent clarification. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. Please note that your participation is voluntary and there will be no monetary remuneration. This research has been approved by the Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Please check one:  I agree to participate in the study as described above.

I do not agree to participate in the study as described above.

Please check one:  I grant permission for the interview to be recorded.

I do not grant permission for the interview to be recorded.

Please check one:  I grant permission for the interview to be transcribed.

I do not grant permission for the interview to be transcribed.

Please check one:  I grant permission to waive my anonymity and for the use of my real name.

I wish to remain confidential.

Please check one:  I grant permission for including the transcript as an appendix of Jackson Anderson's M.A. thesis.

I do not grant permission for including the transcript as an appendix of Jackson Anderson's M.A. thesis.

Please check one:  I agree to deposit at le Centre du patrimoine **without restrictions.**

I agree to archival deposit at le Centre du patrimoine **subject to restrictions.**

I do not agree to archival deposit at the le Centre du patrimoine.

Please check one: \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to deposit at the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation **without restrictions.**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to archival deposit at the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation **subject to restrictions.**

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not agree** to archival deposit at the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **acknowledge** that I have the right to change my decisions regarding the use and depositing of my interview after the interview has taken place.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researchers Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_