



Ahousaht, British Columbia, students in the school cafeteria. British Columbia Archives, PN-15589.

their accuracy. “In almost every instance when meals are mentioned by Inspectors they are said to be well cooked. I doubt very much whether they ever took a full regulation school meal of bread and dripping, or boiled beef and potatoes.” In Benson’s opinion, “The bill of fare is decidedly monotonous and makes no allowance for peculiarities of taste or constitution.”³²²

When funding was cut during the Depression of the 1930s, it was the students who paid the price—in more ways than one. At the end of the 1930s, it was discovered that the cook at the Presbyterian school at Kenora was actually selling bread to the students, at the rate of ten cents a loaf. When asked if the children got enough to eat at meals, she responded, “Yes, but they were always hungry.” The Indian agent ordered an end to the practice.³²³ The fact that hungry students would be reduced to buying bread to supplement their meals in 1939 highlights the government’s failure to provide schools with the resources needed to feed students adequately.

Milk was in constant shortage at many schools, in part due to the poor health and small size of the school dairy herds.³²⁴ As late as 1937, disease among the cows at the Kamloops school had cut milk production by 50%. To the principal’s frustration, Ottawa refused to fund the construction of an additional barn, which would have allowed for an increase in milk production and the isolation of sick animals.³²⁵ Even when the dairy herds were