

Many qualified and experienced people worked in the schools. Miss Asson, the matron at the Kitamaat school in 1930, was a graduate of the Ensworth Deaconess Hospital in St. Joseph, Missouri. She had also trained as a deaconess in Toronto, and worked in China from 1909 to 1927.⁵⁹⁴ The matron at the Anglican Wabasca, Alberta, school in 1933 was a nurse.⁵⁹⁵ Among the staff at the Norway House school in the early twentieth century were the sisters Charlotte Amelia and Lilian Yeomans. Charlotte had trained as a nurse, and Lilian was one of the first women in Canada to qualify as a doctor.⁵⁹⁶ Theresa Reid had four years of teaching experience and a teaching certificate before she applied to work at Norway House,⁵⁹⁷ George Takashima had a teaching certificate,⁵⁹⁸ and Olive Saunders had a university degree and several years of teaching experience.⁵⁹⁹ In 1966, E. O. Drouin, the principal of the Roman Catholic school in Cardston, boasted that out of the twenty-one people on his staff, ten had university degrees. Drouin, himself, had left his position as a university professor to go to work at the school.⁶⁰⁰

A number of people devoted their adult lives to working in residential schools. At least twelve principals died in office.⁶⁰¹ Kuper Island principal George Donckele resigned in January 1907; by June of that year, he was dead.⁶⁰² Sherman Shepherd served at the Anglican schools in Shingle Point on the Arctic Ocean in the Yukon, Aklavik (Northwest Territories), Fort George (Québec), and Moose Factory (Ontario), resigning in 1954 after twenty-five years of service in northern Canada.⁶⁰³ Others worked into their old age, since, due to low pay, their savings were also low and pensions were minimal. When the seventy-three-year-old matron of the Ahousaht school in British Columbia retired in 1929, Principal W. M. Wood recommended that she be given an honorarium of a month's salary as appreciation for her years of service. Woods noted that she was "retiring with very limited means."⁶⁰⁴

Such long service was not the norm. Because the pay was often low and the working and living conditions were difficult, turnover was high throughout the system's history. From 1882 to 1894, there was what amounted to an annual full turnover of teachers at the Fort Simpson (now Port Simpson), British Columbia, school. At one point, all the teaching



The chief cook at Lapointe Hall in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories. The schools were highly dependent on female labour. Northwest Territories Archives, N-1992-255-0144.