



Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers), also known as Peter Jones, in 1832. He was an Ojibway chief who worked with Methodist officials to establish the Mount Elgin residential school in Muncey, Ontario. He died before the school opened. Toronto Public Library, X2-25.

to Protestantism.⁷⁸ In the 1820s, John West, an Anglican missionary from England, opened a boarding school for Aboriginal students at Red River.⁷⁹ Although these efforts also failed to take root, in 1834, the Mohawk Institute, a mission school on the Grand River in what is now Ontario, began taking in boarders.⁸⁰ This school would remain in operation until 1970.⁸¹

In 1847, Egerton Ryerson, the superintendent of schools for Upper Canada, recommended the establishment of residential schools in which Aboriginal students would be given instruction in “English language, arithmetic, elementary geometry, or knowledge of forms, geography and the elements of general history, natural history and agricultural chemistry, writing, drawing and vocal music, book-keeping (especially in reference to farmers’ accounts) religion and morals.”⁸² This he thought of as “a plain English education adapted to the working farmer and

mechanic. In this their object is identical with that of every good common school.” Pupils should be “taught agriculture, kitchen gardening, and mechanics, so far as mechanics is connected with making and repairing the most useful agricultural implements.”⁸³

After the release of Ryerson’s report, Methodist missionaries operated a number of boarding schools in southern Ontario in the 1850s.⁸⁴ One of them, the Mount Elgin school at Munceytown (later, Muncey), did not close until 1946.⁸⁵ The first of what would be a string of Roman Catholic residential schools in what is now British Columbia opened in the early 1860s.⁸⁶ A school in Fort Providence in what is now the Northwest Territories began taking in students in 1867.⁸⁷

The colonization of the Northwest

After the Canadian state was established in 1867, the federal government began making small per-student grants to many of the church-run boarding schools. Federal government involvement in residential schooling did not begin in earnest until the 1880s. The catalyst for this expansion was the 1870 transfer of much of contemporary Alberta, Saskatchewan,