

It is also apparent that many key people within the system had little knowledge of the existing rules and regulations. In 1922, an Indian agent in Hagersville, Ontario, inquired of departmental headquarters if there had been any changes in the regulations regarding education since the adoption of a set of education regulations in 1908. His question suggests he was completely unaware of major changes to the *Indian Act* regarding education that had supplanted previous regulations in 1920.<sup>140</sup> In 1926, J. K. Irwin, the newly appointed principal of the Gordon's school in Saskatchewan, discovered upon taking office that he could not find any "laid down regulations as to the duties and powers of a Principal of an Indian Boarding School." He wrote to Indian Affairs, asking for a copy of such regulations, since he wanted to know "exactly what I am to do and what powers I have."<sup>141</sup> Departmental secretary J. D. McLean informed him that "there are no printed regulations concerning the duties and powers of the principal of an Indian residential school."<sup>142</sup>

The system was so unregulated that in 1968, after Canada had been funding residential schools for 101 years, Indian Affairs Deputy Minister J. A. MacDonald announced, "For the first time we have set down in a precise and detailed manner the criteria which is to be used in future in determining whether or not an Indian child is eligible for these institutions."<sup>143</sup>

## Expansion and decline

From the 1880s onwards, residential school enrolment climbed annually. According to federal government annual reports, the peak enrolment of 11,539 was reached in the 1956–57 school year.<sup>144</sup> (For trends, see Graph 1.) Most of the residential schools were located in the northern and western regions of the country. With the exception of Mount Elgin and the Mohawk Institute, the Ontario schools were all in northern or northwestern Ontario. The only school in the Maritimes did not open until 1930.<sup>145</sup> Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries opened the first two schools in Québec in the early 1930s.<sup>146</sup> It was not until later in that decade that the federal government began funding these schools.<sup>147</sup>

The number of schools began to decline in the 1940s. Between 1940 and 1950, for example, ten school buildings were destroyed by fire.<sup>148</sup> As Graph 2 illustrates, this decrease was reversed in the mid-1950s, when the federal department of Northern Affairs and National Resources dramatically expanded the school system in the Northwest Territories and northern Québec. Prior to that time, residential schooling in the North was largely restricted to the Yukon and the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories. Large residences were built in communities such as Inuvik, Yellowknife, Whitehorse, Churchill, and eventually Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay). This expansion was undertaken despite reports that recommended against the establishment of residential schools, since they would not provide children with the skills necessary to live in the North, skills they otherwise would have acquired in their home communities.<sup>149</sup> The creation of the large hostels