

Hello Rev. McKenzie. It's 2022! And I'm Holly. I grew up on a farm south of Deloraine. I'm doing a school history project and read in a Vantage Points book that you and your wife lived here in the 1890s. And that you started a school, on IR60, the Turtle Mountain reserve.

Thank-you for thinking of us Holly. Let me explain, that the West was newly settled at the time, by folks like me from Eastern Canada. My wife and I saw how impoverished Indians on the reserve were becoming, because of how settlement was happening.

So, you wanted to help the Indigenous folks who were displaced?

Yes. Holly. Across Canada, churches started mission schools for Indian children. Most were Residential schools. Ours was a day school, right on the reserve. Here, I'll quote from a promotional pamphlet I wrote in 1892. Aghem. "It's a sad fact, that even though we have church-run schools across the land, we still have 55,000 non-Christian Indians. We as Christian people have an obligation to look after the physical and spiritual interests of the Indians. Primarily, because we've taken their country."

What, Rev. McKenzie, was the purpose of this pamphlet?



My wife and I worked with the Christian Endeavor Society, Holly. We asked youth, from every church in Deloraine, for monthly

contributions to go toward paying a teacher. We empowered youth to get involved in a nation-wide plan to Christianize and assimilate every Indian. We, settlers, were becoming wealthy. Clearly, we needed to share from our success.

Rev. McKenzie. I'm hearing from Indigenous voices about how Canada intentionally disadvantaged their people, in your day and in mine. These days, Indigenous leaders are asserting that land, hunting rights and self-government be returned, and honoured again.

Oh my, Holly. Those ideas certainly didn't enter our minds. We weren't inclined to interfere with the government's work. Our day school became well known and was emulated across this province. We were on a mission! We proceeded with what we knew.

But like you said, Rev. McKenzie, it's because land was taken, that the poverty exists. What did the IR60 leaders say they needed?

Hmm. I suppose, whatever we offered, Holly. I at one point came across a steely eyed man on the reserve who was lamenting bitterly. When I asked why, he replied. 'I see life fading away. Once we had everything, all the land and all the game. Now we have no land and no game.' My wife and I were compelled to help. Education and salvation is what we had to offer. But, sadly, the Indian Agent didn't want a Dakota reserve near to the American border. So, the school was closed and residents were moved north to Pipestone and Oak Lake.

So, Rev. you're saying that even what little land they had was taken.

Yes, Holly. Perhaps we did too little, but we did what we thought was right. And you? What are you doing?

Mission School was adapted from a story in Vantage Points 5.