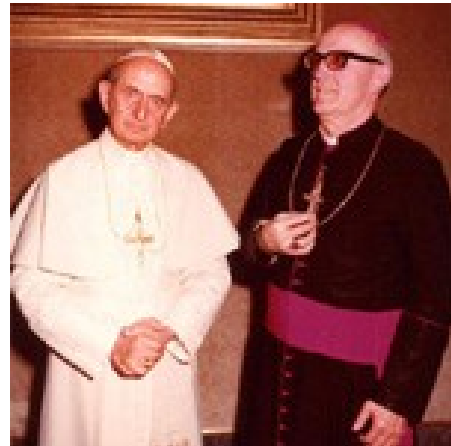


HISTORY OF ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL

St. Joseph's School has had a long, interesting history. In 1956, Most Reverend John Fergus O'Grady, O.M.I., was ordained Bishop and appointed Vicar Apostolic of Prince Rupert by Pope Pius XII. Our diocese was still a missionary territory at the time and only had four Catholic schools in northern BC. Bishop O'Grady valued Catholic education and he realized there was a need for more schools.

In four years the number of schools increased to thirteen; St. Joseph's School amongst them.

Fundraising was organized by the Catholic Men's Club, except for a federal grant of \$124,000. The building of the school began in 1958 on two lots on First Avenue. Floyd Laughlin was asked to clear the land under the government's permission (clearing the wrong land first). Fr. John Callaly, the parish priest, organized workers to build it, while Bishop O'Grady sent some materials from Prince George. Tim McTague did the plumbing and steam fitting for the heat and John Stroet did the concrete sidewalk in front of the school. Other volunteer men from the Men's Club helped to build the rest of the structure.



The school opened in the summer of 1959. At this time the school consisted of one long hallway with eight classrooms, office, library, and gym. The parish priest lived in what is now the office and because the church had not yet been built, weekend mass was held in the gym and weekday mass was held in the chapel which is the present day kindergarten room.

In addition to the building of the school, a new convent (currently the rectory) was built for the Sisters of the Holy Cross, from eastern Canada. Six sisters arrived to begin the school year along with one lay teacher as part of the movement known as the Frontier Apostles. This movement, begun by Bishop O'Grady to help build and run schools, continued into the early 90's. Many of the FA's that taught in the school settled down in the Smithers area and still have close ties to St. Joseph's School and parish.

With the opening of the school came new challenges: how to cover the cost of running a school? The



government did not financially support independent schools, but did provide text books. The tuition at that time was \$7 per child or \$15 per family per month. This, along with parish support, and FA stipends of only \$20 to \$30 a month covered the school financially.

When the school first opened, there were about 200 students, many from Moricetown. The school remained unchanged until 1966 with the building of two new classrooms and the hallway leading to the French room which housed showers, a nurse's station, a classroom, and two washrooms. There were 315 students from kindergarten to grade 8. At one time, the school housed students to grade 10.

In 1976, an agreement with the town was made and the street in front of the school was blocked off and the existing playground was set up. The town and school had access to the new playground and ball field. In 1982 a long hallway with two classrooms and washrooms were built on the north side of the main building. Since that time, we have renovated the computer room and library, extended the French/music room and created more gym storage.

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