

before Jennings

LE Jac Indian Residential School Inquiry,
March 2nd and 3rd, 1937.

Witness: Provincial Constable Jennings in charge of Vanderhoof Provincial Police Detachment.
Place: Vanderhoof Police Office.
Date: March 1st, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- I will read the evidence according to this report as given by you at Fort Fraser, B. C. on January 4th, 1937, before Coroner C. Pitts, M.D. and jury enquiring into the death of four Indian Boys, Allen Patrick, Andrew H. Paul, Justa Maurice and John Michel Jack, pupils of Le Jac Indian Res. School and who left the School after 4:30 p.m. on January 1st, 1937 for "Nautley" Indian Reserve.
Commissioner MacKay reads the evidence.

Commissioner:- Is this your evidence?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Would it be difficult to search for lost or missing persons in that area?

Witness:- No. There are three straight routes to travel; the Lake, the main road, and the railway.

Commissioner:- When were you notified of the tragedy?

Witness:- At 8:05 p.m. January 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner:- When were the bodies found?

Witness:- At 5:30 p.m. on January 2nd.

Commissioner:- Do you think the interval between the time the bodies were found and the time you were notified was unnecessarily long?

Witness:- No. There could be good reasons for the delay.

Commissioner:- How far did the children travel?

Witness:- Approximately 7½ miles.

Commissioner:- How long would you say it took the children to travel the distance from the School to where their bodies were found?

Witness:- From 6 to 8 hours, probably the latter. The children were only little tots and would become fatigued after the first 3 miles which they would probably make in less than 3 hours. The balance of the distance would take them longer. The longer they travelled the slower the pace and besides the walking was not easy.

Commissioner:- What was the depth of snow on the lake?

Witness:- Five inches, the part next to the ice was wet and slushy.

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Commissioner:- You stated in your evidence the snow was packed for a radius of ten feet around where three of the bodies were found, what caused this?

Witness:- The children were so fatigued they could not go on, and they trampled the snow around where they stood before they collapsed.

Commissioner:- If a search party had been organized at 9:15 p.m. or as late as 10 p.m. on January 1st, do you think the children could have been saved?

Witness:- I certainly do.

Commissioner:- When do you think the children died?

Witness:- I would say around midnight on January 1st, or later.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

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Witness: - Harry Paul, father of Andrew Paul, one of the four school boys frozen to death on Fraser Lake.
Place:- In the home of Louie George, Fraser Lake Band, Indian.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937. at Nautley I. Reserve.

Commissioner MacKay:- Your boy Andrew Paul was eight years old and attended school?

Harry Paul:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When was the first time you heard your boy was missing?

Harry Paul:- January 2nd at 3 o'clock.

Commissioner:- Who told you this?

Harry Paul:- The people here.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Harry Paul:- I did not do anything.

Commissioner:- When did you hear your boy was frozen to death?

Harry Paul:- January 2nd between five and six o'clock.

Commissioner:- Did you go then to the lake?

Harry Paul:- Yes.

Commissioner:- How was he lying on the ice?

Harry Paul:- Face down. One boy on top crossways, my boy face down couple of feet away.

Commissioner:- Was the snow tramped around?

Harry Paul:- Yes, the boys had tramped the snow down.

Commissioner:- Did your boy have heavy clothing on?

Harry Paul:- No, just summer clothing.

Commissioner:- Had he a hat on?

Harry Paul:- No hat and one rubber was missing and his foot bare.

Commissioner:- Were the boys frozen hard?

Harry Paul:- About one half frozen.

Commissioner:- Did they bend when picked up?

Harry Paul:- Just one half frozen.

Commissioner:- Did your boy at any time complain about the treatment received at the School?

Harry Paul:- He told me he liked to stay there. He had good treatment there.

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Commissioner:- Did your boy run away from the School any time before?

Harry Paul:- No, he liked to stay in the School.

Commissioner:- Have you heard any time from other boys about bad treatment at the School?

Harry Paul:- I don't know much about that.

Commissioner:- Were you at the School on New Year's Day?

Harry Paul:- No, not me or any of my friends.

Commissioner:- No one he could have come home with?

Harry Paul:- No.

Commissioner:- How long do you think it took the boys to walk from the School to where they were found?

Harry Paul:- Seven or eight hours, hard walking in four or five inches of snow. Lots of water under snow in places.

Commissioner:- They could not make more than about one mile per hour then?

Harry Paul:- No.

Commissioner:- If the School authorities had organised a search party at 9:30 do you think the boys could have been found that night?

Harry Paul:- Yes, I think we could have found them alive if a whole bunch had gone out to look for them.

Commissioner:- Even at 9:30 or 10 o'clock.

Harry Paul:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Some time before when boys were missing from School was it long before a search was made for them?

Harry Paul:- I don't know.

Commissioner:- You haven't anything against the School at all?

Harry Paul:- No.

Commissioner:- The children did well there?

Harry Paul:- The big boys come home to visit on Sundays and I think the young boys should be allowed to come home some times too as they get very restless there.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

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Witness:- Sylvester Patrick, step father of Allen P. Willie,
one of the four boys frozen to death on Fraser Lake.
Place:- In the home of Louie George, Fraser Lake, Indian.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937. at Nautley I. Res.

Commissioner MacKay:- How old was your boy?

Sylvester Patrick:- Eight and three quarters.

Commissioner:- Was he healthy?

S. Patrick:- Never sick.

Commissioner:- Had you heard any complaints from him regarding treatment received while at the School?

S. Patrick:- He said he did not get proper food.

Commissioner:- Did he say anything about being punished at any time?

S. Patrick:- He did not complain.

Commissioner:- When were you notified the boy was missing?

S. Patrick:- I was out working then, when I got home at 4 P.M. January 2nd, then I heard.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

S. Patrick:- They started a search party. I stayed at home.

Commissioner:- When you heard about the boys being dead what did you do?

S. Patrick:- I phoned Father McGrath.

Commissioner:- What then?

S. Patrick:- We waited till the Police came.

Commissioner:- Where was your boy?

S. Patrick:- My boy was about 75 feet away lying face down with coat under him. He just had summer clothing on and some kind of a bennet. He was the only one with a cap on. He had running shoes on with no rubbers.

Commissioner:- How long do you think it was between the time the boys left the School till they reached the place where they were found.

S. Patrick:- About 8 hours.

Commissioner:- They walked slowly?

S. Patrick:- It was hard even for men to walk on the lake.

Commissioner:- Was it cold?

S. Patrick:- About 30 below.

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Commissioner:- Did your boy ever run away from the School before?

S. Patrick:- When he was a little boy and first went to the School another boy got him to run away with him. He was taken back and never ran away after that.

Commissioner:- Did he complain about the School?

S. Patrick:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Because he was punished,

S. Patrick:- No, he did not like the School.

Commissioner:- Do the teachers punish the children there?

S. Patrick:- Most of the time.

Commissioner:- You were punished yourself.

S. Patrick:- Yes.

Commissioner:- How were you punished?

S. Patrick:- With straps, sticks or anything.

Commissioner:- Do you mean you were strapped on the bare hands?

S. Patrick:- Yes, we were strapped on the bare hands and sometimes they would take our pants down and give us a good licking.

Commissioner:- Were they very severe?

S. Patrick:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Who did the punishing?

S. Patrick:- The sisters did quite a lot of it.

Commissioner:- Is there any sister at the School now whom you knew who punished the children herself?

S. Patrick:- Yes, Sister Michelas, punished too hard. She was my teacher at Fort St. James when I was at the School there.

Commissioner:- If the School authorities had organised a search party at 9 or 10 o'clock do you think the boys could have been found and saved?

S. Patrick:- Yes, I think so.

Commissioner:- Do the School authorities usually wait long before starting to search for missing boys?

S. Patrick:- Just the same when boys ran away when I was there.

Commissioner:- You think there is excessive punishment from time to time?

S. Patrick:- Yes, I think so.

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Witness:- Charley Charley who first found the bodies of the four boys frozen on Fraser Lake.
Place:- In the home of Louie George, Fraser Lake, Indian, at Nautley I. R.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- You live here?

Charley Charley:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When did you first hear the boys were missing?

C. Charley:- I heard January 2nd when I got back about 3 or 4 P.M.

Commissioner:- Who asked you to go and search?

C. Charley:- The boys' parents.

Commissioner:- Did Father McGrath speak to you?

C. Charley:- No. Justa Morris boy want with me. I went by way of Gerhardt's place and then across the lake to Encombe. I picked up the tracks on the South side of the lake by the big point. I saw the tracks of four boys. The boy of Justa Morris was with me when I found them.

Commissioner:- Three bodies together and one farther on?

C. Charley:- Yes.

Commissioner:- You followed the tracks; Yes: Did they go straight?

C. Charley:- When I picked them up they went straight to the light that was at the Village.

Commissioner:- They got to within half a mile from here?

C. Charley:- Yes, half a mile from here.

Commissioner:- What was their course on the lake?

C. Charley:- They came to the mouth of the river and it was open water and they turned back when they step in and get wet and they turn back to Beaumont's Beach and I find them about one quarter mile from there. I think they had all been in the water. They had tramped the snow down and scraped some away and put down sweater on ice then one lay on top of sweater and one on top of him and one close by and one 25 feet away.

Commissioner:- How long would it take the boys to walk from the School to where you found them?

C. Charley:- I cannot tell that. I think they would go about one mile an hour and it was about 7 miles.

Commissioner:- If the School had started a search party at 9 or 10 o'clock do you think the boys would have been found alive?

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C. Charley:- Yes. If they had gone and looked right away they could have found them easy but it was too late when they looked.

Commissioner:- Have you a boy in School?

C. Charley:- Yes, one boy 13 years old.

Commissioner:- Does he complain about the treatment there?

C. Charley:- All right but sometimes they whip them too hard.

Commissioner:- Who whips them?

C. Charley:- The Sister does the whipping. The teacher does the whipping. Not the Priest.

Commissioner:- Are they whipped many times?

C. Charley:- Just sometimes.

Commissioner:- How, on hands?

C. Charley:- Yes, on hands but sometimes on backside too but not many that way.

Commissioner:- Does your boy like the School?

C. Charley:- Yes, but sometimes he does not like to go back.

Commissioner:- Do the Indians want their children to go to the School?

C. Charley:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Does your boy complain about any other teacher than his own?

C. Charley:- No, just his teacher.

Commissioner:- Does he complain about having to do hard work?

C. Charley:- Yes, sometimes.

Commissioner:- How cold was it January 1st.

C. Charley:- I can't tell you that.

Commissioner:- About 20 below?

C. Charley:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Were you at the School that day?

C. Charley:- Not me or anybody but Louie George was there.

Commissioner:- Did he see the boys?

C. Charley:- Yes.

Commissioner:- You were not there?

C. Charley:- No, I was not there.

Commissioner:- When boys run away from the School do the School authorities take too long to look for them?

C. Charley:- Yes, they should search right away, they have a car.

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Witness:- Louie George, Fraser Lake Indian, at Nautley I. Res.
Place:- In his home at Nautley Indian Reserve.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- Were you at the School Near Year's Day?

L. George:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Who was with you?

L. George:- My wife.

Commissioner:- What time did you return?

L. George:- I came back maybe three o'clock on the road. I had my team.

Commissioner:- What time did you leave the School?

L. George:- About three o'clock.

Commissioner:- You saw the boys then at the School?

L. George:- One boy there, all I see, Willie Allen.

Commissioner:- At 3 o'clock?

L. George:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When you were at the School you just saw one of the boys?

L. George:- Yes, just see one, I have no boy stop School now, I have girl there, I just go to see her.

Commissioner:- You did not talk to Allen Willie?

L. George:- No, I did not talk to Allen Willie.

Commissioner:- He did not ask to come with you?

L. George:- No.

Commissioner:- Were there many at the School from here?

L. George:- Not many, just us I think.

Commissioner:- You did not pass anyone on the road?

L. George:- No, no one.

Commissioner:- Does your girl complain about the treatment at the School? How old is she?

L. George:- About 9 years. She like the School. I like too. My boy out of School now like the School, he is 17 years old now.

Commissioner:- Are the teachers good to the children?

L. George:- Good for my girl. Me think good for children go to School.

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Commissioner:- Do the boys or girls complain that they are whipped?

L. George:- No, they never do that. My boy run away one time. I take car next day and take back as soon as I find him.

Commissioner:- Was he whipped when he got back?

L. George:- I can't tell you that. He did not tell me.

Commissioner:- How long do you think it would take the boys to get to where they were found from the time they left the School?

L. George:- I do not know. It take long time.

Commissioner:- If Father McGrath had started to look for the boys at 9 or 10 o'clock do you think he would have found the boys alive that night?

L. George:- Maybe, I do not know.

Commissioner:- How fast would the boys walk in that snow?

L. George:- About one mile an hour, some boys run and are smart.

Commissioner:- Have you anything against the School?

L. George:- I like the School. My children like the School. They are treated very well.

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(11)

Witness:- Mrs. Sylvester Patrick, mother of Allen Willie, one of the four boys frozen on Fraser Lake.
Place:- In her own home as she was ill with influenza at the time: Nautley Indian Reserve.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- Did you go to the Indian School?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- Yes, I went to the Indian School when it was at Fort St. James before they moved it to Lejac. They did not treat us right there. We were punished at that school. Sometimes they whipped us by hand, sometimes by stick on hands, sometimes by eight inch strap about 30 times on each hand. Even when we just smiled at one of the boys they gave us that much.

Commissioner:- Was the food all right?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- Sometimes we ate worms in the meat, just beans sometimes and sometimes just barley.

Commissioner:- Did your boy complain about punishment any time?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- Lots of times they punish him and some times he nearly run away.

Commissioner:- Did he run away?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- First time he run away with other boy.

Commissioner:- Did he like the School?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- Yes, he liked it.

Commissioner:- Does this little girl (referring to a sister of the deceased Allen Willie) say that the teacher punishes her?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- Yes. My teacher made my back very big and punished me on my back.

Commissioner:- Did you like School?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- I would rather stay at home than at School. One time we talked Indian in our own language and the Sister said we had to talk English all the time and she make us take down our drawers and she strap us on backside with big strap. Sister Josephine was the Sister who did this.

Commissioner:- Have you heard other complaints about the School?

Mrs. S. Patrick:- I heard lots of complaints they kick them and everything.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(12)

Witness:- Rev. Dobson of the United Church at Fort Fraser, B. C. Mr. Dobson was a member of the Coroner's jury investigating the deaths of the four boys frozen to death on Fraser Lake.
Place:- In the Manse, Fort Fraser, B.C.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- You were a member of the Coroner's Jury?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Reads the first clause of the findings of the Jury and asked "How did you arrive at this decision"?

Witness:- Considering the evidence which came out we felt that we could not attach any criminal blame to any particular persons.

Commissioner:- Reads the second clause:- How did you arrive at this decision?

Witness:- I do not think we have given an unfair decision in any way although most people now seem to say that we should have attached more blame than we did. There have been quite a number of cases of children running away. The feeling of the men in the Jury was that we could not attach direct blame to any party but we felt that there had been laxity in certain ways. We added the riders to direct attention to this in order that conditions at the school might be bettered.

Commissioner:- Reads Clause 3 - "What form of co-operation was in the mind of the Jury"?

Witness:- When Father McGrath came next day about noon he wanted the mother of the child to tell him where the child was as he considered that she had hidden him and did not want to turn him over. That did not look like a very good understanding between the parents and the Principal.

Commissioner:- Did you refer to this intentionally?

Witness:- They were speaking generally, I think. They were not thinking of this particular event but this is the one that brought it to a climax.

Commissioner:- In your opinion should the authorities at the School have taken more aggressive action than they did and earlier than they did?

Witness:- Yes, quite definitely so.

Commissioner:- Reads the clause re excessive corporal punishment:- "What did they mean by this"?

Witness:- I understand the girls get along very well but they have considerable trouble with the boys. Some of the Indians think the boys get too much punishment. Father McGrath was supposed to be the Principal but did not seem to have full authority and had to pamper the children with kindness and nice things. I think the Principal should have a free hand to run the School.

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Commissioner MacKay:- What did the white people think about the action taken by the School?

Witness: (Rev. Dobson) - The white people were very strong in their condemnation of the School. I think myself they have a most difficult situation to handle. The people generally think we were not severe enough.

Commissioner:- Has the situation died down now?

Witness:- Well, the Indians still talk but the white people here being most Protestant and being situated at a considerable distance from the Indian School are not very much interested in that School. The white people close to the School at Fraser Lake would probably be talking more about it. There are no outstanding men among the white people locally who would bother to take any part in demanding any further investigation as they are not sufficiently interested.

Commissioner:- Are you of the opinion that any good purpose could be served by a Judicial Inquiry?

Witness:- That would be rather hard to answer. I have not been where other Indian schools are and do not know what is the usual procedure in such cases.

Commissioner:- Had steps been taken by the School up to 9:30 p.m. on January 1st, do you consider that the children would have been recovered and saved?

Witness: - I doubt if they could have been found but they would have cleared themselves much better had they taken immediate steps to trace the missing children. If there were a telephone on each Indian Reserve it would be a great help in cases of this kind.

The Commissioner then thanked Mr. Dobson (witness) for the way in which he had given his evidence. This concluded the hearing of evidence at Fort Fraser.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(14)

Witness:- Sister Superior (Sister Josephine)
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School
Date:- March 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been connected with this School?

Sister Superior:- With the School since its foundation 1917 (Fort St. James) and after at Fraser Lake since it opened here in 1920.

Commissioner:- What is your position here?

S. Superior:- Sister Superior in charge of the Sisters and all the work done by them in control of the children.

Commissioner:- How many teachers in the School?

S. Superior:- Four teachers, all Sisters.

Commissioner:- What grades were the boys, who perished, in?

S. Superior:- 3 in the primary; 1 in the Kindergarten.

Commissioner:- Were you present and in charge on New Year's Day?

S. Superior:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Who was the teacher in charge on New Year's Day?

S. Superior:- There was no school session on New Year's Day.

Commissioner:- Who taught the children prior to Christmas?

S. Superior:- Sister Noella.

Commissioner:- Did you know the boys?

S. Superior:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Were they well behaved children?

S. Superior:- Yes, very well behaved; they were nice.

Commissioner:- Does the teacher of the class punish children when found necessary?

S. Superior:- For three or four years no punishment was administered by the Sisters; the boys were punished those years by the disciplinarians. The girls are punished by the Sisters. This punishment consists of strapping on the hands.

Commissioner:- Was there excessive discipline prior to the tragedy?

S. Superior:- For one year there was practically no discipline with the result the boys did what they liked.

Commissioner:- Do you remember seeing the boys on New Year's Day?

S. Superior:- Yes. I saw the boys on New Year's Day. One of them, Johnny Michel came to the Office. He came for candy, this was at 4 P.M.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(15)

Commissioner MacKay:- Did you know the boys had asked Bishop Coudert for permission to visit Nautley Reserve?

S. Superior:- No. I did not.

Commissioner:- When did you see the children last?

S. Superior:- I did not see them after 4 p.m.

Commissioner:- When did you notice the children's absence?

S. Superior:- I was informed of their absence at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner:- By whom?

S. Superior:- By Sister Noella.

Commissioner:- You did not see them having their lunch at 4:30.

S. Superior:- No. I did not.

Commissioner:- When did Sister Noella notice their absence?

S. Superior:- At 6 p.m. for she was in charge of the dining room.

Commissioner:- When you were informed the boys were missing what did you do?

S. Superior:- I found the Father in charge of the boys and asked him if he knew the children were missing.

Commissioner:- What did Father Marsigny say?

S. Superior:- I know they are missing, they asked and obtained permission from the Bishop to go.

Commissioner:- What time was this?

S. Superior:- About 6:30.

Commissioner:- Father McGrath was then at the School?

S. Superior:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Did you know he was?

S. Superior:- Yes, I must have known.

Commissioner:- Did you inform Father McGrath the boys were missing?

S. Superior:- No. I did not for I understood they had permission to leave.

Commissioner:- When did you see Father McGrath to discuss the matter with him?

S. Superior:- Next morning about 10 o'clock. Father McGrath appeared worried.

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Commissioner MacKay:- When did you find out the children did not have permission to leave?

Sister Superior:- About 8:30 P.M.

Commissioner:- Who so informed you?

S. Superior:- Bishop Coudert.

Commissioner:- What did Bishop Coudert say?

S. Superior:- He said Father McGrath should know and I presume he then informed him; this would be about 8:30 p.m.

Commissioner:- Did you take any steps to find the boys then or offer any suggestions as to what should be done?

S. Superior:- The boys were not satisfied, they wanted to go home.

Commissioner:- That is not answering the question -- Did you take any steps to find the boys or offer any suggestions as to what should be done?

S. Superior:- No, I thought the Bishop and Father McGrath would do what was necessary. If it had been girls I might have been more concerned.

Commissioner:- Do you know if any or all of the boys who perished complained of the treatment received at the School?

S. Superior:- No, the boys did not complain, they had no reason to complain.

Commissioner:- Had any of these boys been punished during the time they attended the School?

S. Superior:- I am sure they were not.

Commissioner:- Considering the circumstances, have you anything to say as to what should have been done when the Bishop and Acting Principal knew the boys were missing?

S. Superior:- The Bishop and Father McGrath thought they would reach home safely.

Commissioner:- What was the depth of snow?

S. Superior:- I could not say.

Commissioner:- What was the temperature and was there a strong wind?

S. Superior:- I do not know what the temperature was. There was not a strong wind.

Commissioner:- Who was in charge when the Acting Principal was absent?

S. Superior:- The Bishop.

Commissioner:- Is there any Church regulation as to who takes charge when the Principal or Acting Principal is absent?

S. Superior:- I cannot answer that question for I do not know.

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(17)

Commissioner MacKay:- How often was the Acting Principal absent?

Sister Superior:- Nearly every Sunday, but always present during the week.

Commissioner:- Was there excessive corporal punishment immediately prior to the tragedy?

S. Superior:- Not to these boys. Other runaways were punished by strappings but Father McGrath was present each time and counted the strappings.

Commissioner:- Was there any definite rule as to who took charge in the absence of the Principal?

S. Superior:- I do not know.

Commissioner:- Are individual teachers allowed to administer corporal punishment at will or must the case go to the Principal?

S. Superior:- The teacher refers the case to me and for minor offences I instruct the teacher as to the punishment to be administered and for major offences I refer the case to the Principal.

Commissioner:- If the offence is serious who administers the punishment?

S. Superior:- I do to the girls and the disciplinarians do to the boys.

Commissioner:- What does the punishment consist of?

S. Superior:- The strap for major offences - on the hands and on the backside when they run away.

Commissioner:- Has each boy a separate place for his clothes?

S. Superior:- Yes, a peg to hang clothes on and a box for their shoes.

Commissioner:- Where is this?

S. Superior:- In their play hall.

Commissioner:- Who first discovered the boys were missing?

S. Superior:- Sister Noella.

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Jac Indian Residential School Inquiry:

(18)

Witness:- Sister Noella, Age 23 yrs; teaching since last Sept.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School
Date:- March 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been at this School?

S. Noella:- I have been here for 2 years.

Commissioner:- What Grades are you in charge of?

S. Noella:- Grades 1 and 2.

Commissioner:- How many of the boys who perished were under you?

Witness:- Three. Allen Benoit Willie (Patrick step father)
9 years old.
Andrew H. Paul - 8 years old.
Maurice Justa - 8 years old.

Commissioner:- Were these children healthy and normal physically and mentally?

Witness:- They were healthy.

Commissioner:- Were these children well behaved?

Witness:- Yes they were well behaved in the classroom and elsewhere where I had charge of them that is, in the dining room and dormitory.

Commissioner:- Were any of these children punished by you or to your knowledge?

Witness:- Not to my knowledge nor did I punish any of them.

Commissioner:- Did any of these children run away before?

Witness:- Maurice Justa ran away the year before.

Commissioner:- How long was he away?

Witness:- He was found and brought back the same day.

Commissioner:- When offences are committed, do you punish the children or do you refer the case to the Sister Superior?

Witness:- I always refer the case to the Sister Superior.

Commissioner:- What does punishment for offences consist of?

Witness:- The strap.

Commissioner:- When the offence is considered serious who administers punishment?

Witness:- The Sister Superior. I have had no case which I would consider a serious offence.

Commissioner:- It has been suggested that there was excessive corporal punishment?

Witness:- I know nothing of this. I have not seen or heard of corporal punishment since I have been here.

Commissioner:- Who was in charge of the dining room at 6 p.m.?

Witness:- I was.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(19)

Commissioner MacKay:- When did you first notice the boys were absent?

Witness (S. Noella):- Approx. at 6:10 p.m.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Witness:- After the boys who were eating left the dining room I informed the Sister Superior the boys were missing; this would be about 6:20 p.m.

Commissioner:- Have you heard complaints by the children regarding treatment at the School?

Witness:- No. I haven't.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(20)

Witness:- Sister Cecile; age 25 years.
Place:- Lejac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been at this School?

Witness:(S.Cecile)- Seven years.

Commissioner:- What Grades are you in charge of?

Witness:- Grade 1-B and C.

Commissioner:- How many of the boys who perished were under you?

Witness:- One. John Michel (Jack) 7 years.

Commissioner:- Was this boy normal physically and mentally?

Witness:- Yes, he seemed to be.

Commissioner:- Was this child well behaved?

Witness:- Yes, he was a good boy.

Commissioner:- Did you ever find it necessary to punish or report for punishment this child?

Witness:- I don't remember ever having punished him. I never reported him for punishment.

Commissioner:- Did this boy run away at any time?

Witness:- No - this was his first year.

Commissioner:- When offences are committed do you punish the children under your charge?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- What does punishment consist of?

Witness:- Stand them in the corners for a few minutes and keep them after school.

Commissioner:- For serious offences?

Witness:- I use the strap.

Commissioner:- Are they punished in the presence of other children?

Witness:- Sometimes.

Commissioner:- What do you consider a serious offence?

Witness:- Defiant disobedience.

Commissioner:- Would you refer a case of this kind to the Sister Superior?

Witness:- Yes.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(21)

Commissioner MacKay:- It has been suggested that the boys who perished were subjected to excessive corporal punishment.

Witness (S.Cecile):- I never found occasion to punish this boy.

Commissioner:- Has there been excessive corporal punishment to your knowledge?

Witness:- No, not to my knowledge.

Commissioner:- When did you first learn the boys were missing?

Witness:- At about 7:30 on January 1st, 1937. Sister Michelas informed me.

Commissioner:- Do you recall hearing the dead boys complain of the treatment received at the School?

Witness:- No. They seemed contented and happy here.

Commissioner:- Do you recall seeing Father McGrath that evening (January 1st).

Witness:- No. I did not see him that evening.

Commissioner:- This boy John Michel (Jack) was under the disciplinarian?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When are you responsible for the children?

Witness:- Only in the classroom.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(22)

Witness:- Father Marsigny, age 26 years.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- When did you come to the School?

Witness:(Father Marsigny)- 22nd of September, 1936.

Commissioner:- What were your duties up to January 2nd?

Witness:- First Disciplinarian.

Commissioner:- What were your duties as Disciplinarian?

Witness:- Same as replies given by Mr. Corcoran.

Commissioner:- When did you punish the boys?

Witness:- Never - I did not punish them at any time.

Commissioner:- Are methods of punishment provided for in School regulations?

Witness:- I do not know.

Commissioner:- When boys are punished is punishment given in front of other boys?

Witness:- In cases where boys run away, yes. Severe punishment given in front of the other boys. Ten strokes of the strap were given.

Commissioner:- When did you first hear the boys were missing?

Witness:- At 6 o'clock.

Commissioner:- Who informed you?

Witness:- The Sister Superior.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Witness:- Nothing.

Commissioner:- Why?

Witness:- Permission had been given formerly by the Principal so I did not worry.

Commissioner:- When permission is given, the children would not be considered missing.

Witness:- I supposed permission had been given.

Commissioner:- Do you recall seeing Father McGrath at 5 o'clock or between 5 - 6 o'clock?

Witness:- He was probably here but I do not recall having seen him.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(23)

Commissioner:- Did you discuss the absence of the children with Father McGrath or any member of the staff on the evening of January 1st.

Witness:- The matter was discussed at supper.

Commissioner:- Father McGrath would be present?

Witness:- No.

Commissioner:- Was Bishop Coudert there?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Do you recall how the Bishop expressed himself when the absence of the children was being discussed?

Witness:- The Bishop was convinced then that the boys had gone away with the other Indians.

Commissioner:- Did you discuss the matter with Father McGrath that night?

Witness:- No.

Commissioner:- Do you know if the children were contented and happy at the School?

Witness:- Yes - they were contented - They may have been upset when permission to go home was refused especially when permission had been granted to others.

Commissioner:- You knew the children?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Were they normal physically and mentally?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Were they well behaved?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Have there been any runaways while you have been here?

Witness:- Two or three times.

Commissioner:- Were these punished on their return?

Witness:- Yes. The punishment wasn't always the same and not necessarily corporal punishment.

Commissioner:- What was the temperature on January 1st and 2nd.?

Witness:- I don't remember.

Commissioner:- Is there usually a delay in organizing a search for missing boys?

Witness:- Search begins at once.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry:-

(24)

Commissioner MacKay:- Do you know why there should have been such a delay on this occasion?

Witness (Father Marsigny):- The conviction they were with the Indians.

Commissioner:- Why did Father McGrath delay search until the morning of the 2nd January?

Witness:- I do not know.

Commissioner:- Is it a usual custom to do this?

Witness:- This is the only case in my experience where there was a delay.

Commissioner:- What justification was there for the delay?

Witness:- Because their absence was noted when the visiting Indians were leaving for home.

Commissioner:- Assuming that a search party had been organized when Father McGrath was informed could the boys have been recovered and saved?

Witness:- I am not in a position to answer the question.

Commissioner:- If a search party had been organized at 6:15 p.m. January 1st, could the boys have been found and their lives saved?

Witness:- Yes, if this had been done.

Commissioner:- You are not now a disciplinarian?

Witness:- Not in the same way as before.

Commissioner:- When was the change made?

Witness:- On arrival of Father Byrne Grant.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Residential School Inquiry:

(25)

Witness:- Patrick Joseph Corcoran, age 31 years.
Place:- Le Jac, B. C.
Date:- March 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been at this School?
Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- Since 1931.

Commissioner:- What were your duties at the time of the tragedy?

Witness:- Chauffeur and postmaster.

Commissioner:- What are your duties now?

Witness:- Disciplinarian and postmaster.

Commissioner:- What are your duties as disciplinarian?

Witness:- To take charge of the boys.

Commissioner:- When?

Witness:- When they are not in the classroom, chapel or dormitory.

Commissioner:- Now please answer the question more fully. What are your duties as disciplinarian?

Witness:- (1) Supervise the conduct of the boys while at play and work.
(2) Allocate the different duties to each boy.
(3) See that they are properly clothed.
(4) Punishment for offences.
(5) See that the boys wash and have regular baths.

Commissioner:- When do you punish the boys?

Witness:- When instructed to do so by the Principal. I am also at liberty to punish for such offences as defiant disobedience on the spot without reference to the Principal who is immediately informed.

Commissioner:- How long have you been disciplinarian?

Witness:- 1931 to 1935 and since about the 10th of January, 1937.

Commissioner:- What does your punishment consist of?

Witness:- Strokes with the regulation strap on the hands and silence for general punishment for a group of boys for from 10 to 15 minutes.

Commissioner:- Have you had occasion to use the strap other than on the hands?

Witness:- In former years, Yes.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Residential School Inquiry.

(26)

Commissioner MacKay:- Are methods of punishment provided for in School regulations?

Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- I do not know of any written rules but it is the established custom of the School.

Commissioner:- When is excessive corporal punishment administered?

Witness:- For immoral conduct and running away.

Commissioner:- What does this consist of?

Witness:- Ten or twelve strokes of the strap on the bare posterior.

Commissioner:- Before anyone?

Witness:- Yes, before the pupils and in the presence of the Principal.

Commissioner:- Is excessive corporal punishment administered without the knowledge or consent of the Principal?

Witness:- Not now.

Commissioner:- In Father McGrath's time?

Witness:- No.

Commissioner:- Before Father McGrath's time?

Witness:- Yes, in Father Cocola's time - We informed him afterwards; that was during 1931 - 1932 - 1935.

Commissioner:- When did you first hear the dead boys were missing?

Witness:- January 2nd at 9 a.m.

Commissioner:- Who informed you?

Witness:- Bishop Coudert informed me that Father McGrath wanted me in the office as he was sending me after the four boys.

Commissioner:- What did Father McGrath say to you?

Witness:- He told me that 4 boys had run away the day before and he had not been notified until between 9 and 10 that night. He instructed me to get my car and go after them.

Commissioner:- Where did he tell you to go?

Witness:- To Fort Fraser Indian Village.

Commissioner:- Did Father McGrath appear anxious?

Witness:- Yes, he was quite anxious.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Witness:- I told Father McGrath I would go immediately after the mail which was 3½ hours late (approx.).

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(27)

Commissioner MacKay:- Did Father McGrath express fears as to the children's safety?

Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- They were very young and because of this he was somewhat concerned.

Commissioner:- When did you leave for Fort Fraser?

Witness:- About 1 P.M. January 2nd, 1937.

Commissioner:- You did not find them at **Fort** Fraser?

Witness:- No.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Witness:- I returned to the School and informed Father McGrath, the mother of Allen Benoit Willie, suggested the children might be at Stella I. R. with their uncle. I proceeded to Stella accompanied by Father McGrath and Father Murphy. The chief informed us the children were not there.

Commissioner:- What did you do then?

Witness:- I returned to Fort Fraser, Father McGrath and Father Murphy accompanied me. We met Allen Benoit Willie's mother and the father of one of the other boys who assured Father McGrath the boys were not being hidden.

Commissioner:- What was the next move?

Witness:- Father McGrath asked the Indians to search for the boys.

Commissioner:- What time was this?

Witness:- Approx. 4 o'clock on January 2nd when we returned to the School.

Commissioner:- When did you hear the bodies were found?

Witness:- Between 7 and 7:15 p.m., January 2nd.

Commissioner:- Who found the children and when?

Witness:- Charlie Charlie at 5:30 p.m.

Commissioner:- Who have you recognized as in charge of the School in the absence of the Principal or Acting Principal?

Witness:- It seemed to be the Bishop.

Commissioner:- Were any of these children punished immediately prior to their departure?

Witness:- No, not to my knowledge.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry:

(28)

Commissioner MacKay:- Did you know the children?

Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- Yes.

Commissioner:- In your experience with them were they well behaved?

Witness:- Yes; they were good boys.

Commissioner:- Do you know if any of these boys ran away before?

Witness:- Yes. Maurice Justa, on two occasions he was found and brought back at 4 P.M. and ran away again about daybreak the following morning.

Commissioner:- Was he punished for this?

Witness:- I could not say definitely, but I feel confident he was.

Commissioner:- You have had experience in going after missing boys before?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When the boys asked for permission to leave the School it was understood they wanted to go to Nautley I.R.

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Permission was refused by the Bishop?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- How deep was the snow on the lake the way the boys travelled?

Witness:- I would imagine about 6 or 8 inches.

Commissioner:- You have had a lot of experience with small children walking in the snow?

Witness:- Yes; quite a little bit.

Commissioner:- How long would you estimate it took them to cover the distance between the School and where the bodies were found?

Witness:- It is difficult to say - I wouldn't like to say.

Commissioner:- What was the temperature?

Witness:- I could not say.

Commissioner:- When children are reported missing is there usually a delay in organizing a search party?

Witness:- No, as soon as we find out they have gone we go right after them. This means day or night; I have gone without meals to go after them.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(29)

Commissioner MacKay:- Do you know why there should have been such a delay on this occasion?

Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- No I don't - I feel sure had Father McGrath known I would have been after them right away.

Commissioner:- Father McGrath knew at 9:15/^{P.M. Jan. 1st}the children were missing. Do you know why he did not send and ask you to arrange to search for them then?

Witness:- No. I do not know.

Commissioner:- Is it the usual custom at the School when children are missing irrespective of age of children and weather conditions to allow overnight interval to elapse before making a search?

Witness:- No. This is the first time I know of that it has ever occurred.

Commissioner:- What justification had Acting Principal McGrath for assuming the children had left with friends?

Witness:- There were a number of Indians around that day with whom they might have gone.

Commissioner:- Are not visiting Indians seen as they come in and when they go out or are they allowed to come in and go out at will?

Witness:- They have been allowed to do that in the past but are not always seen when they come in or go out.

Commissioner:- Assuming that it was not definitely known whether or not these children were warmly clad what reason can be given for not making an immediate search, whether the children were supposed to be with friends or not?

Witness:- It was such a short distance and there were such a number of Indians around.

Commissioner:- Do you consider the distance between this School and the Nautley I. R. a short distance for children of such ages to travel and under the prevailing weather conditions?

Witness:- I would not consider this a great distance - We did not think of them travelling by the lake.

Commissioner:- Would a search in the snow about the School shore line boundaries immediately their absence was discovered have revealed tracks showing which way the children had gone?

Witness:- It is difficult to say.

Commissioner:- If a search party had been organized when the boys were first missed so as to cover the routes to Nautley I. R. (that is by the Lake, the road and the railway) simultaneously do you think the boys could have been saved?

Witness:- Yes; I do.

This question was also asked of Mr. Anderson who answered in the affirmative.

Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(30)

Commissioner MacKay:- Have you heard complaints against the administration of the School?

Witness (P.J. Corcoran):- Yes, founded on rumors but not on personal knowledge.

Commissioner:- Is it your experience to find the children at this School satisfied with conditions under which they are trained?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Are the parents of the children opposed to sending their children to this School?

Witness:- A certain number of them.

Commissioner:- Is this because they think the children are subjected to unnecessary and undeserving punishment?

Witness:- No. It is on account of their abnormal love for their children and the desire to have them with them at all times.

Commissioner:- Was the road open between here and Vanderhoof on January 1st and 2nd.?

Witness:- Yes, but tough going.

Commissioner:- Do you think Father McGrath had sufficient authority?

Witness:- No - If he had the authority Father Grant now has, I doubt if this tragedy would have occurred - He didn't know what authority he had.

Commissioner:- You mean Father McGrath?

Witness:- Yes.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(31)

Witness:- Brother Anderson.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been with the School?

Witness (B.Anderson):- Since 1923.

Commissioner:- What are your duties?

Witness:- I have many jobs to do. I'm supposed to be janitor.

Commissioner:- Have you acted at anytime as a disciplinarian?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- When?

Witness:- For a year and a half after I came in 1923.

Commissioner:- Have you acted as disciplinarian recently?

Witness:- Yes in the dormitory and outside in connection with various occupations.

Commissioner:- As disciplinarian, have you found it necessary to punish children?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- What did the punishment consist of?

Witness:- The strap supplied by the government.

Commissioner:- Did you inform the Principal before you strapped the children?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- What would the strappings be given for?

Witness:- For various reasons, disobedience, and misbehavior.

Commissioner:- Did you punish any of the boys who perished?

Witness:- No. - I had nothing to do with them.

Commissioner:- When did you punish children last?

Witness:- A month or two ago when in charge of the dormitory.

Commissioner:- You punished some then?

Witness:- Yes, for misbehavior.

Commissioner:- What was the nature of the punishment?

Witness:- 3 strappings on the hand.

Commissioner:- Have you ever administered excessive corporal punishment.

Witness:- No.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry:

(32)

Commissioner MacKay:- Did you know the boys who perished?

Witness (B.Anderson):- Yes.

Commissioner:- When did you hear the boys were missing?

Witness:- The morning after.

Commissioner:- Did you have dinner with the staff on January 1st?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Was Father McGrath there?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Was the question of the missing children discussed then?

Witness:- Not at supper while I was there.

Commissioner:- Who told you the children were missing?

Witness:- Father McGrath.

Commissioner:- What time was this?

Witness:- I don't remember whether it was before supper or not, maybe afterwards.

Commissioner:- Did Father McGrath appear to be worried?

Witness:- Yes he was greatly upset.

Commissioner:- This would be on New Year's night?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Do you know if any of these children ran away before?

Witness:- Yes - Allen Benoit Willie, and Maurice Justa.

Commissioner:- Were they punished for this?

Witness:- I do not know.

Commissioner:- Is there usually a delay in arranging a search for missing children?

Witness:- No. We go after them day or night.

Commissioner:- Why was there a delay this time?

Witness:- I don't know unless it was figured they got to Fort Fraser.

Commissioner:- Is it your experience to find the children at the School satisfied with conditions under which they are trained?

Witness:- I think so.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry:

(33)

Commissioner MacKay:- Are individual teachers allowed to punish the children?

Witness:- (B.Anderson) - Yes, they do it.

Commissioner:- Are individual teachers allowed to administer corporal punishment at will or must case go to the Principal?

Witness:- They refer the case to the Principal.

Commissioner:- Were there many Indian visitors on New Year's Day up until 6 p.m.?

Witness:- No, some, but the Sunday following there was a big bunch.

Commissioner:- Do you remember if any of the dead children were talking to visitors on New Year's Day?

Witness:- No. I cannot say.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry:

(34)

Witness:- Dr. C. Pitts.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- How long have you been the Doctor at Fraser Lake.

Witness (Dr. Pitts):- Since the fall of 1931.

Commissioner:- Do you remember if this evidence of Jean Donze is substantially correct? (Commissioner reads evidence)

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- You are of the opinion, Doctor, the children died on the ice before midnight on January 1st, 1937?

Witness:- I think so.

Commissioner:- What are your reasons for so thinking?

Witness:- Well, it is difficult for me to say whether they actually died before midnight on January 1st. It looked as if two had been sitting resting then had fallen back on their backs. The third was lying down on his face across one of the bodies of the first two. - The fourth was 50 feet away lying on his face. The bodies were frozen stiff.

Commissioner:- How long would it take them to travel the distance covered?

Witness:- At least 3 hours.

Commissioner:- Do you think they were exhausted when they reached the space in which they were found?

Witness:- Apparently. - They were probably freezing before they collapsed.

Commissioner referring to Item (3) of Jury's Verdict and asks:
On what was this based?

Witness:- On the evidence of Father McGrath, Jean Donze and P. Corcoran. If energetic action had been taken on the night this occurred up until 9:30 p.m. the jury were of the opinion the children could have been recovered and saved.

Commissioner:- Were these boys normal physically and mentally?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Have you heard from any authoritative source that excessive corporal punishment was administered at the School?

Witness:- No. I haven't.

Commissioner:- Have you any reason to believe from your examination of the children that severe punishment was administered?

Witness:- No. Not to these 4 boys, or others.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Commissioner MacKay:- What about Clause 4 of the Jury's finding - excessive corporal punishment?

Witness (Dr. Pitts):- It should not have been in the verdict, there was no justification for it.

Commissioner:- Why wasn't Bishop Coudert called to give evidence?

Witness:- He was away. He left on the 2nd. He was wired to but he could not be connected with.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(36)

Witness:- Paul Alex, boy of 10 years who left the School with the other boys who lost their lives, but returned about 6 p.m.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- Paul, did you leave the School for Nautley I. R. with the 4 boys who lost their lives on Fraser Lake on January 1st?

Witness (Paul Alex):- Yes.

Commissioner:- When did you leave the School, Paul?

Witness:- I go with other boys after I get lunch.

Commissioner:- Did you ask the Bishop if you could go?

Witness:- Yes, but he said No.

Commissioner:- When you left the School which way did you go?

Witness:- Down to tracks (Railway), we walk along track to place up there and boys want to go on lake, me no like to go on lake and boys go and I come back.

Commissioner:- When did you get back to the School, Paul?

Witness:- Maybe time to eat, I forget.

Commissioner:- Did you have your heavy clothes on for going outside?

Witness:- Yes.

Commissioner:- Did the other boys?

Witness:- No.

NOTE: This boy does not appear to be very bright for his age but from the information he gave it would be reasonably safe to assume that two of the deceased children were clad in their winter outdoor clothing when they left the School, for 2 mackinaw coats were found, one with the body of one of the boys and the other at the edge of the lake.

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6443, file 881-1, part 2)

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Enquiry:

(37)

Witness:- Principal Byrne-Grant.
Place:- Le Jac Indian Res. School.
Date:- March 3rd, 1937.

Commissioner MacKay:- Father Grant, are you the Principal of this School?

Witness (F. Grant):- Yes.

Commissioner:- When were you appointed?

Witness:- I received instructions to proceed here on January 3rd.

Commissioner:- When did you arrive?

Witness:- On January 7th.

Commissioner:- Who was your predecessor?

Witness:- Father McGrath, he was Acting Principal.

Commissioner:- Is Father McGrath here now?

Witness:- No, he left for Baker City, Wash. the day I arrived.

Commissioner:- Is Bishop Coudert here?

Witness:- No, he is visiting some of the Reserves and will not be back for 5 to 7 days.

Commissioner:- Who was in charge of the School during the Acting Principal's absence?

Witness:- Bishop Coudert - understand the Acting Principal was only absent on Sundays.

Commissioner:- Who is in charge during your absence?

Witness:- The Vice-Principal, Father Murphy.

Commissioner:- When was he appointed?

Witness:- I had him appointed as soon as I took over.

Commissioner:- Do you know when Father McGrath became Acting Principal?

Witness:- In September last.

Commissioner:- When did the French Disciplinarian arrive?

Witness:- About the time Father McGrath took charge.

Commissioner:- Who are the Disciplinarians now?

Witness:- Father Murphy and Mr. Corcoran.

Commissioner:- When was the change in Disciplinarians made?

Witness:- After my arrival.

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Le Jac Indian Res. School Inquiry.

(38)

Commissioner MacKay:- Do you know if excessive corporal punishment has been administered in this School?

Witness (Father Grant):- I understand severe strappings have been given.

Commissioner:- Do you know if this took place just prior to the death of the 4 boys?

Witness:- I cannot say positively for of course I wasn't here, but I have information to the effect that boys and girls were punished somewhat severely before my arrival.

Commissioner:- Do you know what the punishment mainly consisted of?

Witness:- Strappings on the bare hands, legs and posterior.

Commissioner:- Would this take place after the Acting Principal had been informed and with his approval and before him.

Witness:- Oh! yes, I would think so.

Commissioner:- What methods of punishment are now in force?

Witness:- I have made changes, corporal punishment will not be given unless approved by me and only then in cases of immorality or serious cases of misconduct - Indeed, we will operate in this regard along the lines of the provincial public schools.

Commissioner:- Do you think Father McGrath had sufficient authority as acting principal?

Witness:- I think he could have taken it. The situation was complicated, Father McGrath couldn't speak French and the French Disciplinarians would naturally refer to the Bishop.

Commissioner:- Where does your responsibility begin and end in so far as the student body is concerned?

Witness:- That is a difficult question to answer.

Commissioner:- Do you know?

Witness:- My personal opinion is that we are responsible for their safe keeping while they attend School.

Commissioner:- Does your responsibility extend beyond the boundaries of the School in a case of absence with or without permission?

Witness:- When they are missing, I would say we should look for them until they are found but this is my personal view. I know of no set rules although there may be rules governing our responsibility in detail.

Commissioner:- You have made some changes since your arrival?

Witness:- Yes, the Disciplinarians have been changed and also some changes have been made in the outside staff.

Commissioner:- The Indian Department's representative, Mr. Moore, was not informed of the tragedy until the afternoon of January 3rd and then not by the School authorities.

Witness:- I understand that is correct - It was a mistake, Mr. Moore should have been notified as soon as possible after the children's absence was discovered.

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(39)

Commissioner MacKay:- Father Grant, if a search party had been organized between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. on January 1st could the children have been found and saved?

Witness (Father Grant):- I cannot answer that question.

Commissioner:- Father Grant, knowing the circumstances as you now do, would you say a search party should have been organized when the absence of the children was first noticed or immediately after?

Witness:- Yes I would say a search party should have been organized.

The Commissioner then thanked Father Byrne Grant for his assistance, kindness and courtesy.

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