



History of Education

The Témiscamingue area was populated in 3 distinct stages: the formation of the Old Témiscamingue, colonization during the 1930s and the mining colonization. In spite of everything, there remains throughout the different times one commonality: no sooner had the pioneers arrived, they hurried to build a church and a school. Such is the beginning of education in the Témiscamingue area.

The First School Board: main office

The pioneers from different missions and parishes regrouped under one school board for many reasons. First of all, in the beginning, none of these parishes received recognition as such. Secondly, the meagre population of each parish did not allow for the formation of a local school board. This last factor leads us to believe that there was disparity of the pioneer farmers in the townships.

At the beginning of the century, there existed a main school board called the Témiscamingue School Board. A few parishes and missions fell under its jurisdiction:

Lorrainville, Laverlochère, Duhamel-Ouest, Guigues and Ville-Marie. The board office was located in Lorrainville. With time, the Témiscamingue School Board defined more precisely its area and grew. However, each time the population increased, parishes created their own local school board. In a few parishes, the school was built before the church. For example, in Lorrainville, the parishioners built a church in 1907 and the school board was established in 1900. We can conclude that the pioneers quickly organized an education system within their newly adopted territory.



The Teachers College in 1930

School commissioners

The school commissioners viewed themselves as legislators, enforcing the laws of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Furthermore, they oversaw the administration of the schools, their maintenance and their construction. Even though they hired the teachers, the commissioners had very little contact with them. It was limited to the yearly visit at the end of the school year, at which time they also purchased prizes to award to students.

The parish priest's role in education

The town's parish priest did not play an important role in the administration of the current affairs of the school board. At least, he did not appear to do so. On occasion, the parish priest was also the board commissioner but as a general rule, he attended the annual visit of the schools and tended to religious ceremonies. In the case of conflicts, the parish priest did not hesitate to let his presence be known. The parish priest could also intervene outside of conflicts. In 1914, the commissioners gave him a mandate to find a religious community to teach at the village school of Lorrainville. He made his choice with the Sisters of Assumption. In essence, the parish priest, without direct implication in the School Board's business, ensured the smooth running of the organization.

Courses offered by the Moffet School Specialized Schools

In the 1930s, two specialized schools were opened: Teachers College in 1931 and the Moffet School of Agriculture in 1939. Both schools were a response to local needs: to develop teachers for the diverse schools within the county and to ensure succession in the agricultural field.

School Types

There were three types of schools in the Témiscamingue area. The one room schoolhouse was the most popular. Since the population in the Témiscamingue area was meagre, it was necessary to respond to local needs. This is the reason for the higher number of one room schoolhouses, given that the economy was based on farming. There also existed two other types: village schools for more densely populated areas and government school for the native reserves. These schools had their own particularities.

With regards to the first two types, the schools belonged to the local school board who was responsible for building, maintaining, heating and furnishing them. The local school board was financed from two sources for the construction and the renovation of schools. The commissioners could either borrow the money from the local bank or from a local member of the community. However, they had to pay interest on the loan.

One Room Schoolhouse

Each parish owned many one room schoolhouses. As a rule, there was one school per range road. However, a range road could have more than one school depending on how far it stretched, on its population and where the farmers were situated.

The schoolhouse was built at the centre of a group of farmers. The furthest distance required to reach the school could be no more than 5 kilometres. The teacher was responsible for heating the building, which was furnished with a double deck stove.

The wood stove was situated in the classroom but the stove door opened into the teacher's quarters. Comfort was not a necessity for the one room schoolhouse. The floors were made of rough lumber and the building



was not insulated. It was cold inside the school in the winter. The outhouses were divided into two areas: one side for the girls and the other for the boys.

Village School



Village school in Fugèreville – 1934-1935

The village schools were different than the one room schoolhouse. In the majority of the villages in Témiscamingue, the first school built also served as a chapel. On Sundays, the parishioners removed the benches and desks and transformed the school into a chapel. After mass, they returned the school room to its original state. Shortly thereafter, the School Board built a new village school. This new building was bigger than the one room schoolhouse, often two or three stories high with many classrooms. Each classroom housed a different grade. On occasion the commissioners formed split grade classrooms due to a low number of students. There was a central heating system. The commissioners replaced the wood stove for a furnace. In many villages, the school also housed the nuns who taught there. The curriculum was more comprehensive than the one taught in the one room schoolhouse.

The teachers

Most teachers were women. There was however a male instructor at the Lorrainville School Board starting from 1902. However it was not all women who were allowed to teach. The first ones to be hired were single women with certification, then single women without certification and last to be hired were married women.

Government Schools

There existed still another type of school in the Témiscamingue area: those that belonged to the government. The Quebec Colonization Department owned a few of them. The Ministry of Indian Affairs of Canada built schools in its native reserves.

Colonization Plans

The Gordon and Vautrin plans, stemming from two levels of government (1932-1936), brought about the creation of the parish colonization of the Témiscamingue area. We are talking about the following: Moffet, Laforce, Rémigny and Roulier. How were these schools different from those in the parish of Old Témiscamingue? First of all, they were built by the Department of Colonization who oversaw their maintenance. In other parishes, it was the taxpayers who paid for the service. Also, the government was directly responsible for the teachers' salaries. The colony schools or government schools were much like the one room schoolhouse. A vestibule to hang up the students' coats was added to the front of the building. There was also a shelf where a pail and a cup could be stored.

One room schoolhouses and village schools disappeared near the beginning of the 1960s when schools became more centralized. Polyvalent schools soon followed.