

*Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*  
 SPECIAL ISSUE / NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL  
 Education North of 60 / Éducation au nord du 60e



*Children and teachers outside school, Gold Bottom Creek, Yukon, 1898.*  
 78\_69\_#311 Yukon Archives, Robert Coutts, Gold Bottom Creek, 1898.

## ARCHIVES NORTH OF 60

Editorial note: This description of the education records in Yukon Archives was contributed by the Yukon Government Territorial Archivist. It is followed by a personal account of researching in the Northwest Territories Archives, which has similarly rich holdings.

# Educational History Resources at Yukon Archives

**Ian Burnett**

## ABSTRACT

The mandate of Yukon Archives is to acquire, preserve, and make accessible records of lasting importance to understanding the history and development of Yukon and documenting its diverse peoples, cultures, and society. The archives acquires public records from its sponsoring agency (the Yukon government) and Yukon communities and private records from individuals, corporations, societies, religious groups, etc. Yukon Archives also includes a large research library of historical, ethnographic, scientific, and sociological publications and reports of relevance to the study of Yukon and its peoples.

## RÉSUMÉ

Le mandat des Archives du Yukon est d'acquérir, préserver et rendre accessibles des fonds d'une importance pérenne pour la compréhension de l'histoire et du développement du Yukon et de fournir de la documentation sur ses divers peuples, cultures et sociétés. Les Archives font l'acquisition de documents publics en provenance du gouvernement et des communautés du Yukon, ainsi que des archives privées léguées par des individus, des corporations, des organisations, des groupes religieux, etc. Les Archives du Yukon possèdent également une grande bibliothèque pour la recherche contenant des publications en histoire, en ethnographie, en sciences et en sociologie ainsi que des rapports portant spécifiquement sur le Yukon et ses peuples.

## Locating Resources at Yukon Archives

A starting point for research is the Yukon Archives website at [www.yukonarchives.ca](http://www.yukonarchives.ca) from which various tools and databases are accessible.

The Yukon Archives library collection is integrated with the Public Access Catalogue (PAC) of Yukon Public Libraries. Search results from this database indicate at which particular library location each book or serial is located. The Yukon Archives is a non-circulating library and all materials must be requested and reviewed in the Archives' research room, 400 College Drive, Whitehorse. Interlibrary loan services are available. Electronic versions for some current and historical publications are now available through the catalogue.

The Yukon Archives Digital Library features rare Yukon-related material from the Yukon Archives library collection. The site allows users to search and browse for digitized material covering subjects such as history, geology, mining and First Nations. Most of the titles are out of copyright and in the public domain.

The Archives Descriptive Database is an online guide to the archival holdings at Yukon Archives. Please note:

- This database is the main tool for accessing the archival holdings at Yukon Archives. It allows the user to identify relevant records and records creators by searching descriptive and authority records.
- This database provides access to a small number of digitized archival records (photographs and sound recordings). As more records are digitized, access will be provided to them through this database.
- This database does not include descriptions of all archival records. New information is added on a regular basis. In the meantime, it may be necessary to consult paper-based inventories in the Yukon Archives reference room.

The Archives Images Database provides access to over 3,000 photographs from a small selection of collections/fonds. The photographs can be located either through keyword searching or subject browsing and they can be viewed online. This is a legacy system with no new content being added. More recently digitized content is accessed through the Archives Descriptive Database (above).

Various government and private record finding aids and bibliographies are available to assist in accessing material.

The Yukon Archives has created a number of online virtual exhibits, several of which contain materials of relevance to the study of education in the territory. These exhibits are available at [www.yukonarchives.ca](http://www.yukonarchives.ca)

### **Public Records**

Records created and received by the Yukon government are public records subject to the *Archives Act*. As such they cannot be destroyed or alienated from the Yukon government without the concurrence of the Archivist. Yukon Archives receives public records into its care and custody through the Yukon government's records management program. All Yukon government records in the custody of Yukon Archives are subject to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

There are three main bodies of public records that contain documents relevant to research into the history of education in Yukon. These three bodies of records reflect the gradual evolution of a Yukon government administration and bureaucracy independent from its federal counterpart.

#### *(i) Yukon, Central Registry Files (YRG Series 1-12) – 1894–1977*

The Central Registry includes files of the early Yukon Territorial government, containing correspondence, reports and memoranda created by federal officials charged with the responsibility of administering the Yukon Territory. The records include original incoming correspondence and copies of outgoing information prepared by the offices of the Commissioner, Gold Commissioner, Comptroller, Registrar and the other agents and officials who managed the affairs of the Territory. These files provide a rich source of information on such subjects as doctor's fees, taxes, homestead land, local

elections, roads, the fire department, surveys, schools, mining claims and methods, Indian reserves, postal service, dance halls, gambling, churches, missions, telephones, wireless, courts, permits, ordinances, licenses, hospitals, timber lots, the cost of living, steamships, sewer systems, northern defence, scientific expeditions, customs, aviation, floods, individual companies, diseases, sports, tourism, water diversion, the White Pass and Yukon Railway, cemeteries, the North West Mounted Police, saw mills, and farming, among others. The earliest schools-related file dates from 1899.

A finding aid and file list of the Central Registry Files are available at [www.yukonarchives.ca](http://www.yukonarchives.ca)

*(ii) Yukon, Records Office Fonds – 1901–1977*

The Records Office was a centralized body that succeeded the Central Registry and was responsible for maintaining the records of the Government of the Yukon Territory. The records were primarily maintained in a centralized location; however, there were a number of sub-stations. The Records Office maintained the files in a duplex-numeric filing system. These include the Commissioner's files, which formed the 1- series, which developed in the early 1920s. The development of other blocks took place after 1953 and were as follows: 10, Administration; 50, Personnel; 60, Finance; 100, Information Services; 400, Territorial Buildings; 450, Operation and Maintenance; 470, Communications; 480, Public Utilities; 500, Roads; 600, Ordinances; and 900, Federal Lands Transferred to the Commissioner. The Records Office maintained files dating back to 1899 (brought forward from earlier records keeping systems). The Records Office maintained the records of the government centrally until the 1970s, when the responsibility for records keeping was decentralized and devolved to the departments.

Within the Records Office Fonds, includes records pertaining to educational matters.

The subseries Schools 1949–1967 consists of .715 m of textual records and 2 maps. The subseries includes records relating to schooling, including tours, school fees, teachers' housing, Yukon Teacher's Association, Superintendent's reports, religious education, new Vocational Training School in Whitehorse, Advisory Council on Vocational Training, Parent Teachers Association, Indian Mission Schools and Hostels, Dawson School administration, Catholic Schools, Separate School districts, Mayo Schools, Federal Student loans, Keno School, Brook's Brook School, Granville School (proposed), and Baptist Separate School.

A second subseries—Schools 1949–1975—consists of 1.7 m of textual records and 5 maps. The subseries includes records relating to schooling, including the administration of schools, School Advisory Committee, student visits, Yukon hostels, education of First Nations people, French language programs, bilingualism and biculturalism, transportation, subsidies, school fees, scholarships, student loans, residential schools, trade shows and educational training, Yukon Teacher's Association, children with learning disabilities, student residences, and opportunities for youth.

A third small subseries of .15 m of textual records is related to the development of a Schools ordinance 1956–1975.

It should not be assumed that all records relating to educational matters are to be found within subseries of the Series 1- Commissioner files. Other series within the Records Office Fonds likely contain subseries with files and records that are of relevance, depending on the specific subject being researched.

A finding aid and file list of the Yukon, Records Office Fonds are available at [www.yukonarchives.ca](http://www.yukonarchives.ca)

*(iii) Yukon, Department of Education – 1902–2002*

Formal education responsibilities of the Yukon government began with the Public Service Ordinance of 1902. Under this Ordinance the Superintendent was made responsible for the administration of schools, reporting to the Commissioner of Yukon. For many decades, public school administration was the focus of the Department, and the Superintendent remained the senior responsible official. A separate Department of Education gradually emerged with increased staff and a broader mandate. As of 1970, the department was responsible for public schools and had, in addition, a Recreation Branch and a Vocational and Industrial Training Branch. Over time, the department has been responsible for the following programs and units, which were later transferred to other departments: Rehabilitation, Women's Bureau, Recreation, Libraries, and the Yukon Archives. A major departmental reorganization in 1996/97 resulted in the department consisting of three branches: Advanced Education, Public Schools, and Education Support Services.

Yukon Archives has a large volume of records from the various branches of the Department of Education covering the period 1902–2002. In some instances older Records Office files were brought forward into file systems that were maintained by the Department of Education as it emerged as a distinct entity within the Yukon government. Noteworthy records include school attendance registers and computer generated reports; records of the Public Schools Branch, including exams, reports, committee, and program files; enrolment cards; newsletters; timetables; records pertaining to curriculum development, including educational reviews, stay in school initiatives, and experimental learning modules; recommendations on the administration of schools; files pertaining to negotiations with the Yukon Teachers' Association; and more.

There are 64 m of Department of Education records. The bulk of this material is textual but there are some records in other media and formats. Finding aids and file lists are available for a large portion of the Department of Education records.

**Private Records**

A few private records collections of note are the Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training fonds (1986–1987) and the Carcross Community Education Centre fonds (1970–1979). The Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training was established in August 1986 by the Yukon Territorial Government and the Council for Yukon Indians. Its formation was a direct result of recommendations made to the government in previous reports on the state of native education in the

territory. The objectives of the Commission were (a) to identify, investigate, analyze, and report on the barriers to educational and training opportunities for Yukon Native people and (b) to provide recommendations for changes in policies, procedures, and practices which would eliminate or reduce these barriers. The Carcross Community Education Centre was an experiment in alternate education and community living. It was established to meet the needs of young people, both native and non-native, from the Yukon and elsewhere in Canada, who had been alienated by the impersonal nature of the school system. The philosophy of education at the Centre was one in which learning was experienced through all aspects of living, from academic courses to practical activities (cooking for 50 people, cleaning a boiler, caring for farm animals, hunting, outdoor survival, etc.). These collections include a combination of textual records, photographs, films, and sound recordings.

Other private records collections of potential interest include the Yukon Indian Cultural Education Society fonds (ca. 1960-ca. 1988) and records of individuals prominent in Yukon educational initiatives over the years, including Bill Ferguson, Pearl Keenan, Ted Parnell, Richard King, and others.

### **Publications and Reports**

A useful starting point is Marjorie Almstrom's *A Century of Schooling: Education in the Yukon 1861–1961*. An electronic version of this self-published manuscript is available on the Yukon Archives digital library at <http://yukondigitallibrary.ca/digitalbook/centuryschooling>. This comprehensive history covers early missionary schools, the formation and development of the territorial school system, the residential schools experience, and modern trends in education. Although now somewhat dated (the manuscript was most recently revised in 1991), this work contains a very extensive bibliography of resources available at Yukon Archives.

Yukon First Nations have, in recent years, published a number of books which include documentation of and perspectives on the residential schools experience. These include *Hammerstones: A History of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in* by Helene Dobrowolsky, and *Finding Our Way Home* by Chris Clarke and the Känächá Group.

The Yukon Archives library has prepared a comprehensive bibliography of education resources available in its collection. This includes reports and studies from the Yukon Government Department of Education, the Yukon Native Brotherhood, the Council for Yukon Indians, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Teachers' Association, and others. An additional bibliography, completed in 1991, identifies resources pertaining to residential schools in Yukon. Both bibliographies are available on the Yukon Archives website.

## **References and Contact**

Yukon Archives is located at 400 College Drive, Whitehorse, Yukon. The archives mailing address and contact information is:

Yukon Archives  
Department of Tourism & Culture  
Government of Yukon  
P.O. Box 2703 (L-6)  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Canada Y1A 2C6

Phone: 867-667-5321  
Toll free (In Yukon): 1-800-661-0408, local 5321  
Fax: 867-393-6253  
Email: [yukon.archives@gov.yk.ca](mailto:yukon.archives@gov.yk.ca)

Opening hours/reference services are:

Tuesday and Wednesday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Thursday: 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm  
Friday: 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Saturday: 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Yukon Archives provides one hour of reference and research assistance at no cost to out of Yukon clients.