

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE
PIUS X MISSION SCHOOL IN SKAGWAY,
ALASKA (SKG-00577)**

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Report prepared for
The Municipality of Skagway
The Skagway Traditional Council

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2023

Executive Summary

In May 2022, the Municipality of Skagway, Alaska awarded a contract to the Bureau of Applied Research In Anthropology to conduct an assessment of the cultural significance of Pius X Mission School site, which is slotted for future development. The award was made under the auspices of the Skagway Traditional Council. The assessment entailed archival searches, archaeological fieldwork and analysis, and interviews with former school students or their descendants. This Report details completed research.

Pius X Mission School was founded by Father Edgar Gallant, a Benedictine priest who worked in Alaska beginning in 1918. The school operated from 1931 to 1959 with the assistance of the Sisters of St. Ann, headquartered in Victoria, British Columbia. Children from as far as Nome and Kodiak, Alaska attended the school. Archival searches, which are significant for contextualizing the history and activities during the school operation, entailed the examination of documents from various repositories in the state and elsewhere, including the Sisters of St. Ann's archives at the Royal British Columbia Museum.

Archaeological research consisted of a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey to ascertain the presence of unmarked graves, pedestrian survey of the property to identify architectural remnants of the school as well as artifacts, systematic test excavations across the entire property, and stratigraphic excavations of areas where GPR anomalies indicated the presence of potential graves. Excavations did not identify graves; however, they produced various artifact types associated with school and military activities at the site. It also revealed the existence of undisturbed cultural deposits under the current RV campground. The pedestrian survey further produced evidence of the school's foundations.

Ethnography entailed the identification of potential project participants with the assistance of the Skagway Traditional Council and application of semi-structured interviews with former students or their descendants. Ethnographic research, while very limited, revealed that certain students were orphaned at an early age either by their parents' death or by removal from their homes when the Welfare Department determined that parents were unable to support them. These children were then brought to the school to be educated and resided there for many years. At least one former student permanently lost contact with his family. The students participated in a range of school activities including work at the school farm and other tasks aimed at raising funds for Pius X.

Archival research indicates that Pius X deployed a program of immersive assimilation and Catholic indoctrination in the guise of academic excellence. Systematic abuse and various instances of sexual abuse were documented.

Overall, the project found that the school site contains significant cultural remains pertaining to educational activities. Recommendations include developing a management plan of the property in full partnership with the Skagway Traditional Council.

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Introduction

The Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona (BARA) was contracted by the Municipality of Skagway (MOS), under monitoring by the Skagway Traditional Council (STC), to conduct an archaeological assessment of the Pius X Mission School in Skagway, Alaska (SKG-00577).

The main goal of the project as expressed in the Request for Proposal was to document the historical and cultural significance of the school site. BARA also contracted Northern Land Use Research, LLC (NLUR) to conduct a preliminary Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey and aid in locating potential graves at the site. BARA then conducted a survey and testing of the school grounds to ground-truth GPR anomalies and estimate the extent and nature of archaeological remains at the property.

BARA also conducted archival and ethnographic research to contextualize the archaeological assessment of the property. Archival research focused on identifying materials related to the school operation, its buildings, and its students. BARA also interviewed former students or their descendants to document their experience at the school.

Limitations of the Study

This study suffers from several limitations, particularly in regard to ethnographic information and archival records.

First, most former students at Pius X have passed away; therefore, first-hand stories are very limited. While descendants of students we interviewed were eager to share memories of their relatives, it is unknown how representative these second-hand stories are since shame, memory suppression, and a culture of silence might have prevented students from sharing their experience with spouses, children, or other relatives. Thus, the information gathered here from less than 10 interviews is a sliver of the full student experience. This is particularly true for stories of abuse, including sexual abuse, that students might have refused to share with anyone. We further lack information about change in student experiences through time and by age or gender.

Second, we lack information pertaining to the first decades of Pius X operation and thus this is a glaring gap in the school records. According to Cantwell and Edmond (1992:198), records were lost during the 1945 fire that destroyed the original school building. It is also possible that the school founder, Father Gallant, kept records to himself. Most available archival records come from the church and the government and do not reflect instances of abuse of any kind.

Structure of the Report

The report has two parts. The first part begins with a brief historical overview of the Indian Boarding School System in the United States and Alaska to help contextualize Pius X Residential School. Next, the report discusses the boarding school experience for Native American children

generally and locally at Pius X. Here, archival sources pertaining to the school activities are brought into perspective to better understand how and why students' experiences varied along a negative-positive continuum. Unfortunately, there are precious few living voices from the former Pius X students, nevertheless, they provide some light into the boarding school experience. We weave historical records, both published and unpublished, as well as student voices to best assess this experience.

In the second part, the report details the methods and results of archaeological fieldwork and analysis, including Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), systematic survey and testing of the school grounds, excavation of GPR anomalies, and artifact analysis.

The report also includes archival photographs and appendices.

Part 1: History and Ethnography

Archival Methods

We consulted multiple published and unpublished sources to reconstruct Pius X Residential School experiences. We searched for published materials on Google Books, Google Scholar, and WorldCat. We initially identified several repositories that may contain archival materials related to the Pius X Mission:

- Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Anchorage
- Municipality of Skagway (MOS) and Skagway Museum
- Skagway Traditional Council (STC)
- Skagway News
- St Theresa Catholic Church, Skagway
- Diocese of Juneau
- Archdiocese of Anchorage
- Alaska State Archives, Juneau
- Sisters of St Ann, Victoria, BC
- National Archives, Seattle, WA

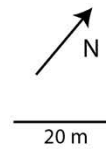
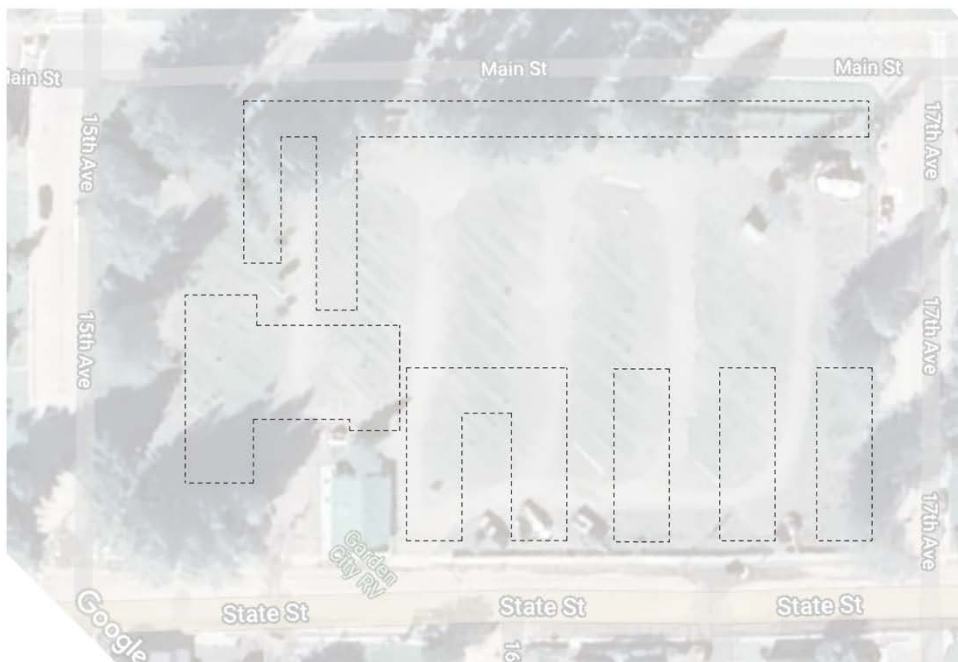
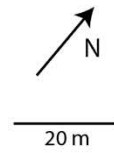
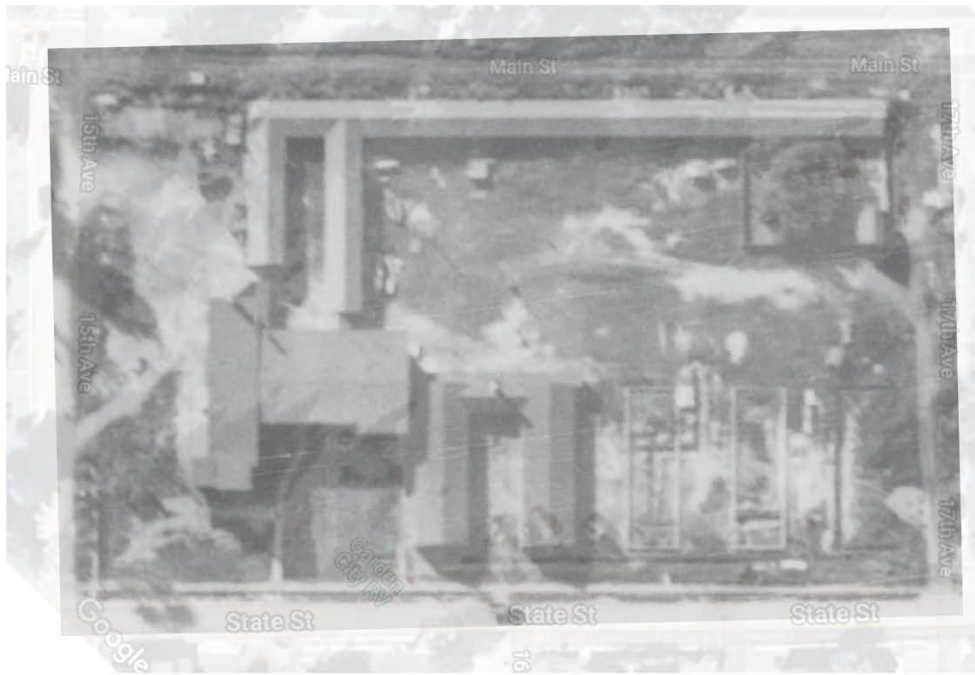
Discussion with people and staff in each of these locations led to the identification of additional potential repositories:

- Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Skagway
- Jesuit Archives, Saint Louis, MO
- Sheldon Jackson Museum, Sitka
- Royal British Columbia Museum Archives, Victoria

Documents related to the Pius X Mission School include government hearings, class rosters and grade reports, correspondence, meeting transcripts, newspaper clips, postcards, and photographs (Table 1). The Skagway Museum provided numerous photographs of students, a selection of which is scattered throughout this report. The Klondike Gold Rush NHP provided aerial pictures that assisted the archaeological survey and the interpretation of its findings (Figure 1). The experiences Pius X offered to students can be best gleaned from the journals kept by the Sisters of St. Ann, which chronicle academic performance, student work, and student involvement in community festivities and activities. The journals are complemented by correspondence and a large photographic archive kept by the Sisters.

Table 1. Identified (I) and consulted (X) archival documents pertaining to the Pius X Mission School.

Source	Descriptive History	Correspondence	Rosters & Grade Reports	City Census	Accounting & Receipts	Government Hearings & Bills	Meeting Transcripts	Newspapers Clips	Postcards & Photographs	Comments
Google Books						I				
Alaska OHA and SHPO										no site form
MOS-Museum									X	
STC										
Skagway News								X	X	
Church-Archdiocese										STC requested info, no response
Alaska State Archives		I	I							
National Archives				X						
Sisters of St Ann										archives transferred to Royal BC Museum
Klondike Gold Rush NHP							X		X	
Jesuit Archives									X	
Sheldon Jackson										
Royal BC Museum	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	



--- est. extent of buildings

Figure 1. Overlay of archival aerial picture with modern satellite picture (top), and estimated extent of the historical buildings on the current property (bottom). Represented buildings correspond to the school after the fire, with the main building on the bottom left and the five dormitories or “cottages” (three in construction on the picture) aligned along State Street.

Compare to Figure 4 where photographs are taken from State Street.

Ethnographic Methods

A significant component of this project entailed ethnographic interviews with former school students or their descendants. Sadly, very few students are still alive and well enough to provide interviews. Interviews were thematic and semi-structured. Themes included:

- Date and place of birth
- Ethnic / community affiliation
- Relationship with the school
- Recruitment method
- Years in school
- Grades attended
- Narrative of experience
 - Teachers
 - Peers
 - Classwork
 - Work / chores
 - Play time
 - Family visits
 - Other topics (e.g., substance abuse, physical or emotional abuse)

We asked for assistance from STC to identify and recruit potential project participants and expected to have up to 10 interviews, but in two instances former students who lived outside Skagway have lost their hearing and could not be interviewed by phone. Another student suffered a stroke and could not be interviewed. Two individuals did not reply to our invitation.

When integrated, both sources of information (archives and interviews) provide a valuable picture of the boarding school experience at Pius X.

Background: The Indian Boarding School System

The Indian Boarding School System (hereafter “the system”) has become the epitome of the US Government genocidal philosophy toward Native Americans, Native Alaskans, and Hawaiian Native Communities – a powerful ancestor that bore terrible offspring: poverty, family disfunction, violence, isolation, substance abuse, and suicide (Child 2014:268). Since its inception, the system’s main goal was to dispossess Indians from their territories through assimilation and extinction (Adams 1995; US Senate 1969:142). A strong focus on vocational training and the militarization of older children dominated boarding schools to provide gainful means of employment upon graduation, however, many of those children who returned to their reservations failed to find gainful employment or reintegration into their cultural communities (Krupat 2021; Newland 2022).

In the United States, Indian education began in the early colonial period, when the Jesuit Order opened the first mission school in Florida in 1568. For the next 300 years, Indian education was entrusted to the Church, with the goal of converting children to Christianity and extirpating them from their tribal ways. Venerable institutions of higher education, such as the College of William and Mary and Dartmouth College began, in fact, as colonial Indian schools (US Senate 1969:140).

Shortly after the US Constitution was drafted by the Forefathers, it became explicit that government-mandated education as a means to dissolve the traditional structure of native communities was one of three avenues of dispossession; the other two were treaties that vastly reduced or extirpated their land base, and indebtedness that would force individuals to forfeit their land to pay their debts.

Funds for the system were initially drawn from the Indian Civilization Fund, which operated from 1819 until 1873, and thereafter obtained from Congressional appropriations, Indian and public land sales, and bonds and securities. Some funding also came from Tribal Trust accounts including those based on Indian land cessions that the United States managed on their behalf (Newland 2022:43). In other words, the monies that rightfully belonged to native communities were used to assimilate and dispossess them through compulsory education in abusive institutions often located far from their families and tribes. After generations of family dysfunction due to the removal of children from their parents' homes, often permanently, the system became a proxy for child welfare, where orphaned, abused, or impoverished children found structure, shelter, and community in their peers (Krupat 2021).

In many of these institutions, children were subjected to physical and psychological punishment; solitary confinement; sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies; unhealthy living conditions and crowding; hunger and untreated illness; and forced labor. Children as young as 6 years old were made to work in farms, workshops, and other tasks that schools required (Meriam 1928:11-12). Children were sometimes loaned to strangers to perform menial tasks and were severely punished if they refused (Tang 2023). As a result, many children escaped. In Alaska, children were given metal tags to wear around their necks. Each tag had the number of their house engraved in it, by which they could be identified if they escaped; their parents received fines and imprisonment if they refused to return children to the school (Newland 2022:66). In the words of Alaskan elder James LaBelle, who attended the infamous Wrangell Institute in southeastern Alaska, children came to think that their numbers were their names. When investigating abuses at the Institute, for example, Diane Hinsberg was told how a culture of violence among children was created; older children were encouraged to physically punish younger children for speaking their native language (Hinsberg and Sharp 2005). It was not until the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1977 that the outrageous conditions of native children in and out of schools were formally addressed by the US government.

The system was instrumental in the loss of cultural knowledge, languages, and values that for millennia had sustained highly diverse and thriving native populations across the North American continent. Two critical government reports detail the system's failure to provide healthy and productive means of education to thousands of native children (Meriam 1928; US Senate 1969). Myriad scholarly publications in law, history, literature, psychology, public health, and anthropology detail the consequences of native children suffering (e.g., Barnes et al. 2006; Bombay et al. 2014; Breaveheart 2003; Child and Klopotek 2014; Fort 2019; Running Bear et al. 2019; Wilk et al. 2017). Recently Canadian journalist Connie Walker won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize in audio journalism for her Indian residential school podcast *Stolen: Surviving St. Michaels*. Yet the message somewhat fails to reach the average American consciousness.

While in Canada the system has been a matter of national dialogue since 2006, only very recently have Indian boarding schools been brought to the public attention in the US. Recognizing that the system has caused intergenerational historical trauma among native communities including, but not limited to, the loss of children to illness and violent death, in 2021 US Secretary of Interior

Deb Haaland mandated an official investigation of Federally funded schools. The first investigative report of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative was released in May 2022 (Newland 2022). This report shows for the first time that, between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408 Federal Indian boarding schools. In addition, the Federal government may have supported hundreds of other institutions such as orphanages, day schools, asylums, stand-alone dormitories, and sanatoriums operated or assisted by religious institutions and organizations. Pius X Mission School is one of these institutions and will be added to the next version of the report.

Many children did not return home. The report states that at least 53 Federal Indian boarding schools have marked and unmarked school graves of children that attest to the brutal conditions under which the system often operated. Of these, approximately 19 schools accounted for over 500 American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian child deaths (Newland 2022:9). The Department of Interior expects that, as its investigation continues, the number of deaths will increase. The report contains not only a history of the system but also descriptions of how it was practically developed in Alaska, Hawaii, and 35 other US states or territories. In the case of Pius X, investigations of certain areas of the school, e.g., the farm, will likely not be possible due to the fact that the land has been passed to private ownership.

Native Education in Alaska

Alaska has a unique history of native education during the colonial period and under the US government. Alaska's remoteness and ruggedness contributed to a much slower assimilation process than the rest of the US. Native populations were not conquered through war, forceful removal (although slavery was instituted in Russian colonies), or confinement in reservations, however, they suffered comparatively greater dispossession than tribal communities elsewhere due to political ambiguities about their legal status, which was not recognized through treaties. As a result, the Federal government did not incur formal obligations toward Alaska Natives after its purchase from Russia in 1867.

The relative autonomy of these communities coupled with quiet but progressive encroachment of non-Native and government agencies in the past century have further undermined sovereignty and tribal status. At the time of the purchase, Alaska Natives were not considered American Indians but, rather, populations of Asian origins who should not be treated as nations or wards of the state given their suspect ethnic origins. This misconception lasted decades and fueled segregation akin to that suffered by African Americans in the US South. Even as recently as 1988 the US Supreme Court ruled inconsistently on Alaska Native sovereign rights and Alaska's possession of "Indian Country" (Huhndorf and Huhndorf 2014:133-134; Moorehouse 1992).

Although motivated by the same assimilationist philosophy, education of native children in Alaska has a distinctive trajectory. Beginning in the late 18th century, the earliest schools were founded under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church and later the Russian American Trading Company. As many as 50 schools were in operation at the time of Alaska's purchase, the majority of which were located along the coast. Education in general as well as rule of law were neglected by the US government during the first two decades after the purchase; citizens had to come together and fund their own school, as it occurred in Sitka. Education was instituted in Skagway as early as

1897 (Thornton 2004). It took decades to bring native education up to earlier standards set by Russian educators (Getches 1977: chapter 1).

In 1884, Congress passed the Alaska Organic Act. The act established civil government in the territory, which had been without any civil law or devices for dispute resolution since the purchase. Provisions were also made for the education of children. Under the act the Secretary of the Interior was charged with making "needful and proper provision for the education of the children of school age in the Territory of Alaska, without reference to race, until such time as permanent provision shall be made for the same." The last Russian school closed in 1916 as the US government took charge of education. Until then, mission schools were run by the Presbyterian Church in southeastern Alaska, as well as the Orthodox Church in the southeast coast, northern coast, and Aleutian Islands (Getches 1977: chapter 1).

When the Office of Indian Affairs declined to take responsibility for Alaska Natives due to their suspect ethnic origins, the US Congress assigned the responsibility for their education to the Bureau of Indian Education (Huhndorf and Huhndorf 2014). In all, the Federal government supported or operated 21 boarding schools in Alaska, some of which had more than one site. Religious institutions and organizations were contracted to run many of these schools with some federal support. However, it was quickly discovered that in Alaska and across the US missionary education varied widely in academic standards and overall retention of native children (Meriam 1928). The government then cut funding and pushed for non-sectarian schools unless these could not be provided.

With the passing of the Nelson Act of 1905, Congress empowered the Alaska Territorial Legislature to develop a formal school system. However, the Act did not contain provisions for native children. This oversight created a bifurcated school system wherein white children were entrusted to territorial schools, but native children continued to attend mission schools contracted by the Federal government, thus fostering segregation. It was not until 1917 that legislation was passed to ensure native children were provided education through Federal appropriations. Although the territorial legislature took responsibility for increased funding of public education, native education was slow to develop, and integration was difficult. In 1930 Congress began contracting with territorial school boards for native education and schools progressively were transferred from Federal to territorial control. Between 1934 and 1969 several dozen Federally funded schools were transferred to territorial and, after 1959, state funding (Getches 1977: chapter 1). While the legislature required that schools be opened in communities with at least 8 school-age children, such schools served predominantly white communities where native children were not welcome (Hinsberg and Sharp 2005:2).

Because of the remoteness of some Alaska Native communities, children were often taken away and sent to schools across the state and the country. In 1966, the State of Alaska increased options for Native students by establishing a boarding home program in which Native students moved to urban areas to attend school and lived with families that were compensated by the state (Hingsberg and Sharp 2005:1). Hundreds of Alaskan native children without local school access went to Chemawa School in Oregon. The overflow went to boarding schools in Oklahoma; in 1968, for example, more than 400 Alaska natives were attending Chilocco Boarding School (US Senate 1969:160). Displacement, which was deemed important for thorough assimilation, had the effect of preventing parents from visiting children and vice versa; many students did not see their families for years or ever again. In one extreme case of identity loss, a student spent the first 23 years of his life without knowing he was Alaska Native (Hinsberg and Sharp 2005). Displaced children

acquired school-borne identities and putative relatives regardless of tribal affiliation in order to create community and ease loneliness "because if we didn't stick together we'd get into trouble. And togetherness was a way of holding on to your own self" (Hinsberg and Sharp 2005:17; Krupat 2021).

It is widely acknowledged that social dysfunction experienced by native families and communities throughout the 20th century largely derived from children's inability to learn parenting skills at home since they were not present at critical developmental years (Child 2014). In Alaska, rampant tuberculosis, alcoholism, and abject poverty – all of which resulted from Euroamerican trade, influx of White prospectors during the Gold Rush, lack of government support, encroachment, and erosion of traditional lifeways – made orphans of school children who found their only notion of socialization in the boarding school experience. For example, in 1985 former Pius X student Fred Mahle (Aleut) told the following to *The Skagway Alaskan*:

If I hadn't been at the mission, I don't know where the heck I'd been... without an organization like Pius X Mission ... where the heck would any of us be? (in Thornton 2004:236).

According to Hinsberg and Sharp (2005), the incidence of suicide during and after attending school in Alaska is high, with an instance of 9 students committing suicide in one school in a single year. More generally, Manson et al. (1989) reported that at least 23% of Native Americans who attended boarding schools attempted suicide due to intergenerational trauma and its nefarious consequences.

Pius X Residential School, Skagway (brief description)

The mountainous region of southeastern Alaska around Skagway was home to the Chilkoot and Chilkat divisions of the large Tlingit ethnic group. These divisions controlled the mountain passes that brought a host of Euroamericans (miners, businessmen, explorers, and missionaries) to the Klondike and other gold fields toward the end of the 19th century (Thornton 2004). While Presbyterian and Orthodox churches had generally dominated education in the region, Skagway did not have a school until 1897, even though at the height of the gold rush it housed as many as 3,000 people. Jesuit missionaries arrived in Skagway during this time (Cantwell and Edmond 1992:178). The Skagway Public School began operation in 1901 (Thornton 2004:230).

Archival and published sources offer a detailed picture of the founding and operation of the Pius X Mission and its school. Father Edgar Gallant, founder of Pius X Residential School, was a recently ordained Benedictine priest who came to Skagway in 1918 to replace the local Jesuit missionary. Gallant was adamant about education of native children "to turn them away from harmful sectarian influences or government influences" (Archives S74:2); he wanted to build a mission similar to Holy Cross on the Yukon River. He purchased land on the Skagway River through a generous gift of J. M. Klein from Chicago, as he intended to build a school for native children that would compare well with the territorial Indian school that was being planned for what would become the Wrangell Institute.

Gallant was an excellent fundraiser; it still took him 12 years to obtain the necessary funds through private donation of \$30,000 from John F. O'Dea of Canton, Ohio, who asked that the school be called Pius X in gratitude for favors the Pope had granted him (Cantwell and Edmond 1992:180). In all, the school was funded with a total of \$65,000 in donations. It has been confirmed that Father

Gallant also received Federal funding for the school (Skagway Traditional Council personal communication, 2023). Gallant also served nine years as the Board Chairman of the Department of Public Welfare, a position that likely increased his awareness of the need to house orphaned children at Pius X (Nord 1921 entry).

The mission school was built in 1931 and its 33 rooms were to house 60 children.

The handsome structure of brick and tile was 120 feet long, 57 feet wide, and two full stories in height. It [...] can boast an oil-burner heating system, hot and cold running water, showers, spacious dormitories, airy class-rooms, recreation rooms, and a commodious chapel. (*Chronicles*, introduction)

It was the most modern native school in Alaska and rivaled only the Federal Wrangell Institute for elementary school children. The Sisters of Saint Ann arrived in Skagway in 1932 from their mother house in Victoria, BC at the bequest of Alaska's Bishop Crimont and a deacon, Leo A. Dufour, was also secured to educate older children. The Sisters of Saint Ann were well known across Alaska and Canada for their mission to educate Native children. Recently, the Order recognized its role in cultural suppression and shaming as well as abuse or lack of protection toward students in their care. A large children cemetery was recently discovered in association with one of the Sisters' schools in British Columbia – Kamloops Indian Residential School (Canadian Religious Conference 2014).

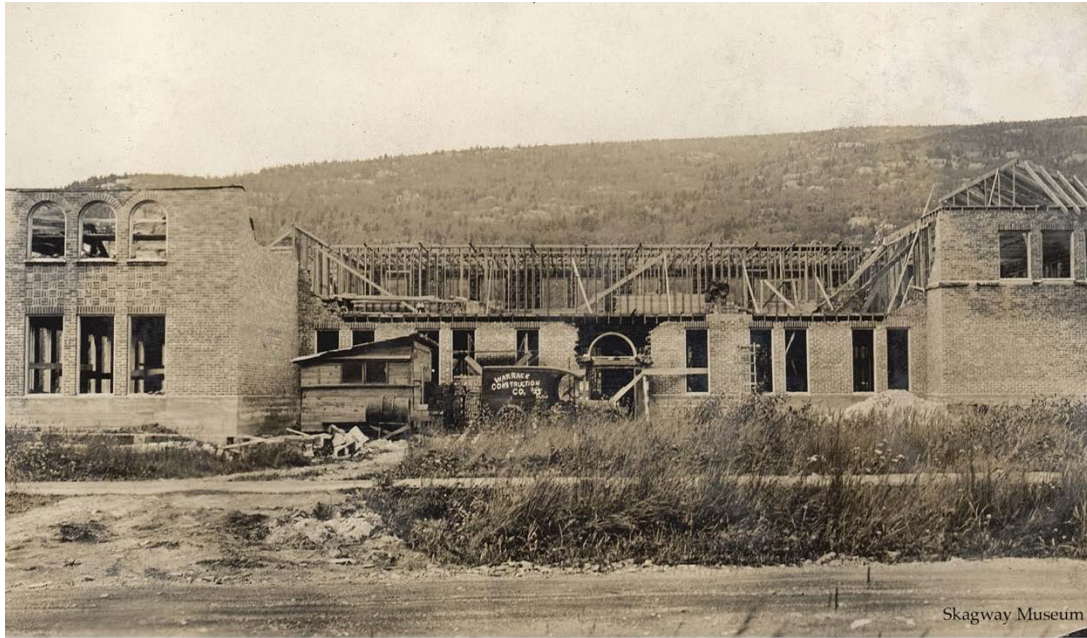
Pius X initially offered classes for grades 1-6 for the first 52 enrolled pupils and progressively added other grades, including high school. In the first year Pius X enrolled 42 pupils. By 1939 the school had an enrollment of 44 boys and 25 girls. Native children came from as far as Nome (Brady 2013:246-251). Enrollment increased as Pius X began to admit day school children from the local community. The school's intent was to provide basic education as well as religious indoctrination, housekeeping, and a variety of crafts and skills, notably musical arts. Children learned domestic chores and cooking among other crafts and skills encouraged by Father Gallant, including carving, leather work, pottery making, and weaving. Music was especially emphasized at the school, which eventually came to own a full children's band and choir. When Father Gallant purchased the Skagway Pioneer Dairy, older children were required to care for farm chores. Crafts made by the students and eggs from the dairy were sold by the Sisters to support the school.

Despite operational tensions between Father Gallant and the Sisters, the school continued to function throughout World War II (Cantwell and Edmond 1992:192). Pius X Mission burned to the ground in 1945. The school children were sheltered in neighboring homes, at the community hall, and the Skagway Sanatorium. Army barracks were secured and modified for use by school personnel and children. Father Gallant then organized a fundraiser to rebuild the school, which was completed in 1948 and intended to house 120 children.

The main building, a two-story stucco structure, is occupied by the chapel, class-rooms, dining-rooms, sewing rooms, kitchen, laundry, and sleeping quarters for the Sisters who are not perfecting the children. The walls of the main building are done in scored plywood and all the ceilings are in acoustical tile. The chapel is finished in cedar and has a seating accommodation for two hundred twenty. The new organ is a Hammond electric organ, complete with outside chimes which can be heard within a radius of two miles. Children's sleeping quarters are all in separate units – five in all – and all joined to the main building by a ramp. The sleeping units, called cottages, each capable of housing twenty-four pupils,

are divided off into living-rooms and dormitories. There is a central heating unit for the five cottages (*Chronicles*, 1948).

Thereafter, Gallant spent more time away from the school, leaving the Sisters to educate and resolve problems. Nevertheless, Pius X was once considered a high-performing Indian boarding school in Alaska Territory (Brady 2013; Thornton 2004). The waning years of Pius X were difficult and disturbing. Father Francis A. Cowgill took over as principal and teacher in 1952 after Father Gallant left for Anchorage. Cowgill's sexual proclivities (formally recognized as pedophilia by the Dioceses of Anchorage and Juneau), in addition to unnamed teachers/priests sexual misconduct, fostered an abusive environment that affected students profoundly even decades after the school demise. Furthermore, older children from juvenile detention centers were transferred to Pius X, which encouraged violence and distrust in the school and local community. School operations became increasingly difficult with funding shortages and structural decay of the school buildings. Given these problems and the reluctance of other Catholic priests to take charge of mission duties, Pius X closed in 1959 (Cantwell and Edmond 1992:199).



Skagway Museum
 Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, c. 1932
 View looking West
 Skagway Museum, Berg Collection-2



Figure 2. First school building during (top, looking northwest) and after (bottom, looking north) construction. The bottom image is annotated with the location of the different rooms, from left to right, top floor: chapel, girls' dor[mitories], srs [sisters] rooms, b[oys] dorm[itories]; bottom floor: grs [girls] D.R. [dressing room?], rec[reation] room, classroom, office fe[.] R. (?), classr[oom]. Top: Skagway Museum archives; bottom: Royal BC Museum archives.



Figure 3. School building after the fire. Royal BC Museum archives.



Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, c. 1958
View looking Northwest
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-2587



Pius X Mission and Barracks, Skagway, Alaska, c. 1950
View looking Northwest
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-2159

Figure 4. Second school building and dormitories, looking north. Skagway Museum archives.



Pius X Mission Students and Staff
 Skagway, Alaska, 1940
 Skagway Museum, Kasbohm Collection-1

Bottom row: ① Ed Pickernel ④ John Cristovich ⑫ Barbara Crabtree ⑭ Tom Cristovich
 left to right

Second row: ① Lucille Roundtree ② Edith Gardner, Father Gallant, Sister Mary Aimee ⑩

second row: ⑫ Tiny Stokes ⑬ Winfred Woods ⑭ Dorothy Sheldon, ⑮ Gladys Roberts ⑰ Mary Crist-
 -vich

3rd row: ① Maude? ⑦ Betty Blake ⑪ David Brown, ⑫ Pat Cristovich, Sam? ⑬

3rd row: ⑭ Bob Sheldon ⑮ Betty Lunden, ⑯ Isabel Moreno, Agnes Roundtree ⑰

⑱ Emma Cristovich, ⑲ Gladys Roberts, ⑳ Pearl Jackson

4th row: ④ - ⑥ Pete Landy, ⑧ Dan Marino, ⑩ ? Ely, Eugene ⑫ Sheldon
 Top

⑬ ? Marino ⑱ Bernard?

Reverse of Photo
 Pius X Mission Students and Staff, Skagway, Alaska, 1940
 Skagway Museum, Kasbohm Collection-1

Figure 5. Pius X mission students, Skagway Museum archives. Some students may be misidentified (see #15 and #19).



Pius X Mission Dairy Float, Skagway, Alaska, July 4, 1947
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-01901



Pius X Mission Weaving Loom, Skagway, Alaska, April 1952
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-01907

Figure 6. Pius X mission dairy float and weaving loom, Skagway Museum archives.



Pius X Mission Students, Skagway, Alaska, April 1952
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-2594



Figure 7. Pius X students crafting ceramics and fringed leather jackets for sale to tourists.



Yakutat Altar Boys, Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, c. 1940
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-788



School of Music, Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, 1940
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-761

Figure 8. Pius X Mission students, Skagway Museum Archives.

The Boarding School Experience from a Native Perspective

Increasingly, narratives of the Indian boarding school experience are becoming the voices of communities whose children left them, voluntarily or forcibly. In these narratives one finds two types of experience: individual and collective. The collective experience is one of layered historical trauma that began at the time of European contact and culminated with land dispossession, poverty, social dysfunction, and cultural loss, a central part of which was education for assimilation, dispossession, and extinction (Adams 1995; Montgomery 2019). The individual experience, on the other hand, is more nuanced; students variously describe their experience in boarding schools along a continuum from negative to positive (Hinsberg and Sharp 2005; Krupat 2021; Lomawaima 1994).

To better contextualize this continuum and understand the discomfort that positive individual memories might bring to communities assailed by historical trauma, it is important to document the living conditions experienced by children at the time they were recruited by Indian schools. Were children removed from healthy and intact families and thus lost parents, freedom, and cultural/economic wealth or were they already hardened and disheartened by years of dispossession? These preconditions had influence on how each student viewed their Western education and understood their Indian identity upon returning to their native community. Krupat (2021) notes that children who had already been dispossessed or living a dysfunctional life generally viewed the boarding school as a sheltering, stabilizing environment (e.g., Thornton 2004:236), whereas children who were forcefully removed from healthy homes and communities were prisoners of the schools. Ultimately, the continuum is the product of assimilation for dispossession and extinction.

The mistaken notion that “all Indians are alike” (Lomawaima 1999:5) has influenced non-native views of the Indian boarding school experience as a positive step toward integration in a capitalist society. Native communities had their own trajectories which, in turn, predisposed their children to fail, survive, or succeed in boarding school. Equally significant is the individual. Montgomery (2019) observes that individual narratives of boarding schools are akin to war veteran narratives; some warriors excel at post-war reentry in society while others are mired in post-traumatic stress disorder. While the positive can be shared, the negative is generally buried under a blanket of silence wherein the experience becomes haunting. Former Pius X student Fred Mahle (Aleut) told the following to *The Skagway Alaskan* in 1985:

I learned quite a few things. I learned humility, I learned bitterness, I learned patience. I learned how to hate, vengeance, revenge. I learned how to live, I learned how to forgive, **I learned how to forget...** (in Thornton 2004:236) (emphasis added)

Community and individual healing, therefore, begin with school stories. Most stories of early boarding schools come from students’ descendants and thus are limited to what was shared among family members or whether relatives suffered the consequences of living in families traumatized by the boarding school. In some cases, the alienation of silence and loss of identity becomes unbearable – hence the high incidence of substance abuse, violence, and suicide in native communities. The Pius X Residential School experience fits within this assimilation model.

Assimilation at Pius X Residential School

As noted above, the US-Alaska Native history of relationships was characterized by legal ambiguity, informality, and denial of sovereign rights, all of which resulted in loss of land and resource use rights, lack of basic services such as health and legal mediation, segregation, and unemployment or oppressive employment away from the community, among other ills. It is important to keep in mind that many Alaskan native children suffered from family dysfunction, parental abandonment or neglect, or outright orphanhood. These issues, in turn, fostered social dysfunction wherein children failed to thrive and were unprepared for adulthood in Native communities. The Alaska Native school system, whether administered by religious institutions, Federal agencies, or Territorial/State legislatures, was uniquely designed as a proxy for welfare. Pius X native students came from various regions inside and outside southeastern Alaska. Most of them were displaced and isolated from native communities beyond the local Skagway native population. In fact, the school journals suggest that only a portion of the students returned to their homes after the end of the school year. As indicated in the records and in ethnographic interviews, students who had nowhere to go or did not know where home was stayed at the mission for their entire childhood and adolescence.

The mission of Pius X was to provide native children with basic education, religious indoctrination, housekeeping skills, and craftsmanship. This goal was accomplished with exacting success according to record keepers (see also Thornton 2004:234-236). The Sisters wrote that native children were docile and amenable to indoctrination. Although it is inconceivable that a large group of school children did not customarily rebel or challenge the system even at the cost of punishment, the end result was a successful model of willful assimilation into mainstream American culture and Catholicism. The Pius X charter, as outlined by Bishop Crimont at Mission school inauguration, called for charitable authority and rejection of institutional cruelty (such as practiced at Wrangell Institute):

Follow the example of Our Blessed Lord. Always He was patient and kind with the ungrateful and the ignorant. He was merciful and compassionate, seldom severe. I advise you, Sisters, never to nag at those under your care. If you have harsh remarks to make, give them collectively rather than privately or individually. This system which, as a rule, works well with white children, would not apply to Indians, who are sensitive and do not forget easily (Bishop Crimont, 1932).

Despite this mandate and Father Gallant's care for "his" children (Thornton 2004:234), the school system nonetheless abused and alienated children, literally brainwashing them, stripping them of their traditional culture under the guise of academic excellence, competition, social obligations, and celebration. Student responses, as we describe below, varied from acceptance to silence to repudiation. The price children paid for assimilation and abuse, including sexual abuse, is recorded in at least one known instance of family violence, one of criminal adult pedophilia, and one of suicide.

The Sisters journal indicates that native children in their care had already had enduring relationships with whites and that their manners and culture resembled more those of the whites than their native communities. Yet, those children who could go back to their communities continued with traditional practices. From published history, unpublished journals, photographs, and testimony of former students and descendants, a picture of assimilation arises, one that took many forms as outlined below.

Academic Excellence

Since its inception, the academic program at Pius X strove for excellence (Thornton 2004:235-236). Father Gallant, the architect of the elementary school curriculum, emphasized high performance from the students. When the 7th and 8th grades were added to the school, the Sisters kept an annual record of 8th grade performance at the Territorial Examination, which was taken by all 8th graders across Alaska. Anywhere from 5 to 15 students took this exam each year; almost without exception, Pius X students passed the examination, some with exceptional marks (99/100). Graduation was, of course, a cause for great celebration, as Pius X thrived on success and outward display of academic pride. Once high school was instituted at Pius X (post-1945), the Sisters also recorded annual high school graduations (1-5 annually). Older students were expected to successfully compete against local schools. In one instance (1955), a Pius X high school student won the American League Medal for his essay, entitled *Our Heritage – Freedom of Religion and What it Means to Me*. As in other Indian schools across the United States, notably Carlisle Indian Industrial School, literary writing was expected from the students and rewarded as an example of civilization (Krupat 2021).

Artistic Performance

Music emerged as one of the most enduring strategies that these schools employed to reshape the cultural sensibilities of young Native Americans (Veerbeek 2020).

It is clear that music marked a more profound transition toward assimilation for Native Americans at Indian boarding schools like the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. (Winston 2019).

I guess my music is what I gained most from there. I still play the trumpet. They were excellent teachers. I grew up among regimentation with them, but you learned. (Lee Jimmie, former Pius X student, in Thornton 2004:236)

Father Gallant's vision of academic excellence at Pius X also emphasized the arts. Music was the main focus of his arts curriculum, as practice contributed to discipline (and a "heavy hand with the ruler," Shannon Ames interview, 2022) and character formation. In 1938 Gallant purchased a large set of musical instruments from the Skagway Band and, within a year, the school had a full highly performing band which gave its first public recital in Easter Sunday of 1939. The school also had a choir and a dance troupe. Although the burning of the mission buildings in 1945 disrupted the activities of its music band, it was reinstated after the new school building was rebuilt in 1948. Students were also expected to develop theater performance as well as artistic design. For example, the annual poster competitions in Skagway brought numerous prizes to the school. In 1946-47 three senior boys entered the American League poster competition and won the first three prizes. Similarly, in 1949 six of nine prizes went to mission students for the national Dental Week poster competition. Winners of the Poppy Posters had their art displayed at various venues in Skagway.

Craftsmanship

The school curriculum involved training in a variety of crafts. While the students might have benefited from this training, craft work was primarily aimed at supporting the school from the proceeds of crafts sales to tourists: in the 1950s the mission had its own craft store. Craft training included weaving, for which Father Gallant bought looms both for his own use and children's education, leatherwork, sewing, pottery making, and wood carving. While all the artwork produced in the school by students and teachers was aimed at fundraising, it is unclear whether traditional wood carving ever made it to the tourist market. In 1939-1940 Samuel Jackson, a local artist "versed in the almost forgotten art of carving totem poles" was hired by the school to teach students how to carve. This was perhaps the only Alaskan traditional craft the students learned. On the other hand, there were "Indian" crafts decidedly not of Alaskan tradition, such as fringed leatherwork and pottery that were made for sale. "Indian" crafting for sale trivialized the cultural importance of objects in Alaska Native culture and traditional knowledge systems that often place object making within the ritual domain. Furthermore, using school time to make students do manual labor might have violated child labor laws of the time (Newland 2022; Pendharkar 2022).

Varsity Sports

Additionally, Pius X had a competitive basketball team. The Sisters recorded their wins and losses against other schools but, unfortunately, not in a systematic fashion. Boys and girls were routinely encouraged or chaperoned, respectively, to attend local basketball games. Calisthenics were also a part of the sports curriculum, which extended into performances by the children. (1958)

When in 1930 the Skagway scout group refused to accept native children, Father Gallant created his own scout group with the Pius X students (Thornton 2004). It is unknown how long this group lasted, given his frequent absences from the mission.

In sum, Pius X academic, artistic, and sporting curricula filled most waking hours of students' activity. There was little or no time left for them to engage in any extra-curricular activity involving traditional cultural practices other than occasional hunting and fishing forays in which only boys were involved.

Religious Indoctrination

As a Catholic mission, the most pressing goal of Pius X was to indoctrinate students. The Sisters' journals chronicle in detail the number of masses they and the students attended daily. On some special days, there were up to six daily masses celebrated at the mission. Students were required to attend at least one, if not two, daily masses. Additionally, they were required to learn catechism, say rosaries, and keep vigils on certain ceremonies, like the Forty Hour vigil. The Sisters noted that students were "very generous" with their time in keeping vigils. Baptisms were scrupulously recorded each year; first communions and confirmations were often noted but not systematically recorded. As part of their artistic performance, the children's choir also was required to sing high mass (although this is not explicitly stated, the choir likely sang in Latin, which was taught at the school).

Interestingly, as time passed and more local day school children (native and non-native) were admitted to Pius X, the number of protestant children rose to one-third and one-half of the total

student body. The increasing number of non-Catholics in the end was one of the causes for the demise of the Mission, as no priest would come to take on the Mission work when there were not enough Catholics to minister (1959).

Celebration

Pius X thrived on celebration. Numerous religious dates were observed, including St. Patrick's Day (also Father Gallant's birthday), St. Theresa's Day (the "Flower of Jesus" and patron saint of Alaska), Palms Sunday, and Easter in the Spring; All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas in the Fall. After Father Cowgill arrived at the school, St. Francis Day, his patron saint, was also cause for celebration. The students were deeply engaged in the preparation of these ceremonies as well as in the artistic performance they required. On any given Christmas Eve, for example, the student choir had to sing back-to-back midnight masses for the local community who attended them. In addition, students had holidays whenever an important religious visitor came to the school, so they also learned to associate religious occasions with free time during which students took long hikes or attended picnics. Not surprisingly, students generally kept true their catholic faith until their death.

Strict observance of a celebratory calendar at Pius X extended to secular dates. Valentine's Day and Halloween were notable in that they were specifically focused on the children. Valentine's Day included the election of a King and Queen of Hearts among the older students (1954). Halloween was marked by the making of children's costumes. Children were encouraged to make decorations, so time was devoted to these celebrations beyond schoolwork. As American culture flourished in the early 1950s, Dance Night and Prom Day were added to the calendar – the latter with the election of a king and queen. New Year's Day was also marked with a feast. Another tradition instituted in 1951, for example, was the graduating formal dance when students "read their last will and testament and made prophecies for the future" based on accomplishments of previous graduates. Talent shows were also run by the students (1953).

Civic celebrations were dutifully observed and highly anticipated, including Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving. Sisters and students entered the Skagway Fourth of July parade and float contest, often winning cash prizes (1953). In these parades, children were often made to wear caricature "Indian" outfits that resembled the typical stereotype of Indigenous people all looking like the Sioux of the Plains. This practice could have demeaned children and possibly eroded further their native tribal identities. Thanksgiving, of course, was a great feast.

Notably absent in the calendar were Alaska Native celebratory dates, such as Solstice, especially Winter Solstice, which marks the end of darkness in the North. Only in the last year of Pius X was a native game introduced in the calendar.

Food and Feasting

Catholic indoctrination and assimilation into mainstream American culture followed a strict calendar of highly anticipated religious and secular celebration, which marked not only free time but also involved artistic performance and competition among students and between Pius X and other local schools. Importantly, this calendar introduced the notion of *feasting*, not in the traditional native way, but in the expectation that good food was only served for special occasions.

Except for times when donations of fresh fruit were made to the school, at Pius X children were customarily served subpar food (certainly far less appetizing than the food the school staff ate daily). For example, the Sisters maintained the dairy, required children to clean the coops of up to 500 birds (which caused disease and respiratory problems), and sold eggs to support the school. Yet, they never served the students fresh eggs except at Easter, when each student received three painted hardboiled eggs and five donated candy eggs. On any other day, the students were served expired powdered eggs and moldy peanuts. When the Skagway Sanatorium opened in 1945 older students who did not return home in summer were able to find work and possibly afford better food.

Social Obligations

Although Father Gallant took on the lion share of fundraising, Pius X depended on maintaining good social relations with the local community and its glee clubs to support the school. Children often received gifts from the American League (e.g., Christmas 1946) and were feted by the Army units stationed in Skagway and the region to build the road to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. The community's expectation was that Pius X students would perform at various functions and recitals, notably, the Skagway Spring Recital, the Bingo Party, and the Silver Tea Party, the latter two being fundraisers for the school. Children also visited the Skagway Sanatorium during Christmas to entertain the infirm (1946-47). The Women's Club of Skagway routinely invited Pius X piano pupils to give recitals (1948). The Mission Auxiliary volunteers, who ran the Bingo Party for the school, also required that children perform dance, music, and theater, which in 1958 was a big attraction that drove nearly 100% of Skagway residents to the bingo – a clearly inappropriate gambling activity for children to witness.

It is unknown what became of Father Gallant's funds he worked so hard to raise. It is interesting, nonetheless, that he did not pay the sisters their wages for years, was consistently behind on bills, wrote frequently of the dire financial state of the school yet he always had a new car, bought and sold land regularly in Skagway, and traveled extensively including Hollywood and Rome (Skagway Traditional Council notes 2023).

Illness and Health

The Sisters journal indicates that Pius X was periodically assailed by the flu although no pandemic-scale illness was ever recorded. Nevertheless, in one year 45 children contracted the flu. Tuberculosis also appears to have been common and isolation implemented. Children were annually checked for eyesight, dental health, and tuberculosis, and their tonsils were often removed. We found five instances of death of children from accidents or illness: accidental fall, tuberculosis, hemorrhaging, and tubercular meningitis. The chronicles do not indicate that these children were buried in the school property. An additional three students were evacuated to a hospital or their home with respiratory ailments and/or tuberculosis, but the Sisters' chronicles do not mention their fate after evacuation.

Discomfort

A little known but nonetheless recorded issue in the Sisters journal is the poor state of the school building after it was rebuilt in 1945. The building consistently had problems arising from poor construction, including leaking roofs, constant flooding that children had to clean up, and malfunctioning furnaces that often required that certain dormitories be closed because the children could not be comfortably sheltered in them due to cold and rotting floorboards. Neither the staff nor the students could be sheltered safely in the school. By its closing in 1959, most of the school building was dilapidated.

Segregation and Abuse

According to Thornton (2004:222), Pius X students suffered from segregation among the Skagway community, which wanted to sell itself as a non-native community. Instances of segregation abound: native families lived in their own neighborhood (Thornton 2004:220), rarely were allowed to mingle socially at glee clubs, and certainly were discriminated against if they intermarried racially. Likewise, Pius X students suffered from discrimination either because they were Catholic, they were Native, or both. There was a particular “caste” for the Pius X children that was below that of white residents and other school children. Instances of racial discrimination while the students were out and about in town, e.g., at the movie theater, are well documented; they generally occupied the balcony of the theater and had to take a weeknight to go to the theater when no white children were present so they would not be blamed for whatever happened inside (Thornton 2004).

The activities the children were forced to do in school (likely a violation of child labor laws of the time) speak of assimilation for cultural extinction. Crafts and skills learned beyond the formal curriculum were targeted to supporting the school economically through the sale of these objects to tourists. Music and militarized practice were likewise tools of assimilation, where students learned behaviors that were divorced from their own cultural background. Marching everywhere in Skagway when going to the movies or other places, for example, was so embarrassing to older children that they refused to go (Thornton 2004:235). Chores older students were forced to endure, notably the cleaning of chicken manure from the Sisters of Saint Ann’s farm, was not only awful but deleterious to their health. Children were never fed fresh eggs the Sisters sold to support the school; rather, they had to eat expired food left behind by the military. These are simply a few instances of abuse where the school acted against the welfare of the students.

Another element of abuse was appearance. The Sisters of St Ann emphasized hygiene and appearance. Photographs indicate that girls wore exactly the same haircuts and uniforms. In one photograph two girls appear with their heads shaved, which could indicate treatment for lice infestations, which were and still are common among children who live in close quarters. Hair cutting, especially among tribes that revered hair as a lifeline, was a generalized imposition to strip them from their individuality and their culture.

It is important to note the rampant sexual abuse children everywhere suffered at the hands of Catholic priests. The Sisters journal accounts for numerous visits of priests over the years, both to teach and just for short or extended visits. At least two of these visiting priests were on the Anchorage list of abusive priests for assault with attempt to rape and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. One of them served time in federal prison before returning to active ministry. It is now officially confirmed by the Dioceses of Anchorage and Juneau that Father Cowgill, who served as principal of the school from 1952 to 1959, was a pedophile. Anonymous sources indicate that there was at least one more priest who abused children as well as a teacher

who was alcoholic and showed pornographic magazines to the children. An anonymous source indicates that when older students learned of the heinous sexual abuses of smaller children, they took them out of the school and temporarily boarded them in a hotel in Skagway. In the last year of its operation, Pius X saw an increasing number of children with behavioral problems that decreased the morale of the school. The Sisters were unable to manage these issues and the school closed in December 1959.



Figure 9. Pius X students wearing western headdresses at the 4th of July Parade, 1955.



Figure 10. Girls with shaved heads.



Figure 11. Students in identical haircuts and school uniforms.

Narratives of Residence at Pius X Mission



Figure 12. Andrew Beierly, former Pius X Mission student, visits the excavation of the school grounds during an interview. Also pictured Lauren Bridgeman and François Lanoë (BARA), excavating.

Andrew Beierly

Mr. Beierly was born on June 4, 1940, in Juneau. He is one-fourth Tlingit from the Eagle Moiety and also belongs to the Killer Whale Clan (Kake). He and his brother Pete were 14 and 15 years old when they attended Pius X from 1954 to 1959, when the school closed. He completed 8th grade through freshman grade. The brothers were taken from their parents, who could not support them, by Alaska Welfare. “We were made orphans.” Andrew Beierly spent some time at the Wrangell Institute before coming to Skagway, but this was not a component of the interview, as we learned about it afterwards. He did say that he was seven years old when he went to the institute and “it was a tough place.” The Beierly brothers did not have any further contact with their parents.

Mr. Beierly did not have any problems at school. Father Gallant “was like a father to me” and eventually became his friend; he was kind with the children. “The teachers were really good, excellent teachers, always tried to help slower people. The 6th, 7th, and 8th grades all met together, about 20 of us.” He met students from Ketchikan, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. His best friends were Byron Mallott (recently deceased) and Marcelo Quinto, who lives in Juneau. Mr. Beierly notes that nobody spoke a native language at the mission, even though the sisters did not discourage them. The seniors learned typing, carving, music, and other skills as well as Latin. According to Andy, “the mission was ahead of public schools.”

While at school the senior boys (14 and up) could leave the premises and go fishing or hiking. They “borrowed” a mule from Father Gallant to bring wood up the side of the mountain across from the school and built a shelter where they could play. “It was very steep to go up there and was good nobody found out about the mule.” Girls, on the other hand, did not have freedom and were always at the mission chaperoned by the Sisters. There were approximately 20 girls when he was at school.

Andy Beierly and his cohort had to attend church twice a day and, when not in class, they were asked to clean the chicken coops, which was the worst part of being at school. Also, the food was bad: the Army had left egg powder and peanuts behind, and the Sisters served them to the children. “Those peanut shells were moldy and even though we had fresh eggs at the mission they never once served them to us – only egg powder.” Father Gallant made Andy and Byron clean his yard and they would find bottles of wine beyond the fence. He did not see signs of child abuse, only hearsay about Father Cowgill, but not the Sisters.

When Pius X closed in 1959, Bill Ferro asked Andy if he would like to live, work, and go to high school. “It was a very good arrangement. I did chores, wash dishes, mop, dust, wax floors, mow the lawns and carpentry work; not heavy work.” He joined the army from 1963 to 1966. Thereafter he worked for the railroad at White Pass (20 years) and the National Park Service (another 20 years), eventually becoming the lead carpenter. He became a maintenance mechanic after his career with the National Park Service.

Anonymous Student (AN)

AN is Tlingit. They attended Pius X Mission in 1953 for one year (7-8 grade). They went there because their parents also attended school. Their mother’s parents died, and they and two siblings were orphaned. The teachers were good and overall Pius X Mission was ahead in education in contrast to public schools in Alaska. In addition to grade classes, small alternative classes were also offered (e.g., music, carving). There were all kinds of after-school activities they and their

friends engaged in, including movie watching once a month, picnics, fishing, and winter ice skating. They got to know a lot of kids, many of them from distant areas such as Athabasca (Alberta).

Their shelter was fine and warm as was the study hall; they had snacks and dinner and never went hungry. They had chores and they cleaned the chapel. They did not work on the farm but did errands such as picking up milk and baked goods for the school. Father Gallant physically punished students but the nuns were generally gentler. Although AN remembers Father Cowgill, they did not hear of sexual abuse, perhaps because they were protected by older students. AN's experience was positive; they finished public high school at St. Ann in Juneau, and thereafter joined the army for four years. They owned a business and held productive jobs.

Eleanor Jackson

Eleanor was born on September 28, 1944. She is Inupiaq and Tlingit. Her mother was dying of tuberculosis while still pregnant with Eleanor and her father was fighting in WWII, so she was orphaned for a time while still a baby. She was cared for by the Sisters at Pius X. After her mother's death her father returned from war and buried her in Skagway. He remarried to Dorothy Jackson. Whenever they traveled to Juneau, they would leave Eleanor at the school. Although she was very young, Eleanor preserves a vivid memory of a night when the Sisters threw the children in trenches covered in blankets while there were sirens and lights overhead, perhaps a military exercise. At age 10 she returned to Pius X and observed the barracks where food as old as 10 years was still stored in them. "Pius X Mission is History and I am a part of it."

The Moreno Children

The Moreno children who attended Pius X were ethnically Tlingit and Hispanic. We interviewed their niece, Rachel Moreno.

Originally there were eight children in the family, "most of them were Moreno": Harriet, Philip, Isabel, Daniel, Paul, Walter, Frederick, and Julia. The family came from Yakutat. Their mother was Emma Johnson. She was adopted by John or George Johnson from Kake, and both were Tlingit (4/4). She married Jorge Moreno from Acapulco, Mexico. He had a dark past and spent time in prison. They also had Tsimshian and Aleut ancestors, one of them was Chief Kitkatla from British Columbia. The Aleut from Kamchatka were closely related to the Alaskan Aleut and shared many cultural traits. Members of these communities (also Japanese Ainu) were indentured minorities who worked in canneries as "literally slaves, they were kidnapped sometimes."

Emma lived in Wrangell and Petersburg. Jorge was a fisherman. Their father, who cared for them, fell off the dock into the rocks and died. Emma died from tuberculosis. While the mother was still alive, they were so poor they had no food or winter clothes. The children were taken from the house by Alaska Welfare and only the older sister stayed behind to help her mother with a new baby. Their case was so heart-wrenching the *Wrangell Sentinel* published their story and asked for a home for the children.

Apparently, the Moreno children all boarded at Pius X. Philip and Frederick (also Freddie or Ferdinand) were 6 and 4 respectively. Frederick became ill and was taken to Juneau where he died very young. Ms. Moreno's research has not been able to reveal the location of his grave. While

they were at school the children made a few dollars by scraping ice off the railroad. They ate oatmeal every day and hated it. In the school photographs they misidentified one of the children, Paul Bernard, who also attended the school. There is photographic record of Julia as well. Julia was a high performing student who went on to graduate from high school. The Moreno children figure in the US Census for 1940 and 1950.

Regarding life in school, Rachel indicated that the children were indoctrinated into Catholicism and lost their culture. Some of her uncles went into the Armed Forces and were decorated war veterans. Upon their death they requested to be buried as Catholic rather than Tlingit. Although she wanted to prepare a traditional burial feast and acknowledge them publicly, she could not. For the Tlingit, “putting people away, taking care of the dead, bringing closure, is a critical ceremony.” Her grandmother was from the eagle moiety and also thunderbird, so tradition is very important to her.



Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, May 1940
Left to Right: _____, Dog, Bernard Moreno (?), Father Gallant
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-771

Figure 13. Archival photograph picturing one of the Moreno children, Skagway Museum.

Jaime Bricker and Shannon Ames

Jaime Bricker and her mother, Shannon Ames are descendants of Andrew Charles Mahle, who attended Pius X along with his brothers. Andrew was born in 1936 in Kodiak and was Aleut. His father was Russian and “not a nice person.” Andrew’s father uprooted him and his two brothers,

Harlen and Fred, who were 4, 8 and 10 years old respectively, and left them at the school. Andrew kept in touch with his mother Sarah Bandy.

With respect to school life, Andrew talked about sleeping in barracks with rows of beds. Father Gallant treated him well and took him on trips – they went to Rome and met the Pope when Andrew was a teenager. In Jaime and Shannon’s opinion, the Father intended to turn Andrew into a priest. Andrew was also regarded as an ambassador for fundraising. Harlen went to California with Father Gallant to learn about dairy farming. He and his brothers hunted and gathered for the school along the Chilkoot Trail. The three brothers stayed in the school until graduation and raised families in Skagway. Andrew rarely talked about the school experience. Andrew received an allotment of 160 acres along the Chilkoot Trail, which tied him to the Skagway community.

Shannon Ames attended catechism at Pius X along with her brother, sisters, and cousins. Her father was a devout Catholic and made them attend catechism while all other children went out to play. In her experience, the Sisters of Ann “were not very nice to the children and had a strong hand with the ruler.” Jaime and Shannon have memories of the second school fire in March of 1985.

Patrick Anderson

Patrick is Tlingit. His grandparents sent his mother, Patricia May Mallott from Yakutat, his aunt Caroline Powell, and his uncle Byron to Pius X when the family broke up. They were mainly orphaned. His grandfather was a white man named Joseph Byron Mallott. Emma Brown was Caroline’s and Byron’s mother. Patricia was four-and-a-half years old when she arrived at the school. She figures in the US 1950 Census. She was able to finish elementary and middle school but dropped out of high school in Sitka before graduation to get married, much to the dismay of the Orthodox bishop who ran the girl’s school.

Patrick’s mother shared memories of Pius X. She remembered working at the farm with a donkey. She and other students served dinner to the priests and the Sisters; theirs was better food than that served to the students. Father Gallant scolded children, including her, about their exam grades. He told them that they were better than their school grades.



Pius X Mission School, Skagway, Alaska, 1932-33
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-01910



Pius X Mission School, Skagway, Alaska, c. 1935
Skagway Museum, 01.696.2

Figure 14. Pius X Mission students, Skagway Museum archives.



Pius X Mission Staff and Pupils, Skagway, Alaska, May 12, 1937
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-756



Pius X Mission, Skagway, Alaska, Dec. 1937
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-795

Figure 15. Pius X Mission students, Skagway Museum archives.



Pius X Mission School, Skagway, Alaska, April 24, 1938
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-773



Pius X Mission School, 8th Grade Graduates, Skagway, Alaska, 1940
Skagway Museum, Dedman Collection-763

Figure 16. Pius X Mission students, Skagway Museum Archives.

Part 2: Archaeology

Methods

Field Surveys

All field spatial data in this project were collected by either Total Station or Trimble GPS unit. We measured reference points (datums) by both Total Station and Trimble GPS to align data collected with either system (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Location of GPR grids (Appendix 1) and reference datums.

Ground Penetrating Radar Survey

Methods used in the GPR survey are described in Appendix 1.

Pedestrian Survey

BARA conducted a pedestrian survey of the entire property in October 2022. We flagged materials upon encounter during our daily movements across the center of the property and surveyed the property edges at the end of our field time. We limited flagging to materials that were deemed to be historic/archaeological based on our findings in the excavation areas, including brick, cement, metal, and ceramic fragments. Other materials (e.g., plastic) were assumed to postdate the 1980s.

Subsurface Excavation

Square excavation blocks of 2x2 m were centered on two of the potential burial anomalies revealed by the GPR survey (Appendix 1) (Figure 18). There was a ca. 1 m inconsistency in the coordinates of anomaly 2 between GPR Grid 1 and GPR Grid 2, and we expanded Block 2 into Block 3 to account for this. In all blocks we removed the sod to an even depth of 20 cm below a datum located on the highest block corner, then excavated in arbitrary levels of 10 to 20 cm, depending on findings. Excavation was conducted by pickaxe, shovel, and trowel, depending on sediment composition and findings or lack thereof. We dry-screened all sediments at a mesh size of 6.4 mm (1/4 in), with collection of archaeological materials per block and level. Exceptions were large masonry and wood pieces, of which we only collected samples and in-situ photographs.

Excavation was stopped 10 to 20 cm within alluvial sand, interpreted to be the natural stratum. We considered the GPR anomaly verified if the findings matched the GPR signal. We drew representative stratigraphic profiles of each block and collected sediment samples of each documented layer. Sediment texture was assessed by feel. Due to the weather conditions at time of excavation, we only documented the (Munsell) color of sediments when wet.

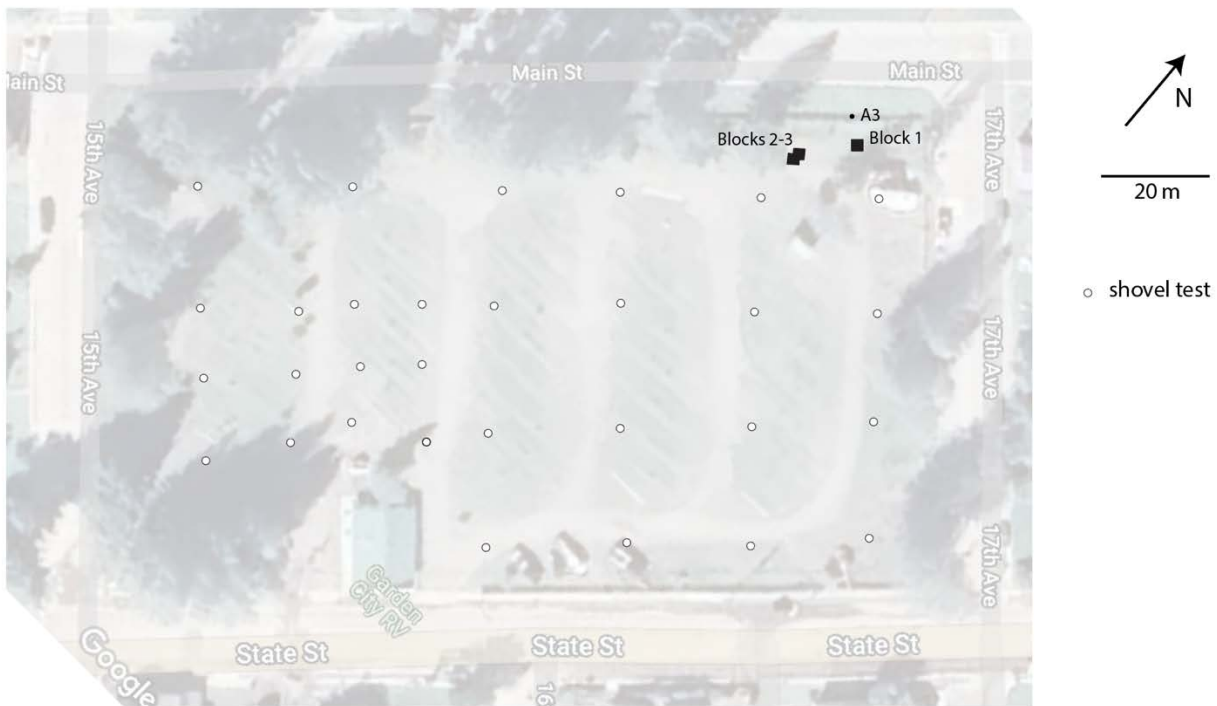


Figure 18. Location of excavation blocks, anomaly 3, and shovel tests.

Shovel tests were excavated over the entire property at a ca. 20 m intervals, attempting to avoid encountering any utility lines (Figure 18). We excavated additional shovel tests at ca. 10 m intervals in the estimated location of the school building. All shovel tests were circular and ca. 40 cm in width. We stopped the tests 10 to 20 cm within the alluvial sand interpreted to be the natural stratum, or if a large object impeded deeper excavation. We dry-screened all sediments at a mesh size of 6.4 mm (1/4 in), with collection of archaeological materials per test and estimated depth. Each test's stratigraphy was sketched and photographed.

Laboratory Analyses

Archaeological materials were cleaned, counted, measured, and weighted. We documented characteristics such as type of material (e.g., metal, brick, glass) and color. When possible, we indicate the estimated shape, size, and function of the original artifact. We investigated all markings for evidence on the origin and date of manufacture, using historical archaeology reference guides and historical catalogs.

Results

Ground Penetrating Radar Survey

Results of the GPR survey are described in Appendix 1.

Pedestrian Survey

We recorded both buried/semi-buried and surface materials (Figure 11). Semi-buried materials consisted of cement, some of it aligned along the axes of the property, that appeared to relate to in-situ building foundations (Figure 20). One foundation element is coated and may have been part of a surface structure, such as a sidewalk or staircase (Figure 20: d). The dormitories in the eastern part of the property appear to have been simple log cabins and may not have included cement foundations (Figure 4).

Surface materials consisted of smaller fragments of cement, bricks, ceramic, or metal objects (Figure 21), all of which may date to the time of occupation of the school. The unearthing of those materials would have been the consequence of disturbance related to the RV campground that significantly affected the property. Utility lines are omnipresent; we counted 167 distinct aboveground utility elements, all of which are presumably linked to underground features.

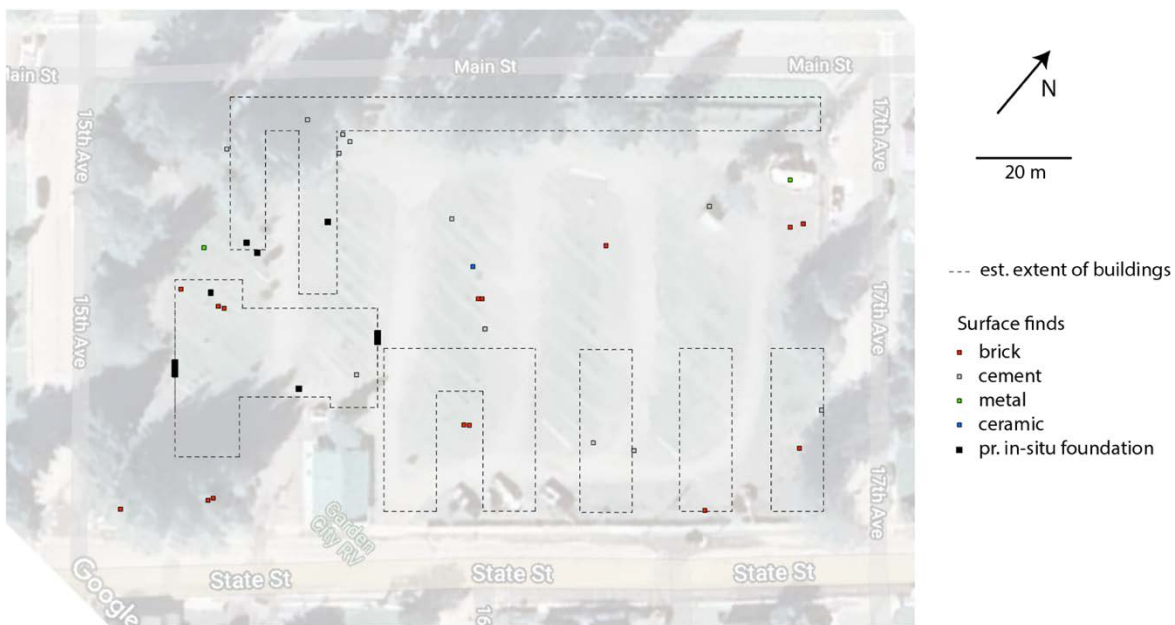


Figure 19. Location of surface finds relative to the estimated location of the historical buildings.



Figure 20. In-situ foundation elements. (a) Foundation (320 x 25 cm, oriented NW-SE) of eastern wall. (b) Close-up of the cement fill. (c) Buried foundation (320 x 25 cm, oriented NW-SE) of western wall. (d) Coated foundation element near northern wall (110 x 25 cm, oriented SW-NE).



Figure 21. Selected surface materials. (a) Cement block, probably a fragment of wall or foundation. (b) Brick. (c) Ulu blade.

Subsurface Excavations

Excavation blocks were excavated in two to five arbitrary levels to depths of 40 to 65 cm below datum (Table 2). Stratigraphy was consistent across the blocks (Figure 14, Table 3) with, from top to bottom: (1) a sod or road gravel layer; (2) a 10-15 cm thick sterile layer; (3) one or several layers containing archaeological materials; and (4) one or several sand strata interpreted to be natural alluvium. Some layers also contain distinct lenses of sand, apparent paleosols, and/or bioturbation (root casts).

Table 2. Depth of levels of the excavation blocks, in cm below datum (highest block corner).

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
0-20	L1	L1	L1
20-30	L2	L2	L2
30-40	L3		L3
40-50	L4	-	L4
50-60	L5		-
60-70			-

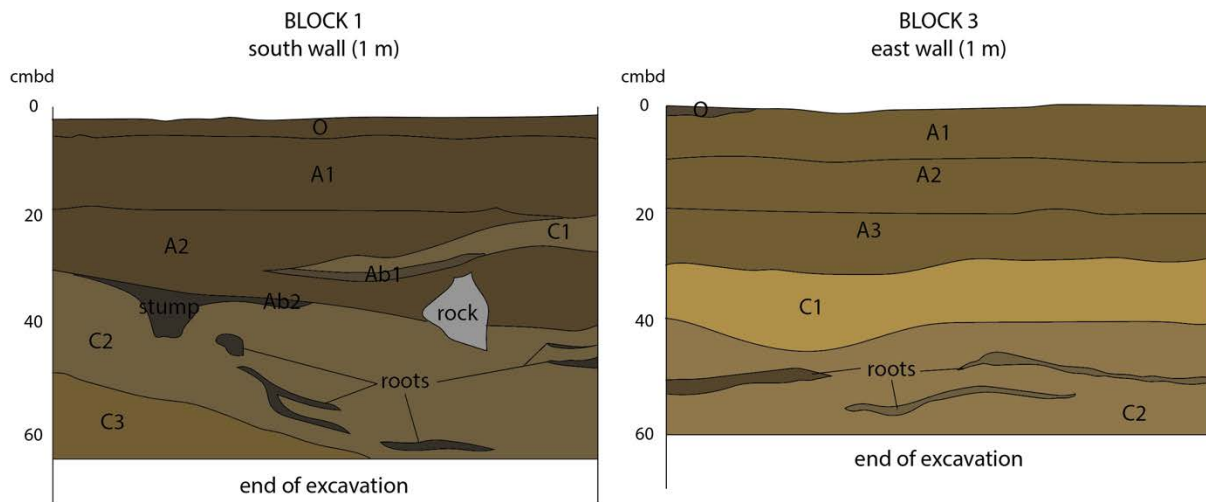


Figure 22. Stratigraphic profiles of excavation blocks.



Figure 23. Profiles for Block 1 (left) and 3 (right) matching drawings in Figure 14.

Table 3. Summary of stratigraphy. Note that accurate identification of stratum and soil horizon characteristics would require advanced laboratory analyses, not conducted here.

Str.	Hor.	Texture	Color	Inclusions	Arch.	Interpretation
Block 1						
III	O	loam	2.5Y3/3	gravels		O horizon (sod)
	A1	loam	2.5Y3/3	gravels		A or AB horizon
	A2	sandy loam	2.5Y3/3	gravels, cobbles	x	anthropogenic layer
IV	C1	fine sand	2.5Y4/3			alluvium
III	Ab1	sandy loam	2.5Y3/2	organics		paleosol
	Ab2	sandy loam	-	wood		paleosol
II	C2	fine sand	2.5Y4/3	organics		alluvium
I	C3	coarse sand	2.5Y4/4	gravels, cobbles		alluvium
Block 3						
III	O	loam	2.5Y3/2	gravels		O horizon (sod)
	A1	sandy loam	2.5Y4/4	gravels		A or AB horizon
	A2	sandy loam	2.5Y4/4	gravels, cobbles – light gray patches	x	anthropogenic layer, possibly with ash
	A3	sandy loam	2.5Y4/4	gravels	x	anthropogenic layer
II	C1	coarse sand	2.5Y6/6	gravels		alluvium
I	C2	coarse sand	2.5Y5/4	organics		alluvium

The bottom of the stratigraphy is consistent with a dynamic alluvial environment. Alluvium (Block 1 strata I-II and Block 3 strata I-II) originates from floods of the Skagway River before its banks were controlled. Variation in alluvium grain size likely relates to intensity of the floods and changes in the location of the main channel over time. Each flood would have buried the existing vegetation and soil, some of which contain tree stumps and root systems. Floods appear to have ceased with the occupation of the area and, presumably, bank control of the river at that time (except for, possibly, Block 1 stratum IV). The corresponding stratum (III in both blocks) probably

consists of a mix of alluvium and anthropogenic sediment, The main archaeological occupation is contained within a 10-20 cm thick layer at the base of stratum III. The top 10-20 cm layers are mostly sterile and appear to denote a decrease in use of the site.

Both anomalies 1 and 2 were consistent with findings of tree stumps with associated root systems (Figure 24). The tree stump in Block 1 was located between 30 and 45 cm below surface (compared to 30-60 in the GPR anomaly), while the stump in Block 3 was located between 35 and 50 cm below surface (30-60 in the GPR). Both stumps were located below layers containing archaeological materials.



Figure 24. Buried tree stumps and root systems in Blocks 1 (left) and 3 (right). Also see Figure 23 for corresponding cleaned-up profiles.

Archaeological materials consisted mostly of bricks, masonry elements, and metal, ceramic, or glass fragments. Fragments of wood were scattered throughout, but only some specimens bore clear marks of having been modified by human action. Materials were most numerous in Block 1, levels 2-3 (Table 4). Blocks 2-3 contained fewer materials but included a layer (horizon A2) which appeared to contain light gray patches. Correct identification would require more advance analysis, but it appeared similar to ash. This layer extended over the southern 2.5 m of the combined blocks and could correspond to the footprint of the elongated building visible in the 1940's photographs (Figure 1).

Table 4. Weight (in g) of archaeological materials from the excavation blocks.

	Bricks	Metal	Ceramic	Glass	Others
Block 1					
L1	0.4	15.0	-	13.0	
L2	168.3	948.3	3.6	58.9	masonry 114.1; plastic 1.1
L3	138.3	247.8	3.6	64.6	masonry: 35.8 + 3 fragments not collected; wood 7.6
L4	164.5	22.5	1.3	33.3	masonry 0.4; leather 11.2
L5	-	-	-	-	-
Block 2					
L1	10.3	190.2	-	10.0	plastic <0.1
L2	9.9	283.0	17.7	18.1	-
Block 3					
L1	2.2	39.5	1.2	-	plastic 0.5
L2	6.6	1.0	8.9	4.2	plastic 0.6
L3	-	-	-	-	-
L4	-	-	-	-	-

Bricks and brick fragments were common in most excavated levels (Figure 17). No markings (that could indicate a date of manufacture) were recorded. Glass fragments were also commonly found. They included clear (23%), white (27%), brown (16%), window (30%), and green, blue, or yellow (4%) types (Figure 26). Some contained markings (Figure 27). Among those, several brown glass fragments are consistent with export “no-deposit” beer bottles in production ca. 1939-1976, with stippling of the glass and fragments of the “NO DEPOSIT – NO RETURN // NOT TO BE REFILLED” embossing (Figure 27: C-F, H-I) (Schulz et al. 2019). The banded stippling (Figure 27: C, E, H) is most consistent with the “Handy” bottle type in production ca. 1959-1976 (Figure 27: J). Ceramic fragments were comparatively few. They include porcelain (Figure 28: A, D-E), coarser dishware (Figure 28: C, F), and probable floor tiles (Figure 28: G).

Numerous metal objects and fragments were recovered, including nails, machinery hardware, a whisky bottle medallion, a centerfire cartridge, and probably furniture elements (Figure 29). The whisky medallion (Figure 29: F) advertises for Calvert Special and Calvert Reserve from Calvert Distillers Corporation, NY, in production 1934-1954. The .45 cartridge (Figure 29: D) bears the marking FA35, indicating production in 1935 by the U.S. Army ammunition plant of Frankford Arsenal, PA.

Organic remains were limited to one item of leather and one visibly modified fragment of wood (Figure 30). The leather piece appears to have been part of a footwear and resembles heel elements of WW2-era military boot. The wooden element may have been a fragment of furniture.

Items likely to have been directly deposited by Pius X Mission students include a marble and a bead (Figure 31). The marble is a machine-made opaque swirl, a common type during the 1920s-1940s and after the 1970s (Webb 1994). The bead is of a shape common throughout recent history.



Figure 25. Sample of brick fragments, Block 1 Level 2.



Figure 26. Sample of glass fragments, from left to right: white, brown, miscellaneous, clear, and window. All from Block 1 Level 3.

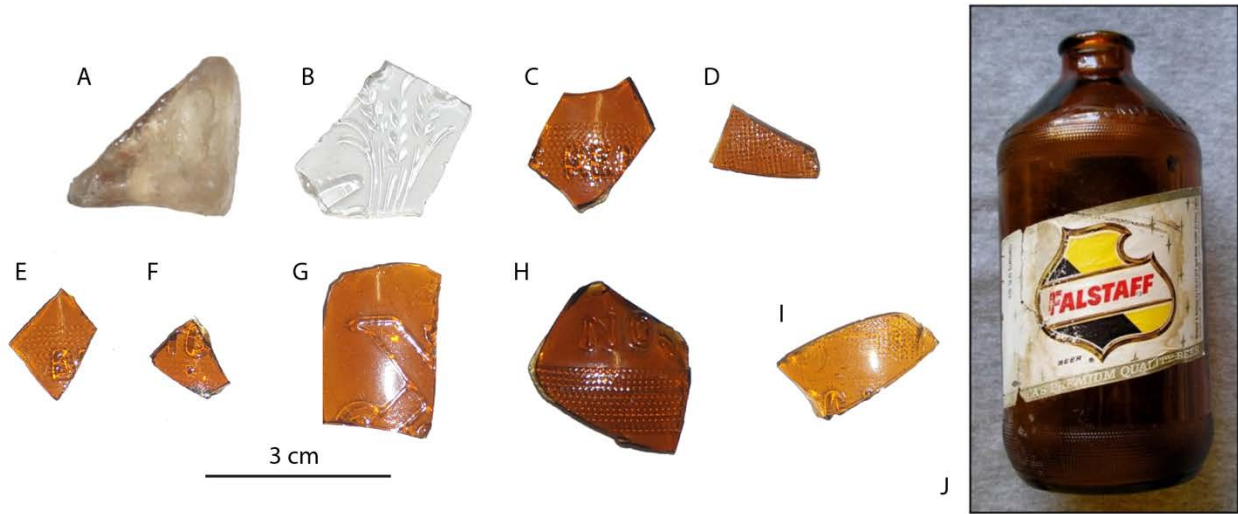


Figure 27. Selected glass specimens with markings, and example of a “Handy” no-deposit beer bottle (J, not to scale, from Schulz et al. 2019). Markings read as follows: A: [...EX]; C: [REF...]; E: [B...]; F: [...TO...]; G: [X...]; H: [NO]; I: [...O...]. A, C-D: Block 1 Level 2; B: B2L1; E-G: B1L3; H: B1L4; I: B2L2.

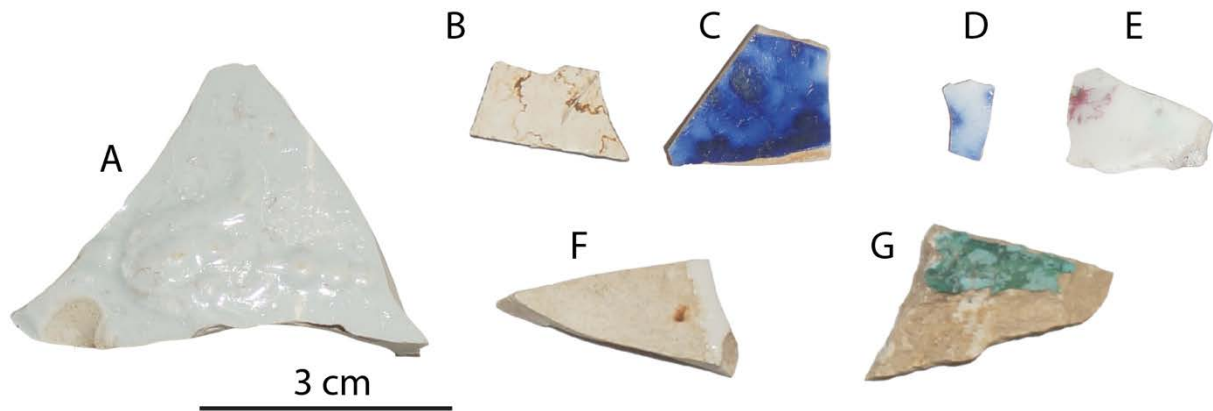


Figure 28. Selected ceramic fragments. A: Block 3 Level 2; B, F-G: B1L3; C-D: B1L4; E: B1L2.



Figure 29. Selected metal objects including large bolt-washers assembly (A), pipe fragment (B), sparkplug (C), cartridge (D), beer bottle cap (E), whisky bottle medallion (F), furniture fragment (G), and nails (H-K). A-B, H-K: Block 1 Level 2; C-D: B1L3; E: B3L1; F: B2L2; G: B2L1.



Figure 30. Leather (left, Block 1 Level 4) and wood (right, B1L3) specimens.

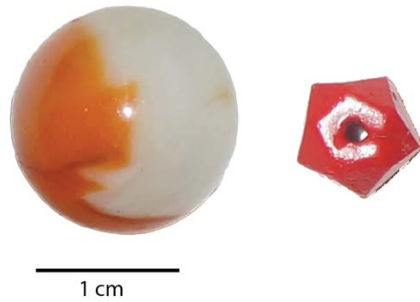


Figure 31. Marble and bead from Block 2 Level 2.

Most shovel tests (20/30) yielded archaeological materials (Figure 32). Shovel test stratigraphy was relatively consistent across the property (Table 1), as well as with the stratigraphy of the excavation blocks (Table 3)). Estimated depths to alluvium (fine sand to coarse sand) mostly range from ca. 20 to 30 cm below surface. Archaeological materials were consistently recorded in a gravelly and/or cobbly sandy loam of estimated depth comprised within 4 to 34 cm below surface. Materials accrue in number with proximity to the school building. Shovel Tests 22 and 26, squarely within the estimated extent of the school building, contained the most materials as well as a distinct and thick “destruction layers” consisting purely of anthropogenic materials (Figure 33). Materials collected in the shovel tests are generally similar to those collected in the excavated blocks, including bricks and fragments of metal, ceramic, and glass objects (Table 5), with few to no diagnostic elements.

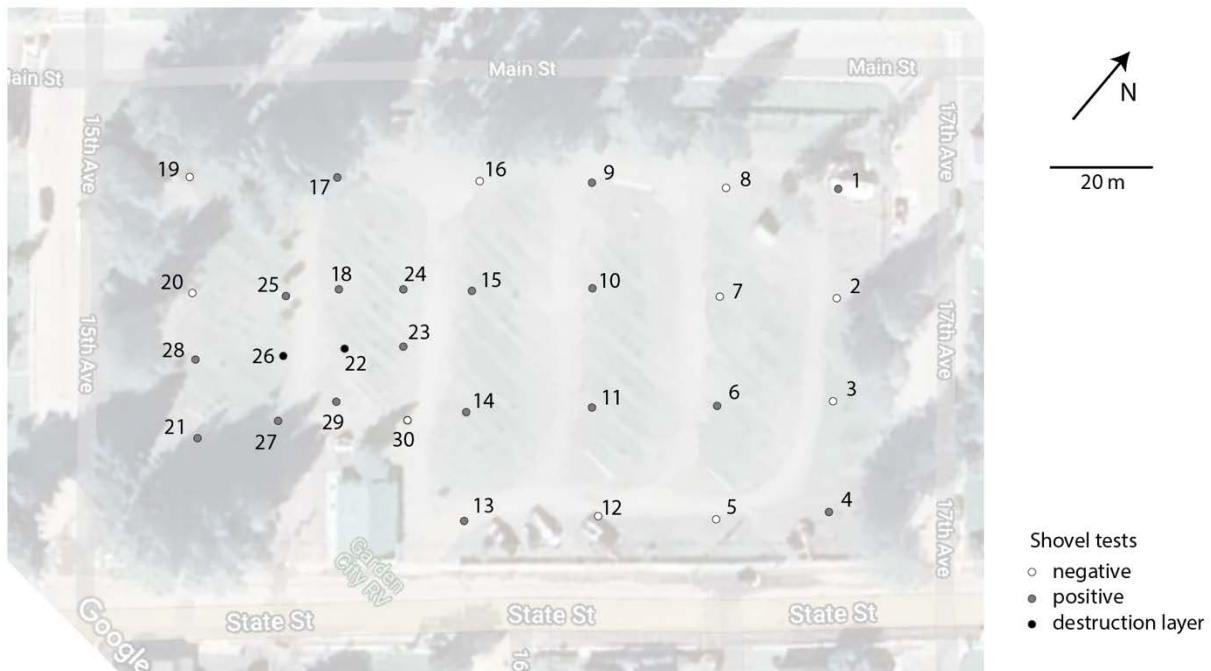


Figure 32. Location of shovel tests.

Table 5. Summary of shovel tests stratigraphy and findings. Weight of findings is in g. Abbreviations used: CB: cobbly; COS: coarse sand; FS: fine sand; GR: gravelly; S: sand; SI: silt; SL: sandy loam.

Test	Exc. Depth (cmbs)	Depth to Alluvium (cmbs)	Alluvium Texture	Depth Archaeol. Layer (cmbs)	Archaeol. Layer Texture	Bricks	Metal	Ceramic	Glass	Others
1	40	16	CB GR COS	4-16	CB SL	38.6	-	-	<0.1	-
2	40	30	CB GR S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	28	24	CB S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	32	25	CB COS	4-25	GR SL	-	-	-	1.1	-
5	37	15	CB S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	42	31	GR COS	4-31	GR SL	7.2	-	-	-	-
7	37	27	COS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	38	20	GR COS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	36	28	GR COS	20-28	GR CB SL	-	-	-	2.5	-
10	NA		-	NA	GR SL	2 large fragments not collected	-	-	-	-
11	40	34	S	4-34	GR SL	1.0	356.1	6.8	3.5	-
12	38	30	CB S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	25	obstructed	-	12- >25	GR SL	-	205.9	-	-	-
14	38	20	GR COS	10-20	SL	-	418.8	-	-	-
15	38	34	GR S	14-34	GR SL	-	4.9	-	-	-
16	36	15	FS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	38	24	FS	4-19	GR CB SL	-	3.9	-	1.2	-
18	40	34	S	13-29	GR SL	1 large fragment not collected	-	-	-	-
19	30	25	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	30	25	CB S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	30	obstructed	-	25- >30	CB SL	66.5 + 1 large fragment not collected	-	-	4.9	-
22	52	46	FS	28-46	CB SL	69.1 + numerous fragments not collected	98.8	-	5.1	-
23	30	obstructed	-	5- >30	CB SL	131.0 + 3 large fragments not collected	-	-	-	-
24	52	30	S	14-30	GR SL	1 large fragment not collected	-	-	58.6	-
25	40	30	GR CB S	5-30	GR SL	48.5	11.8	-	-	-
26	55	49	blue-gray SI	23-49	CB SL	28.9	-	-	10.3	plastic 0.4
27	50	obstructed	-	3- >50	CB SL	63.0 + 1 large fragment not collected	7.0 + 1 metal pipe not collected	12.9	9.4	-
28	25	22	S	8-22	GR SL	-	2.2	75.3	-	-
29	42	36	GR S	4-36	CB SL	fragments not collected	26.8	7.3	2.5	-
30	36	32	S	5-32	CB SL	101.3	5.8	-	0.5	-



Figure 33. Brick fragments excavated from Shovel Test 22 (left), and corresponding profile picture showing the anthropogenic layer ca. 6-18 cm above the bottom of excavation (right).

Discussion

The story of Pius X Residential school represents a clear and consistent pattern of assimilation for cultural extinction. Although the school outwardly strove for excellence in every respect, and Father Gallant sincerely looked after the students, the system also flooded native children's minds and schedules with competitiveness, religious indoctrination, celebration of mainstream American and religious occasions, and social obligations for the benefit of school fundraising. Not only did the students lose their outward appearance and cultural practices, but they were made to imitate The Indian as understood by Whites in the 20th century. Alienation from family and community as well various forms of abuse, notably sexual abuse at the hand of priests and teachers, marked the children indelibly, eventually pushing many of them to violence, alcoholism, pedophilia, and suicide. Not surprisingly, many former students did not share their negative memories with their relatives or anyone, thus developing a blanket of silence. As former student Fred Mahle put it: "I learned how to forget."

Although small, the sample of narratives of the boarding school experience at Pius X Mission School show several significant trends, especially when combined with interviews carried out by the *Skagway Alaskan* in 1985. Although the majority of students at the school were Tlingit, there were other ethnic groups represented in the student body. Yet, no Tlingit traditions were honored at Pius X. There is a clear correlation between family poverty and dysfunction, orphanage, and school residence. Residential schools were proxies for social welfare, wherein orphaned children were sheltered from poverty and given a place to live and assimilate mainstream American culture, often at the hands of strict and abusive teachers. Pius X Mission was no exception.

Outwardly, Pius X seems to have been an educational institution above other public schools in Alaska both in the quality of education and in the breadth of learning experiences it offered on and off the classroom (Thornton 2004). Children participated in the town's social activities such as parades, which brought funding for the school. Father Gallant and the Sisters of St. Ann exercised more leniency toward students than other institutions, notably, Wrangell Institute. However, physical punishment was exercised. Children were expected to work on the farm and do other work for the school. There is an unspoken underlying problem pertaining to sexual abuse by a known pedophile, Father Francis Cowgill, as well as unnamed others.

In retrospect, correspondence from Pius X presents an altogether different picture of the school's academic performance and morality, painting it as a dysfunctional institution that damaged children psychologically. Correspondence entries point out that, "It would take years to work up a reputation, to redeem the present reputation of the Pius X School - academically and morally." (Correspondence p. 59). The correspondence also notes that "Several [students] are in need of psychiatric evaluation; their behavior in class and recreation, rather bizarre; several are retarded children; nine are pure charity cases that have not even been referred to the Welfare Department so there is no money forthcoming for them" (Correspondence p. 60). These passages point to negligence on the part of Pius X in addressing pressing children's needs beyond basic daily care and potentially attributed to abuse.

The property contains a significant archaeological component associated with both the Pius X school and, apparently, the military, the latter of which was very present in Skagway in the 1940s.

This record has been strongly impacted by subsurface disturbance that postdate the archaeological occupation and relates to its current use as a RV campground. Most prominent are the utility lines that run across the entire property and the grading for the roads / lanes that serve the camping spots. In addition to disturbing archaeological layers, both utilities and grading also largely hinder the use of GPR technology and the interpretation of its results (Appendix 1). Additional subsurface disturbance occurred during the destruction of the ruins of the school building, as shown by the scattering, on the surface, of foundation elements.

Despite this disturbance, archaeological materials appear to be present over the entire area and buried at consistent depths of ca. 10 cm to 35 cm below surface. The archaeological layer itself consists largely of construction materials (bricks, wood, and mortar) and is distributed differentially across the property. In the area of our larger (block) excavations to the north, the layer likely mostly relates to the structure(s) of unknown function documented from aerial picture (Figure 1). The school building itself has some foundation elements preserved, a few of which are visible on the surface. Based on shovel testing, the area delimited within the foundations also contains a very dense concentration of construction materials.

We recovered numerous portable materials that relate to both the school and non-school, presumably military, activities at the site. Most recovered materials, including glass and ceramic fragments, witness daily life but cannot be attributed with certainty to one or the other agent. The date of manufacture of datable materials is consistent with deposition in the 1930s to 1950s, during the time of activity of both the school and, in Skagway, the military. Materials that can be imputable to the military include a military cartridge, probable military boot, a whisky bottle medallion, and beer bottle fragments. Those probably related to students include a marble and a bead, providing precious little evidence of the Pius X Mission students and their life. Presumably they were lost during outdoor play, away from the main school building.

One incentive for this project was to assess the potential for unmarked burials of Pius X Mission students. No burials were found during this project, and anomalies detected by GPR were verified as tree stumps. As explained further in Appendix 1, the presence of undetected burials remains possible, and we recommend monitoring by STC during any future subsurface disturbance of the property. The Sisters' Chronicles do indicate that several (at least four) students died at or shortly after being evacuated from the school due to accident or illness. One child is buried at the Skagway cemetery, although the cemetery records do not indicate him (STC, personal communication); it remains possible that other children may be buried elsewhere, including at Gallant's other properties along the Skagway River and in town.

Despite the high level of disturbance affecting the property, the southwestern half of the property appears to contain extensive remains of the school building and of portable objects associated with daily life of students and staff. Knowledge about the school and its students would greatly benefit from additional excavations in this area.

Regardless of future archaeological research prospects, due to the importance of the building for the history of Skagway and its Indigenous community we recommend keeping this part of the property undeveloped and developing a management plan in full partnership with STC, as publicly requested by STC (Kinjo-Hischer, 2022).

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Appendix 1: Northern Land Use Research Report

Appendix 2: Archival Materials

Collection of student pictures from the Skagway Museum Archives.

Collection of school building pictures from the Skagway Museum Archives.

Pius X mission school historic photo essay, compiled by Karl Gurcke, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park.

Appendix 3: Inventory and Characteristics of Archaeological Materials

Catalog of studied archaeological materials.

GPS location of surface archaeological materials, excavation units, and grid datums.

Total Station location of surface archaeological materials, excavation units, and grid datums.

Photographs of studied archaeological materials and excavation units.