

Maple Bay Schools: A Short History
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Settlement in the Cowichan Valley began officially in 1862 when the Colonial Council proclaimed the district a settlement area and offered land by pre-emption to any who would become settlers.

Mr. Amor De Cosmos, who would later become the second premier of British Columbia, wrote the following letter, dated March 5, 1870 to the Colonial Secretary: *“Wherewith I forward a petition addressed to his Excellency the Governor respecting the creation of a School District in Cowichan. I have much pleasure in endorsing the prayer of the petition, and, at the same, drawing the attention of the Executive to that part of the Petition respecting aid in erected suitable schoolhouses. Unless some assistance can be extended to the settling in Kokesaila District, it is doubtful whether a school house can be provided there. On the other side of Cowichan, there are two buildings belonging to the Episcopal Church that may be used temporarily for school purposes.”* He followed that up with another letter to the Colonial Secretary dated April 20, 1870 asking about the results of the school petition.

North Cowichan School District was established June 16, 1870 comprising the Districts of Somenos and Comiakén, and those portions of the Quamichan and Cowichan Districts situated north of the Cowichan River. A meeting was held at the Anglican Mission house located where St. Edwards Roman Catholic Church is today for the purpose of electing a public school board for the ensuing year and also determining the site of the central school *“on the road between Somenos and Maple Bay, where the cross road from between the Somenos and Quamichan Lakes join it”* – in other words where today is the intersection of Lakes and Herd Roads.

Robert Midley Clemitson was appointed as the first teacher on July 23, 1872 with a salary of \$50 per month. While the new schoolhouse was being built, classes were held in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, a log building located at the end of Pioneer Road near the Pioneer Cemetery.

The new schoolhouse was a one-room wooden building, measuring 18 by 28 feet. The October 2, 1872 issue of the *British Colonist* reported that *“the new schoolhouse in the North Cowichan or Maple Bay settlement in finished”*, and *“a very creditable affair”*. A year after its construction the ground around the building was cleared of brush to ensure its safety in the event of a brush fire, 35 yards to the front and 45 yards to the back.

In 1873 the Municipality of North Cowichan was established and the new school came under its jurisdiction. Mr. Clemitson continued as teacher up until his appointment as Assistant in the Boys' Department of Victoria School in Victoria when he was replaced in August, 1873 by Miss Mary Glyde. Her request that part of the schoolhouse be used as a dwelling was granted by the school board. As a result the west end of the schoolhouse, measuring as aforementioned, 18 by 28 feet, was partitioned off. Miss Glyde taught from August 1873 to December 1873 at which point she resigned in order to get married. She was replaced first by Mr. John Mundell from January-March 1874 and then by Mr. Harry Marriner, from April to June 1873.

The Public Schools of British Columbia, Report for the year ending July 31, 1874 noted: *“Educational facilities are now brought within reach of all children in this large and scattered district, by the opening*

of a school in the Court house near Cowichan Flats, in addition to the one between Somenos and Maple Bay. All the children in the district are attending the schools as regularly as can be expected. Two or three changes of teachers have retarded their progress somewhat; yet, on the whole, it has been very satisfactory. The trustees are fully alive to the importance of their public schools, and are actively promoting their interests in every possible way."

The Public Schools of British Columbia, Report for the year ending July 31, 1878 noted: "*Enrolled: Boys, 23; girls, 6. School is held at the Central School and at Agricultural Hall on alternate days. The school rooms are clean. The pupils have a fair knowledge of grammar, read satisfactorily, spelled well, and answered questions in mental arithmetic readily and correctly. The teacher's style was intelligent and effective, and his scholars were quiet and industrious."*

During 1878-1879 Archibald Dods taught at both the Maple Bay School (described as the Central or Comiakén Branch) and the Agricultural Hall, Maple Bay (described as the Agricultural Hall Branch). Maple Bay School was described as being made of lumber and in good condition but requiring a new doorstep. It was also rented for \$10 per annum as the Municipality of North Cowichan's Council Hall. School trustees valued the school building at \$600.

Classes continued to be held on alternate days at the Agricultural Hall in Maple Bay and at the Central School in the 1880-1881 school year under the teachership of Archibald Dods. The Agricultural Hall branch of the school was closed in October 1881 for want of attendance. The Central School was closed for the same reason at the end of January 1882.

The school reopened April 1, 1882 with Miss Marcella Victoria Storey as teacher. Her student attendance register for the period April 3-June 30, 1882 noted that "James Charley got a whipping for using bad words." 25 students were enrolled during the 1882-1883 school term.

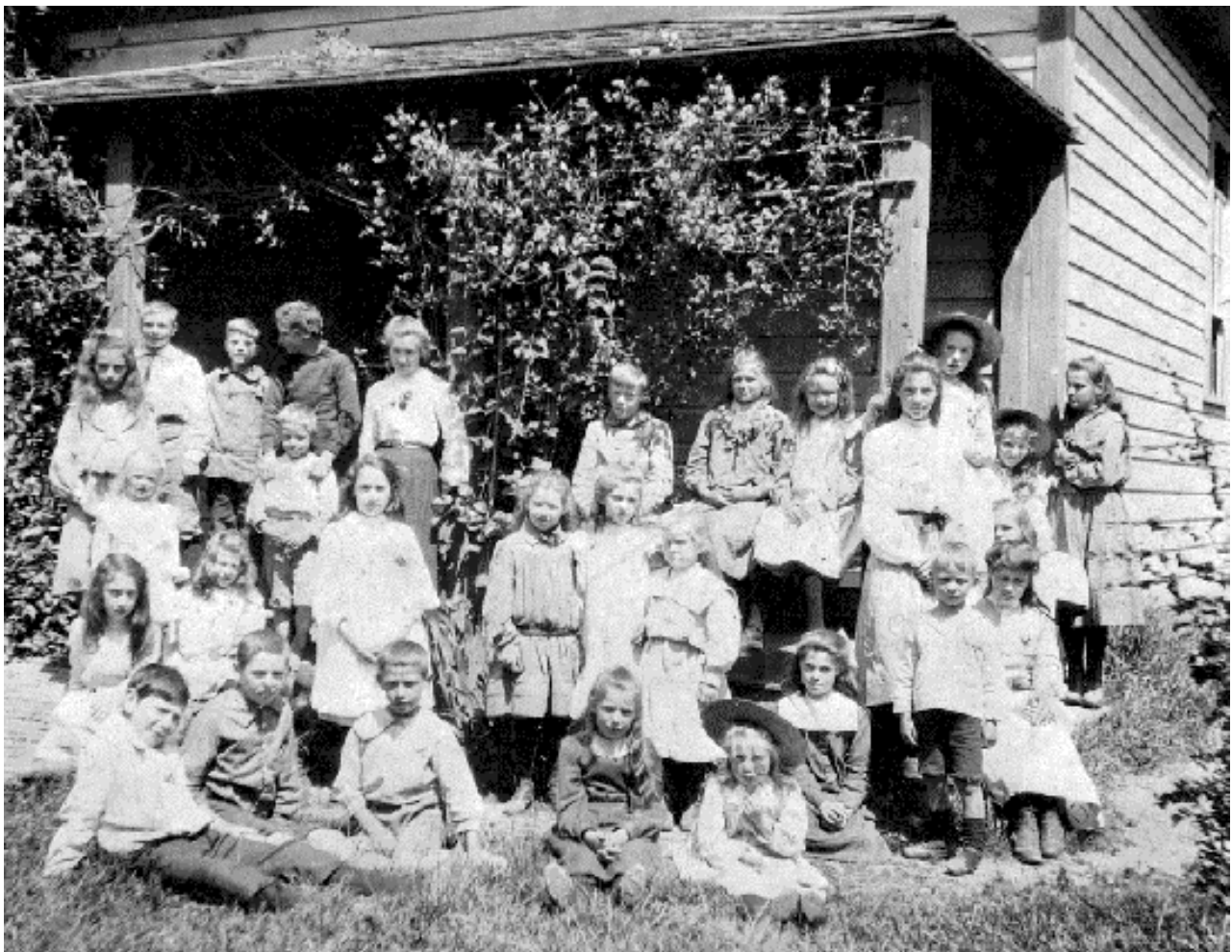
The name of the school district was changed in 1883 from North Cowichan to Maple Bay. The description of the district read: "*All those tracts of land on the Official Map as the Districts of Somenos and Comiakén. "*

There were 24 students on the roster in the 1883-1884 school term. The December 22, 1883 issue of the *British Colonist* reported that the examination of the scholars at Maple Bay School took place the day before. "*The large number of parents and friends who attended had good reason to be delighted as they sat in the beautifully decorated school-room and listened with interest to the reading, spelling, reciting, singing, etc. by the scholars; while all felt the school had made a marked advance since last midsummer, for which many congratulatory remarks were made to the teacher, Miss M. V. Storey. Mr. John Evans delivered the prizes which were in books, select, substantial and beautiful. The following are the successful candidates: Chas. Beaumont, the best boy; Eva C. Dods, the girls' composition; Milton S. Edgson, boys' composition; Minnie L. Botterell, the best girl; Mary S. Edgson, perseverance; Chas. Beaumont, regular attendance; Minnie L. Botterell, good conduct; Fred Beaumont, general improvement; Eva C. Dods, spelling; Minnie L. Botterell, history; Herbert R. Clemitson, general proficiency, class 3rd; Fanny S. Edgson, 1st general proficiency, class 4th; Carolina H. Edgson, 2nd general proficiency, class 4th; Louis Richards, perseverance; Harry Fletcher, 1st general proficiency, class 5th; Walter A. Dods, 2nd general proficiency, class 5th. After singing the National Anthem the school was dismissed, each wishing the others a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year. "*

Total enrollment in September 1884 was 21 students. However, the average attendance required by statute was not maintained and so, in compliance with the provisions of the School Act, the school was closed at the end of December 1884. The school did not re-open until April 1886.

A horseshed was built in 1893 beside the schoolhouse by R. D. Symons for \$25.50.

The North Cowichan School Board put out a tender on May 15, 1895 for a new one-room school building to be completed by August 31, 1895. Mr. William Herd's tender of \$400, which included the destruction of the old schoolhouse, was accepted. For an additional \$24 he also built a porch, a new gate with square posts and altered the teacher's desk. The finished building measured 20 feet x 34 feet with two windows on each side and two at one end with seating for 24 students.



Classes continued in the newly built schoolhouse into the new century. In April 1915 a petition was made to the North Cowichan School Board from residents in the Maple Bay town site requesting a school nearer to the Maple Bay wharf. This resulted in the purchase of 2 acres of on Lot 1 from Alex Aitken for a school site at a cost of \$900. In the meantime the old house on Mr. William Lambe's property at Maple Bay was rented for school purposes until a new school could be built. However,

attendance in the rented house never reached 20 children as required by the BC Department of Education and the temporary school was closed by the end of December 1916.

Classes resumed again at the 1895 schoolhouse at the junction of Herd and Lakes Roads in January 1917 under the charge of its last teacher, Miss Margaret Sibyl Hardwick. By May 1918 only nine students were enrolled in the school forcing it to be permanently closed at the end of that school year.

The 1895 school building was unoccupied and still in existence in April 1931. Today no existing building is left and the former school grounds are under private ownership.

It was not until September 1961 that the next Maple Bay School opened, this time at 6759 Considine Road drawing students from the old Maple Bay town site and scattered homes and farms along Herd, Maple Bay, Genoa, Lakes and Jaynes Roads.



Two new classrooms and a gymnasium were added in 1963 and a library in 1977. A portable classroom was shoe-horned onto the site in 1994. Between 1966 and 1978 the Cowichan School board rented St. Peter's Church Hall at 6692 Chisholm Trail for use as a kindergarten annex. The Considine Road school was closed in 2000 to be replaced by the current Maple Bay School at 1500 Donnay Drive. The former 1961 school was sold in November 2008 for use as a film studio site, and then sold again within a decade to become the current *Hand of Man Museum*.