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One of Canada's first big convictions for residential-school abuse

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Priest's sex assaults called breach of trust: Lengthy jail term urged

The Vancouver Sun

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Byline: DOUGLAS TODD

WILLIAMS LAKE – Roman Catholic **Rev. Harold McIntee** began a 30-year string of sexual assaults by repeatedly sneaking into a dormitory full of pre-pubescent native Indian boys who were in his care and fondling them under their pyjama bottoms.

A courtroom packed with natives heard here Monday that about 10 years later, in the 1970s, the Oblate priest  had moved on to oral sex with a teenage native boy from Duncan who had come to McIntee for counselling because he'd been sexually abused.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

By the 1980s, McIntee was serving in Terrace and fondling or crawling into bed with Caucasian males in their late teens and early 20s who came to his parish for help in finding jobs or overcoming illness.

McIntee, 59, pleaded guilty Monday to 17 counts of sexual assault against males.

Crown counsel Lorne Fisher called McIntee's acts "a breach of trust of the highest order" and asked the judge for a sentence of nine to 12 years in prison.

Defence counsel Thomas Dohm called McIntee "truthful" and "remorseful" and said his assaults were related to a drinking problem. Dohm suggested "a short custodial sentence (in prison), plus probation so he can undergo treatment."

Provincial court Judge C. C. Barnett said one wouldn't have to be a psychiatrist to know McIntee's assaults "could have lasting negative impact" on the victims. The judge said he would sentence McIntee on June 1.

McIntee's first 13 victims were native boys whom, like almost all B.C. natives in the 1950s and '60s, were taken off their reserves eight months of the year and required to attend a residential school – in this case, the Catholic-run St. Joseph's school south of Williams Lake.



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More than 75 times while McIntee worked at the residential school and served as priest to Cariboo-area natives, the court heard, he either fondled and masturbated the 13 boys while they lay in their beds or he lured them up to his private room or into shower stalls, sometimes by promising soda pop.

Most of his residential school victims, aged 10 to 12, were loners, the prosecutor told the courtroom, which included some native victims from the Alkali Lake, Dog Creek, Mount Currie and Soda Creek bands. The young boys, Fisher said, couldn't stand up for themselves as well as other more assertive boys.

When McIntee masturbated the boys or had them fondle him, the court heard he would often ask which other boys he could approach for more of the same (the 400-student residential school included native girls in a segregated area, but McIntee is not known to have assaulted females).

"These young boys felt they had no one to complain to," Fisher said. "They were scared. . . . Their parents considered the Catholic church one of the pillars of the community and wouldn't believe them. And some boys couldn't tell their parents because they went home to houses where there was a lot of alcohol abuse."

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Some of the older, bolder boys began "cat-calling" at McIntee when he entered the dormitory and warned him not to come around their beds at night, Fisher said. Other boys made sure they slept on their stomach or wrapped their blankets so no one could get a hand under their pyjamas.

When McIntee moved from the residential school (which the Oblate order finally closed in 1979), he worked in Hope and then went to a rectory in Duncan connected to a Catholic school. He had a two-year sexual relationship with a native boy of 13 who had come to him to talk about how he had twice been sexually abused.

"The victim recalls McIntee hugged him and said what the victim had told him was all right," Fisher said. McIntee then fondled the boy, took him to bed, took off his clothes and they had oral sex.

McIntee took a few years off from the priesthood after leaving Duncan in 1976, at which point he booked into some alcohol-abuse programs.

But when he ended up later at twin parishes in Terrace and Stewart in the early 1980s, he assaulted three young white men, including an 18-year-old from a devout Catholic family he befriended. The teenager one day had stomach troubles that caused McIntee to take off the youth's pants because he wanted to see if "his testicles were swollen," Fisher said.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“The man told him: ‘Stop. It’s not right for a priest to do this.’ Father McIntee apparently said: ‘I know. I’m sorry. I can’t help myself.’ ”

In arguing for a lengthy jail term, Fisher compared McIntee’s crimes to those of Msgr. John Monaghan of Nelson who last year was sentenced to four years in prison after pleading guilty to 17 counts of sexual assault against young girls.

But Fisher said McIntee, unlike Monaghan, frequently assaulted his young victims repeatedly, 20 times each or more.

Defence counsel cited a psychiatrist’s report that McIntee came from an Ontario home with a distant, authoritarian father and added that “the loss of his (McIntee’s) status is a punishment . . . the Canada-wide publicity is a punishment and the fact he has lived with this all his life is a punishment.” Dohm also argued against a prison sentence by saying McIntee, as a child molester, would find himself at the bottom of the prison hierarchy and thus would end up serving “hard time.”

Fisher responded by saying: “The victims in the residential school were also at the bottom of the social hierarchy and in the court’s submission that’s not to be forgotten. Those victims had no place to go. Nowhere to turn. Nothing. They were there (in the residential school) and that’s where they had to stay. To this day some of those people have not been able to pull themselves out of the pain caused by those assaults.”

Illustration:

- WENDY HOLM/ REV. HAROLD McINTEE: the priest assaulted his young victims repeatedly, as many as 20 times each or more.

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