

HISTORY OF WESTERN SCHOOL DIVISION

The establishment of schools in the Morden area began nearly a century before the formation of Western School Division. Wellington School District No. 59, later to be known as Thornhill School District No. 59, came into being on November 18, 1878, near the present location of the village of Thornhill. The Maple Leaf School District, later to become the Morden School District, was formed in February, 1881 and constructed its first school, the Maple Leaf School, on the northwest corner of 31-2-5w. The original Maple Leaf School was later moved to the Morden town site where the name has been used continuously to the present.

By 1893, rapid increases in school population resulted in the purchase of land and the building of a six room stone school on the present Maple Leaf School grounds. This building, the Morden Intermediate High School, began serving the secondary education needs of the area. A new brick building, part of the present Maple Leaf School, was built on the same grounds in 1928 to house Grades one to six.

In 1953 the School Board built a new ten room Morden Collegiate on Wardrop Street (the present Ecole Morden Middle School) and demolished the stone building on the Maple Leaf grounds. In 1958, eight classrooms were added to the Wardrop Street school.

In 1956, the name of Maple Leaf School District #83 was changed to Morden School District #83. In 1958, in an attempt to reorganize education in Manitoba, the Provincial Government established a Boundaries Commission to divide the Province into areas known as divisions for the purpose of administering secondary education in the province. The recommendations of the Commission were published for the consideration of the public and a referendum was held in 36 proposed divisions on February 27, 1959. Four divisions rejected the proposals, among them being the two divisions whose boundaries coincided with the boundaries of Rhineland and Stanley municipalities. On August 22, 1961, a proposal was placed before the Boundaries Commission that the area of Rhineland and Stanley municipalities be broken up into three divisions centered around Altona, Winkler and Morden. In September of 1961 the Government of Manitoba accepted the proposal and called for a referendum to be held on December 8, 1961. The formation of Western School Division No. 47 became a reality with a positive vote on this referendum. However, a number of rural districts still opposed the proposal. In 1964, the Western School Division opened a new Collegiate in the northwest corner of the old Collegiate grounds, and the old Collegiate became the Morden Elementary School.

In total, eighteen different school districts once existed in the present Western School Division area. These are listed on the next page of this history, showing their date of formation, the date of their dissolution, and their location on the electoral map of the Division (File AAB-E). The formation of the Consolidated School District of Morden in July, 1965, saw the merging of Thornhill (Wellington), Alexandria, Morden, Shannon, Elam, Parkhill, Cheval and Pearce. By the time Western School Division was formed, Mason, Valleyfield, Glencross and Wakeham were the only rural school districts still operating on their own.

In early 1967 the Michener Commission recommended the establishment of unitary divisions having one board responsible for both elementary and secondary education in each division. A referendum on this recommendation was held on March 10, 1967. This

time only a few rural divisions, including Western, defeated the recommendation. Loss of revenue in 1967 and 1968 led to an extensive campaign by board members in all districts to obtain support for a petition to the Government for another referendum. Minimum requirements for a petition necessitate support by 80 percent of all board and 35 percent of electors. This support was received and the resulting referendum, held in April, 1969, was passed by a small majority. Western School Division was proclaimed a unitary division on May 1, 1969.

Despite the operating policy of the newly formed Division that the existing rural schools would be supported until their enrollments were below eight students, Glencross closed after the 1968-9 school year, and Valleyfield closed in June 1971. Wakeham remained open until June, 1975 and Mason School closed on June 30, 2002.

In 1974 an addition was built connecting the Collegiate and the Morden Elementary School. The addition houses a library, laboratories and a cafeteria, among other service areas. In 1980 an addition to the Maple Leaf School was opened. This addition includes classrooms and a new auditorium. In April, 1990 Western opened a new school. Minnewasta School is in the southwest corner of the Town of Morden.

In the late 1990's a resurgence of providing education for mature students led to the opening of the Morden Adult Education Centre, a downtown site under the umbrella of Morden Collegiate.

Western reorganized its schools in time for the 1999-2000 school year including renaming Morden Elementary School to reflect its dual track English and French Immersion programs.

In September 2003 the early years French Immersion program was moved to Maple Leaf School.

By September 2003 Western was organized as follows:

Maple Leaf School	K-4 English and French Immersion (~300 students)
Minnewasta	K-4 English (~200 students)
Ecole Morden Middle School	Gr.5-8 English and French Immersion (~525 students) (Gr.4 Fr.Im. to move to Maple Leaf in September 2004)
Morden Collegiate	Senior 1-4 (~500 students, including Morden Adult Education Centre)

In November, 2002 the provincial government announced a major school division amalgamation effective July, 2003. The number of school divisions was reduced from fifty-five to thirty-eight. Western School Division was unaffected by this action.

On February 28, 2023 a sod turning ceremony was held for the new Discovery Trails School (K-8).

SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF THE WESTERN SCHOOL DIVISION AREA 1

	School District		#	Location		Formation Date	Dissolution Date	District Division Joined
1	Wellington	(6)	59	NW	17-3-6w	18/11/1878	12/04/61	C. Thornhill
2	Glencross	(5)	71	SW	9-2-5w	17/12/1878	01/05/69	W.S.D. (7)
3	Alexandria	(2)	73	SE	17-2-6w	01/01/1879	01/07/65	C. Morden (8)
4	Morden	(2)	83	SW	8-3-5w	01/01/1880	01/07/65	C. Morden (5)
5	Clegg		105	SE	17-4-5w	22/12/1880	01/01/66	C. Miami, C. Morden
6	Mountain City		236	NE	24-2-6w	? / ? / 1884	01/07/67	C. Morden
7	Shannon	(2)	583	NW	26-3-6w	04/05/1889	01/07/65	C. Morden
8	Elam	(2)	684	NW	32-2-6w	18/12/1892	01/07/65	C. Morden
9	Wakeham	(5)	773	NW	11-1-5w	13/05/1893	01/05/69	W.S.D.
10	Parkhill	(2)	77	NE	29-3-6w	06/02/1897	01/07/65	C. Morden
11	Valleyfield	(5)	952	SE	21-2-5w	05/04/1898	01/05/69	W.S.D.
12	Lindal		1060	SE	29-1-6w	07/04/1900	01/01/67	C. Morden
13	Elk Creek		1087	SW	14-1-6w	08/08/1900	01/07/67	C. Morden
14	Cheval	(2)	1124	NW	16-3-5w	01/06/1901	01/07/65	C. Morden
15	Diamond		1314	SE	35-1-6w	17/09/1904	01/07/68	C. Morden
16	Deer Creek	(5)	1420	NW	8-1-5w	02/04/1907	01/07/67	C. Morden
17	Pearce	(2)	1981	SE	12-2-7w	16/07/1919	01/07/65	C. Morden
18	Mason	(3)	2149	SW	27-1-5w	01/05/1926	01/05/69	W.S.D.
1	Thornhill	(2,4)	59	NW	17-3-6w	12/04/1961	01/07/68	C. Morden

- 1 Perfect, M.B., M.Ed. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978.
- 2 Formed Consolidated School District of Morden #2440 in 1965.
- 3 Began as Oak Bluff in 1907
- 4 Formerly Wellington #59
- 5 Formed Western School Division in 1969.
- 6 Consolidated School District of Thornhill.
- 7 Western School Division.
- 8 Consolidated School District of Morden.