

Education

Learning a trade or working on the family farm was seen as the best way to get ahead in the world. For many families, going to school was not considered very important. However, a lot of European settlers could read and write. They were taught at home by family members. Books were highly prized possessions, and reading—silently or aloud—was a favourite pastime.

In the early years of the colonies, almost all schools were run by religious organizations, often with the help of the parents in the community. Many people thought that proper behaviour and religious instruction were the most important things that students should learn in school. So children would go to different schools depending on their religion. Children of wealthy families usually had private tutors in their homes.

As time went by, *publicly funded* schools were set up. These were schools partly paid for with tax money. They were supposed to be open to all children. In fact, they were mostly for White children. The language of instruction was French or English, depending on who was in the majority in the community. The religious instruction also depended on which Church group was in the majority. So minority groups often had to pay to set up separate schools for their children. Church groups also ran schools in First Nations and Inuit communities. The main goal of these schools was to teach the children about European culture and religion.

The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were most active in setting up schools in BNA.



Rural schools were small one-room buildings where children in all grades shared the same classroom. Towns and cities often had larger schools. This is the Orwell Corner School classroom in Prince Edward Island. It shows what a one-room school would have looked like in the mid-1800s.