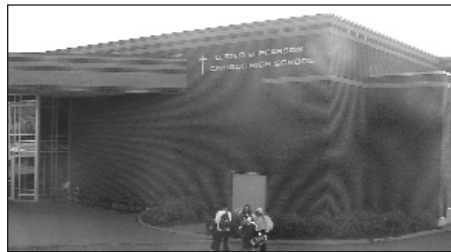
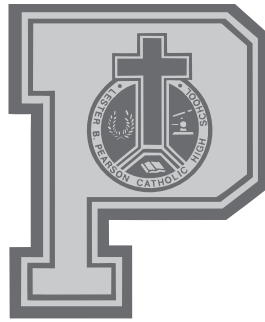


# LESTER B. PEARSON

## CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



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Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School likes to view itself as the “little school that could” and over the years since being conceived as a complete Catholic high school, it has done just that – achieved whatever it set out to do.

Pearson, as the school is fondly called, began as a dream for the former Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board in 1972 to create a complete Catholic high school. At that time, Catholic high schools were provincially funded only to the end of Grade 10. Completion to Grade 13 was a political goal, which the Catholic community across the province espoused until it finally became reality in 1984. Before the founding of Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School, there were four principal players who shared the dream of establishing it: Basil MacDonald, Chairperson of the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board; William Crossan, Director of Education for the Board; Sylvester E. Quinn, a Superintendent of Education for the Board; and Merle J. Obee, the first principal of the school. But these four did not do it alone; they were strongly supported by the parishes and Catholic parents of the communities in North Gloucester as well as others across the whole jurisdiction of the Board.

Principal Merle Obee’s vision of a dynamic and effective Catholic school was innovative at that time; however, the Pearson model would become a prototype used by the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board to accommodate its grades 7 to 13 students across its entire jurisdiction. Principal Obee was keen to assemble a staff of educators dedicated to providing Catholic high school students with the unique and varied opportunities that they would need to achieve excellence. From the outset, he was concerned with establishing a consistent set of values for the school community, and he wanted to staff the school accordingly.

During the first year for the school in 1973-74, while it was still housed in one module of four rooms and two portable classrooms at Thomas D’Arcy McGee Catholic School, a hiring team of three, consisting of Principal Obee and two teachers, Betty Dubien and Gerard Lavelle, took on the task of bringing together the “brave new staff” for the new high school. This staff would consist of teachers one-third of who were new, one-third experienced, and one-third “old pros.” In addition, this initial tiny staff of seven was sent on program scouting excursions to schools known for their excellence.

As the school entered the 1974-75 academic year, some of the program goals set for the school seemed very lofty and far-reaching. Besides offering a strong academic program interlaced with the arts and athletics in a vibrant Catholic milieu where the Catholic faith was to be both learned and practised, the school staff also hoped one day to offer computer skills, restaurant training and auto mechanics.

St. Jerome’s Catholic High School in Kitchener-Waterloo served as the comprehensive high school model for the new Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School.

In the fall of 1974, the growing staff moved into the new school facility, which had been originally designed with a million-dollar price tag but which, due to funding cutbacks by the Ministry of Education, ended up being built on a reduced budget of only half that. This meant that many of the features designed for special programs were eliminated or at least drastically reduced. The theatre arts space, for instance, ended up being a corner platform in the cafeteria. Despite this, a creative and ingenious staff set about building a first-class educational institution.

The school was named in honour of the late Prime Minister of Canada, Lester Bowles Pearson. On June 15, 1975, Mrs. Maryon Pearson, widow of the Prime Minister who had died on December 28, 1972, cut the ribbon to open Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School. At this official opening, Mrs. Pearson presented the flag that had hung in Mr. Pearson’s office the day that the new Canadian flag was officially unfurled on Parliament Hill in 1965.

It was also at this official opening that a school tradition began. This is the now long-standing practice of having students take centre stage, especially at

public events. Mrs. Pearson was welcomed to the official opening by Masters of Ceremonies David Turgeon and Lisa Langlois who read a tribute to her late husband, highlighting his contributions to world peace, contributions that earned him the Nobel Prize for Peace.

From the start, Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School was on the leading edge of pedagogy, and developed and maintained a very close liaison with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. Dr. Pierre Turgeon, whose son attended Pearson, supervised this liaison. Many graduate students did practicums in special education at Pearson while a large number of student-teachers, under the tutelage of Dr. Dorothy Ryan, trained at Pearson as well.

A major problem with regard to operating a Catholic high school involved financing. Betty Bernard, a one-time president of the Pearson Parent-Teacher Association, has often told the story of being asked to help with fundraising for the school. Principal Rachelle Keyserlingk called Betty to her office one afternoon, asking her to raise money for the upper grades. Betty had been long accustomed to Saturday morning bottle drives and cake sales, perhaps netting \$300 or so to help Catholic schools. Asking how much money Principal Keyserlingk needed, Betty was astounded by the answer, "A million to start with."

In 1983-84, Pearson welcomed its first grade 11 students who paid a yearly fee of \$1,000. In the summer of 1984 the Provincial Government under Premier William Davis announced the funding of Catholic schools through to the end of Grade 13. This ended the fundraising programs related to financing the upper grades. However, Pearson was ahead of schedule, as it graduated its first grade 12 class in 1986 and its first grade 13 class in

the following year. This grades 7 to 13 model piloted by Pearson became the standard for all other Catholic high schools in the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School received additions in 1976, 1985 (science lab and classrooms) and 1994 (gymnasium). Innumerable portables have been fixtures at the school for many years, as have its narrow halls. But this has not deterred the "little school that does" from excelling. New programs to meet expanded educational needs have been added over the years, such as computers, English as a Second Language, beauty and grooming, and a program for the developmentally handicapped.

While Pearson graduates succeed in university and in life thanks to the academic excellence of its teaching, the experience at Pearson remains animated by a strong liturgical life, encouraging participation. The Dominican Republic project, established and spearheaded for many years by Teacher Michael O'Callaghan, who was the head of the school's Religion Department, has been a tangible illustration of the commitment to the Catholic faith and to justice by both students and teachers.

The success of Pearson can perhaps best be portrayed not in facts and figures but anecdotally. One potential Pearson graduate called the Faculty of English at Carleton University in the mid 1990s to inquire about "how to get into Carleton." The secretary of the department asked the student where she attended high school. When she replied, "Pearson," the secretary succinctly responded, "there is an excellent OAC teacher there; just do as she says and you'll be fine."

In 1975, Pearson's first yearbook

was published, under the supervision of seasoned Teacher Sandie Bender. Fittingly, it was called *Genesis*. In the year 2000, at the beginning of the new millennium, the Pearson yearbook bore the title *No Limits*. Between *Genesis* in 1975 and *No Limits* in 2000, the achievement of excellence by eager students assisted by a talented staff resulted in much learning and growing in the Pearson school community.

In 1999, Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School was the site for the launching of the Pearson dollar. Lester B. Pearson's son, Geoffrey, accompanied by various government officials, attended the event. In June 1999, the school and an alumni committee hosted a 25-year reunion. Once again, Geoffrey Pearson was on hand to open the event. After the reunion, the alumni committee presented school Principal Peter Linegar with a cheque for \$7,000, the profits from the reunion. The funds were to be used to help students experiencing financial difficulty.

Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School entered the Guinness Book of World Records as a result of a ten-second hug (Give Peace A Chance), which the school shared with St. Matthew High School.

### Present Principal

Manon Seguin (2005-present)

### Principals

Merle J. Obee (1973-76)  
 Peter Linegar (1976-80)  
 Rachelle Keyserlingk (1980-86)  
 John Shannon (1986-91)  
 Starr Kelly (1991-96)  
 Peter Linegar (1996-99)  
 Ron Chisholm (2000-05)

### First Teaching and Support Staff

#### 1973-74

Merle J. Obee, Principal  
 Teresa Dubien  
 Gerard Lavelle  
 Noella Crawford (later Chisholm)  
 Livvie Elmes (later Scott)  
 Jan Kolachuk  
 Ban Hanlon  
 Sister Barbara Herbert  
 Micheline Lefebvre-Poirier  
 Faith Crowley, Secretary

#### 1974-75

Merle J. Obee, Principal  
 Peter Linegar, Vice-Principal  
 Teresa Dubien  
 Gerard Lavelle  
 Sandie Doyle (later Bender)  
 Livvie Elmes  
 Ban Hanlon  
 Mary Murphy  
 Susan Weekes (later McCulloch-Davis)  
 Anne Marie Stevenson  
 Patricia McCool  
 Lionel Spector  
 Gerry Boyer  
 Luigi Antonucci  
 Mary Ann Kazmierski  
 Thomas Duggan  
 Douglas Colwill  
 Micheline Poirier  
 Jacques Frechette  
 Michael Mathews, Guidance

Betty Morrow, Librarian  
 Faith Crowley, Secretary  
 Lionel McAllister, Custodian  
 Roger Allard, Custodian  
 Paul Morin, Custodian  
 Delphine Cere, Cafeteria

### Former Staff and Students

Former student Jason Lachance won a silver medal in the 400-metre event at the Paralympics in June 2000.

Chris Potenza is a performer, with a Listerine commercial to his credit.

Shannon Lawson is a stage actor and appeared in the film *The War Between Us*.

Jennifer Goodhue is a comedian on *Comedy Tonight*.

Rob Bockstael is an actor.

Tracey Clark is a businessperson and founder of eco-friendly Bridgehead, a fair trade coffee shop.

Steve Guenette has played for the Pittsburgh Penguins and Calgary Flames of the National Hockey League.

In 1979, a lovely transplanted American came on staff as librarian at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School. Her name was Elizabeth Patch. Because of her involvement with social and community issues, Elizabeth was widely and fondly respected throughout the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board and became the President of the Carleton Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association.

When she died of cancer in 1985, the staff at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School created a staff scholarship fund in

her name, to be awarded to a graduating student who, in the spirit of Elizabeth, would attend a community college to pursue community and social work. In 1987, the Carleton Unit of OECTA established a professional award in Elizabeth's name to be presented to a teacher in recognition of commitment to Catholic education, OECTA and the community.

In 1974, Mrs. Rachelle Keyserlingk received an Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association fellowship to pursue a Master's degree in education, after which she became Vice-Principal at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School and later its principal.

Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School Science Teacher Karen Kyle received the Global Citizen's Challenge Certificate of Acknowledgement from the United Nations Association in Canada in 2006.

Former students who returned to teach at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School include Peter Linegar Jr. (son of Peter Linegar, the first vice-principal and later principal), Pamela McCulloch (daughter of teacher Susan McCulloch-Davis) and Sean Burke, a 1985 graduate who returned to teach auto mechanics.

### Colours

Blue and gold. These colours are featured on all team uniforms and on the school logo.

### Logo

The school logo is a giant "P" with a cross highlighting the circular area of the "P," along with the school name and appropriate symbols such as an open book.

### Team Names

"Panthers" is the name of the Pearson sports teams.

### Longtime Teachers

Gerard Lavelle taught at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School for 27 years, as did Joan Burrige. Frank Duggan taught at Pearson for 26 years and Linda Gorayeb-Leblanc for 24.

### Award Recipient

Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School student Camille Juswik, a founding member of the school's smoke-free youth team, received a Heather Crowe Award in May 2006. This was a new award created by the Provincial Government to honour the leadership and commitment of the late Heather Crowe who fought for the elimination of second-hand smoke in the workplace and in enclosed public places. The award is given to recognize the efforts of individuals and organizations in promoting a smoke-free Ontario at the local level.

