

1887-1889 Introducing Industrial Schools

Monarch: Queen Victoria

Prime Minister: Sir John A. MacDonal

Premier: A. E. Davie

Federal Ministry: Department of the Interior

In the News

1885	Northwest Rebellions lead by Louis Riel in Saskatchewan.
1887 May	First transcontinental train arrives in Vancouver.
1887 August	800 Tsimshian people move with William Duncan from Metlakatla BC to New Metlakatla, Alaska.
1887	Commission of Enquiry into the Condition of the Indians of the Northwest Coast.
1887	Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show tours England to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 50 years as Queen.
1888	St. Catherine's Milling Case - Privy Council recognizes Indian rights to land.

Backgrounder

In the 1880s the federal government's grip on the lives of First Nations people was tightening. British Columbia was divided into separate districts called Agencies, and Indian agents were hired to oversee First Nations communities in each of the districts. Indian Reserves were surveyed and assigned to individual bands, with little or no consultation with the First Nations people themselves.

In Ottawa John A. Macdonald was not only the Prime Minister (sometimes called Premier at that time), he was also the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, so he played a direct role in formulating the foundations of the Indian Affairs bureaucracy.

In some First Nations communities in BC, church missionaries ran schools as part of their mission work. Many people were converted to the religion of their resident missionary. Some became closely bonded to the Roman Catholic denomination, while others associated with one of the Protestant churches: Anglican, Methodist or Presbyterian.

As the Canadian parliament approved the budget for building schools in British Columbia, there was a discussion of whether they would be secular (also referred to as non-sectarian) or operated by the churches.

First Nations students could attend one of three types of schools. Day Schools were located in a reserve community, and children lived at home. Boarding schools were institutions in or near the local community, where students lived, but may have attended the local day school.

The main type of school discussed in these documents is the Industrial School. This was a large institution where students lived and studied, often a distance away from home communities. The original intention was to teach practical skills, but they developed into what we think of as residential schools, although that term was not used until 1920.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS.

On the item in the estimates of \$78,425 for the Indians of this province in reply to Sir Richard Cartwright, the premier said that last year there were no industrial schools, as the government was only commencing the system in British Columbia and asks a vote of \$17,250. Sir John said that there are two industrial schools to be established. The Indians of British Columbia are of quite a different race from those in the Northwest and in the east. There is a good deal of Mongol blood in them and they are more industrious and self-reliant than the Indians farther east; they work in the mines and on the railways, and are a hard-working people. They do not ask for anything but schools, and especially industrial schools, for some time. The government think it well to establish one industrial school on the Island of Vancouver and another on the mainland, after the fashion of the industrial schools which have been in successful operation for the last two or three years in the Northwest. He believed, and in fact was sure, that this experiment will be a very successful one, because they are a fine people with a promising future before them if their education is promoted. The one will cost \$2,500 and will accommodate twenty-five pupils at a cost of \$130 each per annum. On the mainland there will be two schools; the buildings will cost \$5000 and the cost of teaching twenty-five pupils there will be \$3,500. He fancied the Indians taught in the schools could be safely allowed to join their tribes. They would be secular.

British Colonist 1887

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INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

To THE EDITOR :—It appears to be the intention of the Canadian government to establish at present three or four "industrial" schools in British Columbia. These establishments ought to be exclusively under government control. The teachers government officers. Sectarian proselytisers should be rigidly excluded.

There are about four thousand aborigines living upon the west coast of Vancouver Island. These Indians are hale, robust, active and intelligent fellows. Although not yet well trained, they have improved of late years considerably, and have been, and are, employed by white men in carrying on the seal hunting and other fisheries. They are bold and brave upon the stormy ocean; expert at the management of canoes and boats, in which they may be said to be brought up and educated.

Indians are producers, and therefore of great benefit and value to the country. Were they educated industrially they would become still more so, for they have plenty muscular power which would be more and more made use of. Our Indian population has been, and is still, grossly undervalued. They are very great factors in the commerce and industries of the country, and might be made greater still with much advantage to themselves and the state.

It is to be regretted that in days gone by the government either of Canada or the province did not undertake the education of the aborigines, and not devote their attention almost exclusively to the

mes occupy a dozen separate villages, but there are two much larger than the others, viz: one near Woody Point and the other about Nootka Sound. Probably Nootka Sound would be a very suitable place for the school, as there will be found an excellent harbor, and what is rare on this coast, some acres of land fit for cultivation. Of course all materials abound for boat building whether large or small, and many fishing industries capable of greater development. These Indians have been too long neglected—but it is never too late to mend. Let a government school be erected among them, and if the teachers be earnest and politic in their work, Indians and their belongings will be attracted to it, and in process of time become a large settlement—but it must be exclusively under government supervision. The province has had experience enough to prove the danger of allowing Indians to be massed together for the advantage of private individuals—or rather the employees who have betrayed their trust, not only to their employers but also to the country. With regard to other Indians—our fellow subjects—how is it that their children do not attend our public schools? There is a screw loose somewhere. All are, I believe, entitled to be educated under the provincial law, and yet the funds and teachers are only devoted to white children. Surely by education the Indians ought to be made as profitable to the state as whites, and possibly more permanently so. This letter is already too long, so in conclusion let it be hoped that the government and the people will soon awaken to the fact that the Indians are, and may be made of more profit and advantage to the state.

J. S. HELMCKEN.

British Colonist April 6 1888

3 Indian Agent Letter, Cowichan Agency

Copy

Quamichan 21st Aug 1888

510 DEPT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
OCT 1888

My dear Sir,

I am just informed by Indians returning from the Fraser that a petition has been signed there by about 80 Indians and sent to Ottawa asking that the Industrial School should be built and placed under the charge of the Roman Catholic Mission at Cowichan.

Indian Tom and some others refused to sign, and that a Mr. Bewlie or Buie manager of one of the canneries got his Indians and the others to sign telling them that a petition had been forwarded by me asking that the school should be placed under a Protestant Church.

All this occurred after a visit to the canneries from Father Douchele.

I think it right to let you know this privately as I am sure the majority (were it not for priestly influence) would have more confidence in a non-sectarian school established by the Government. "Somenos Tom" says that this was signed by many who had not any proper idea of what they were signing.

Tom is a staunch Roman Catholic, but

J. W. Powell Esq. M. L.
Victoria

but he says that they have had schools here for twenty five years and there is not an Indian who can read or write properly, and all their best scholars are now the worst Indians, so he would like the Government to try a school not under any priest.

Believe me Dear Sir,
Yours very truly,
W. H. Lomas.

(J)

Transcription:

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INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS FOR INDIANS

Four Schools to be Established in British Columbia—Kuper Island, Metlakahla, Kamloops and Kootenay.

At the last session of the federal parliament a vote of money was made for the establishment of three industrial schools for the province of British Columbia, to be used in the instruction of the Indian population in the peaceful arts. Of these three one is to be located on Vancouver Island, the other two on the mainland—one at Kamloops, the other at Metlakahla. Since the close of the session it has been decided to establish a similar school in Kootenay district. The appropriation for the first three is \$5,750 each, \$2,500 to be spent on buildings, and the balance for the maintenance of a school of twenty-five pupils at an estimated annual cost of \$130 per head. For the Kootenay school a larger sum, \$8,500, was appropriated, owing to the isolation of its location on St. Mary's reserve, \$4,500 buildings and \$4,000 for the maintenance and tuition of thirty pupils. Dr. Powell, superintendent of Indian affairs for this province, has already selected the sites for the schools, subject to the approval of the department.

Kuper Island, off Chemainus, has been chosen for the Island school, and is very favorable. The site is on Telegraph Harbor, facing Chemainus, with a considerable area of agricultural land adjacent, plenty of timber, well sheltered and with a bountiful water supply. On the northern end of the island is a village containing about 300 Penelakut Indians. The Chemainus Indians are at the mouth of the river, it is a short distance from the Cowichan and Oyster Bay Indians and within easy reach of Nanaimo. Nineteen hundred Indians are within a radius of fifty miles from the school.

At Metlakahla, the old school house is being refitted for the purposes of an industrial school, and Agent Todd at the present time has a number of men at work. The site at Metlakahla has become famous, and there can be no question that its central location is very favorable for the success of the school. The Indians of the Naas, Skeena and those in its immediate vicinity are within easy reach of Metlakahla.

The site for the school for the Kamloops Indians is situated on the reserve, opposite the town, two miles from the mouth of the North Thompson river. This location is also central, being convenient for the North and South Thompson Indians in the Okanagon district, etc.

The site for the Kootenay school possesses similar advantages in point of convenience and location, on St. Mary's reserve, which abounds in good agricultural land, and plenty of water for irrigation purposes.

The educational system to be followed has not as yet been outlined, but it is presumed that it will consist of the ordinary English branches, agriculture, and instruction in two or more trades.

The school building is divided into two wings, and on a similar plan to that of the Woshacado Home and Industrial School at Elkhorn, in the Northwest Territories. The boys will occupy one wing, the girls another. Every provision is made for their comfort and convenience, and for the housing of their instructors.

British Colonist August 21, 1888

THE INDIANS.

The Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending 31st December, 1888, gives the patient reader much information relative to the Indian population of Canada. We find from it that the number of Indians in all the Provinces and Territories is estimated at 39,554. This comparatively small number of aboriginal inhabitants is scattered over a wide extent of territory. There are in—

British Columbia.....	17,922
Northwest Territories.....	23,940
Ontario.....	16,903
Quebec.....	6,731
New Brunswick.....	1,594
Nova Scotia.....	2,145
Prince Edward Island.....	319

Total..... 69,554

The condition of by far the greater number of the Indians is exceedingly backward. But the progress made by some of the tribes, both in the East and the West, show that the Indian is improvable, and there are indications that, if the proper means are used, he will not, as some hastily conclude, be in time civilized off the face of the earth. Some of the Indian communities in the East have attained a fair degree of civilization. In the words of the report: "Indications are not wanting of nearer approach to that condition which, when reached, will merge them in the general population of the country, breaking asunder the very slight barriers which now separate many of them from the rest of the community." They cultivate the land, they build houses, they own cattle, they have learned handicraft trades, and many of them are fairly well educated. The object of those who have undertaken to elevate the Indian is to change his social condition and bring it as near as possible to the white man's standard. If they can dissolve the tribal bond and abolish the practises of which it is the origin, they think that they will do much to bring the Indians within the pale of civilization. In order to do this they are cultivating in him a love of property. They wish to make him feel a pride in the possession of land. For this purpose, both in Canada and the United States, they are trying to do away with the policy of settling Indians on reserves which belong to the whole community but to which the individual has no claim. They are encouraging

no claim. They are encouraging the Indian to become the sole owner of the plot of land he cultivates and on which he has built his dwelling. And Indians are, in several places, beginning to see the advantage of possessing land in severalty. This desire, it is hoped, will spread and be one of the principal influences to induce them to abandon a wild and wandering life and to adopt the ideas and the practices of civilized men.

But the civilizing agent which the friends of the Indian principally depend upon is the education of the young. The Commissioner says:

"It is submitted and earnestly pressed that the most essential lever for the elevation of the race would be the adoption of a vigorous policy of imparting to the young a thorough, practical knowledge of mechanical arts and of agriculture, as well as of other employments, including a systematic method of ordering and managing their domestic affairs—in short, a complete training in industries and domestic economy."

There is no question that if the Indian is civilizable this is the most effective way of civilizing him. If he is taken young and taught to appreciate the advantages of civilization, the chances are that he will be much the superior of his brother who remains uneducated, and that he will be the means of elevating in some degree those of his race with whom he comes in contact. We are glad to see that the education to be extended to the Indians is to be of the right sort. It is to be a practical education. The position which the pupil is to occupy after he leaves school is to be kept continually in sight. He is to be taught to work with his hands so that when he is sent into the world he will be able to earn his bread by engaging in some useful and steady occupation. We see, too, that while he is serving his apprenticeship to civilization the Indian educationists think that the pupil should be separated as much as possible from old and degrading associations. They prefer boarding schools to day schools. They want to have the child all to themselves for a few years. This seems to be wise, but whether it is practicable or not we are not in a position to decide.

British Colonist Feb 22, 1889