

1906-1910 THE BRYCE REPORT

Monarch: Edward VII

Prime Minister: Sir Wilfred Laurier

Premier: Richard McBride

Federal Ministry: Department of the Interior

In the News

1906	Delegation of BC Chiefs travel to England to meet with King Edward to discuss the Indian Land Question.
Mar 24 1906	"Census of the British Empire" shows England rules 1/5 of the world .
1907	Nisga'a form Nisga'a Land Committee.
Feb 13 1907	English suffragettes storm British Parliament and 60 women are arrested.
Apr 19, 1907	11th Boston Marathon won by Aboriginal athlete Tom Longboat of Canada.
1908	BC government decides to make no more reserve allocations.
1909	The group "Interior Tribes of British Columbia" is formed.
1910	BC refuses to submit question of Aboriginal Title in BC to British Privy Council.

BACKGROUNDER

Tuberculosis is a highly contagious disease, caused by bacteria that infects any organ, but most commonly affects the lungs. Today we have modern antibiotics to treat the disease, but in 1907 diet, rest, sunlight and fresh air were the main treatments.

TB, also known as consumption, was at epidemic levels among Aboriginal communities in the early twentieth century. With hundreds of children living so close together in dormitories, it is no wonder that the Industrial Schools, and later the Residential Schools, were breeding grounds for spreading the disease.

In 1907, Dr. Peter Bryce, the Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Indian Affairs conducted a study of the health of students in Industrial Schools in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

He found extremely high rates of death from tuberculosis in the schools. His findings were shocking, and his report received publicity across the country. Duncan Campbell Scott and the

Department of Indian Affairs did very little to address the problem.

Bryce continued to push the government to recognize the problem. He conducted another study and report in 1909. This report was circulated to medical, school and church officials for comment. However, there was minimal action taken. You will read part of Scott's response in the documents.

Bryce continued to criticise the department and ultimately he was removed from his position. In 1922, after years of inaction and no change in the death rates, he published *The Story of a National Crime: An Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada* to bring awareness to the issue.

1

Local News

Mr. Burdis Recovering.—W. D. Burdis, secretary of the Fraser River Cannermen's Association, who had the misfortune to break his ankle three weeks ago, is still confined to the association rooms in Vancouver, but is gradually recovering strength in the injured limb.

Noted Baseball Team.—The noted Sioux Indian baseball team will visit British Columbia shortly if arrangements at present going forward are successful. After the Winnipeg fair the Sioux started west, and should arrive in the province late in the present month. In the eight years of its existence the Sioux nine has played 1558 games, winning 1263 and losing 304.

Trouble With Indian Girl.—An Indian girl who did not wish to attend school gave Provincial Constable Cassidy considerable trouble at Ladysmith. The girl has been attending the Indian school on Kuper Island, and recently ran away and refused to return under any circumstances. Constable Cassidy received instructions from the Indian department to take the girl back. He found her, in company with her mother, in Mr. Vowell's field, digging potatoes; and upon the girl learning his errand the trouble started. She refused to come, and was backed up in her refusal by both her mother and father. Finally Mr. Cassidy was obliged to obtain assistance, and it was necessary to almost drag the girl through the field and into the rig. She was taken to Ladysmith and thence to the island in the Mission launch.

Rich Mineral Belt.—The last number of the Atlin Claim to hand has this to say of the new mining camp on the border between this province and Yukon Territory: "Last October the pro-

Daily Colonist August 9, 1906

2

INDIAN SCHOOLS DEAL OUT DEATH

Startling Rate of Mortality is
Shown in Report to the
Department

TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT

Dr. Bryce Shows That Condi-
tions Are Such as to En-
courage Disease

Winnipeg, Nov. 15.—Not too favorable a report on the health conditions prevailing in the Indian industrial and boarding schools of the Dominion is that just issued by Dr. P. H. Bryce in his capacity as chief medical officer of the department of Indian affairs. Taken in conjunction with the fact that the religious denominations in charge of Indian education have asked the government within the past month to take over control of the schools to a greater extent, the report is significant.

The Indian schools, as is generally known, are conducted by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist denominations, who receive grants from the government to assist in carrying on the work. Attention having been drawn to a large number of deaths among the pupils, either while attending school or soon after leaving, Dr. Bryce was instructed to make a report on the subject. During the spring months, he visited all the schools with a few exceptions. He obtained a statistical statement of the past and present conditions of the health of children. A list of questions was left with each teacher, and from fifteen replies received some rather appalling deductions have been drawn. The report says that of the total of 1,527 pupils reported upon nearly 35 per cent. are dead, and in one school with absolute accuracy the statement shows that 69 per cent. of the ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death is given as tuberculosis.

"It is apparent," the report says, "that general ill health from continuous respiration of the air of increasing foulness is inevitable, but when sometimes consumptive pupils, and very frequently others will discharging scrofulous glands, are present to add an infective quality to the atmosphere, we have created a situation so dangerous to health that I am often surprised that results were not more serious than they have been shown statistically to be."

Dr. Bryce remarks that conditions in a majority of schools are much as to demand an immediate remedy. In two or three schools there is a very noticeable absence of drill or manual exercise among boys or calisthenics or breathing exercises among young girls.

The report strange to say, does not contain any recommendations or suggestions as to what should be done to reduce this abnormal death rate among Indian pupils, although the statistics given and general conditions described, make it quite evident that vigorous action cannot be long delayed.

Daily Colonist November 16, 1907

In Woman's Realm

In devoting more space than formerly to the affairs of women, the Colonist is taking a step, which it is hoped our lady friends will appreciate. Any communication from them of general interest will be welcome and carefully attended to.

to admire the bravery and self-devotion of the men and women, who in loneliness and isolation strive, in spite of many hardships, much discouragement and constant danger from exposure to an insidious disease to uplift the Indian children and to advance the cause of Christian morality.

* * *
If Canada ever becomes, as few doubt that she will become, a great nation, the most famous spot in the

PERSONAL MENTION

The Colonist readers are asked to assist in making this personal column as complete as possible. Send or phone items to the city editor.

Another mournful chapter has been added to the sad history of the native races of North America by the publication of the report of P. H. Bryce, M.A., M.D., chief medical officer of the department of Indian affairs. This is a report of the Indian schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

Dr. Bryce has visited and examined the Indian schools scattered throughout the great territory east of the Rocky Mountains and is compelled to come to the conclusion that the spread of tuberculosis among the children in the schools is terribly rapid. The industrial schools for Indian children from which great things were expected, have not proved so successful as was hoped. The Indian children of the middle west, who are being educated at all are taught in boarding schools situated on or near the reserves. These schools, of which there are 38, are attended by 1,739 children, while the day schools have 694 and the eight industrial schools 693 pupils. The terrible prevalence of consumption in these boarding schools is attributed by Dr. Bryce to the unsanitary conditions prevailing in the buildings themselves, and especially in the sleeping rooms, and to the want of knowledge of the laws of health among the teachers. Where the superintendents of the schools realized the value of fresh air the children were, comparatively speaking, well.

Another feature which is deplored by Dr. Bryce is the absence from these schools of drill or manual exercise among the boys, or of calisthenics or breathing exercises among the girls.

From a humanitarian point of view the report of Dr. Bryce, although alarming, is by no means hopeless. The causes to which he attributes the prevalence of consumption are avoidable. If new buildings were erected and an abundance of fresh air provided for the Indian schools of the future the children will improve in health while they attain what mental and moral development is possible to the remnant of the race. While the sufferings of the poor children cannot but excite our pity we are compelled

Daily Colonist November 23, 1907

4 Clipping from Department of Indian Affairs Files

WHAT is Canada trying to do with her Indian wards? Let it be conceded freely that good missionaries are working devotedly among them, and are supported in this work by other good people who contribute funds to support these missions. But has the country, as a nation, any policy with regard to the red men, and is a voice ever raised in Parliament to question or accuse the administration in their behalf? Do we not as a people put away our responsibility, close our eyes to the facts and leave the officials of the Indian Department to do as they like with the Indians? There are now 110,345 survivors of the red race in all Canada. Two hundred years ago there were 30,000 of them in that one little speck of Ontario now known as the county of Simcoe.

The published report of Dr. P. H. Bryce, chief medical officer of the Department of Indian Affairs, on "The Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories," has just been issued, and it contains information that should startle the country and at last compel the attention of Parliament. What are we trying to do with our Indian wards? What we are doing with them is clearly and coldly set forth in the tabulated reports of Dr. Bryce. An attempt was made by the Doctor to gather a complete statement giving the physical condition of present and discharged pupils of Indian industrial and boarding schools. Although not complete, the statement is sufficiently so to utterly condemn the schools as at present maintained. Indian boys and girls are dying like flies in these institutions or shortly after leaving them. Of 1,537 pupils of fifteen schools reported upon, after a period of fourteen years, seven per cent. are reported sick or in poor health, and twenty-four per cent. are reported dead. Of a total of thirty-one pupils discharged from the File Hills school, all are dead but nine. In each case the cause of death is given as consumption or tuberculosis. Of the total attendance at fifteen schools twenty-four pupils out of every hundred have died either at school or soon after leaving; of the graduates of one school sixty-nine per cent. went almost direct to the grave. Even war seldom shows as large a percentage of fatalities as does the educational system we have imposed on our Indian wards.

Dr. Bryce condemns these Indian schools as lacking in ventilation, and one can see in his report a repressed impatience with the lack of ordinary intelligence in matters of health that he found in most of them. These young Indians are cooped up under conditions fatal to them, and Dr. Bryce says he was often "surprised that the results were not even worse than they have been shown statistically to be." He says the conditions demand immediate remedy. What remedy? He has the statistics before him revealing a condition disgraceful to the country, he has visited many of the schools and wonders that the death-rate is not greater than twenty-five per cent, and yet he recommends *nothing*. His report is printed, many people will scan the title on the cover, some will open it, a few will read it, and so the thing will drift along for another year. And so with the next year, and the year after.

Such will be the course of events—the protests of medical officers buried in blue books and the complaints

of missionaries lost in pigeon-holes—unless public opinion takes the question up and forces it to the front. Then Parliament will show a quick interest, pigeon-holes will give forth their dusty contents, medical officers will have a wealth of suggestions, and the scandalous procession of Indian children to school and on to the cemetery may possibly be stopped.

Saturday Night, Toronto, November 23, 1907

5

Ottawa, March 7, 1910

Notes on Dr. Bryce's Report - with suggestions for future action

Dr. Bryce recommends that under existing conditions the following procedure be adopted:-

He proposes that the school system should be handed over to the Chief Medical Officer and be made in its first essentials a sanatorium system rather than an educational one:

That each child must be primarily considered an "individual case of probably tuberculosis."

That improvements be made in the buildings so that open air work-rooms and dormitories shall be provided.

That increased expenditure for extra clothing be provided for, also a special dietary. Also improved water supply for bathing &c.

Suggestions by the Department.

It will be obvious at once that Dr. Boyce's recommendations while they may be scientific are quite inapplicable to the system under which these schools are conducted. Even were the Department prepared to take the schools over from the Churches, it is self evident that the Churches would not be willing to give up their share of the joint control. These preliminary examinations by Dr. Lafferty and Dr. Bryce have already caused considerable irritation and brought protests from the Roman Catholic authorities who have the larger number of pupils under their charge.

If the schools are to be conducted at all we must face the fact that a large number of the pupils will suffer from tuberculosis in some of its various forms. The admission indiscriminately of such pupils into the schools in the past, and the failure to recognize any special treatment which could be accorded to them has no doubt led to the high death rate which has rendered ineffectual to a large degree the past expenditure on Indian education in Boarding and Industrial schools. More stringent regulations as to the admission of pupils will doubtless have a beneficial effect, and it is only necessary to carry out some common sense reforms to remove the imputation that the Department is careless of the interests of these children.

I would lay down as the chief rules under which admission to residential schools and the future life of the pupils at these schools are concerned, the following rules:-

1st. Continue the present system of refusing children where they are reported to be tubercular.

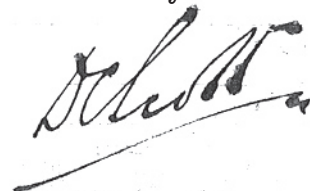
2nd. Improve buildings so as to have open air dormitories and workrooms where they have not already been supplied.

3rd. Establish a dietary which it shall be obligatory upon the school to provide for the pupils.

4th. Increase the per capita grant to Boarding Schools to \$100.00 so that they may be able to meet the extra expense of this nutritious diet.

5th. Establish a form of contract to be entered into with the authorities of each school; the dietary and sanitary regulations to be attached to each contract, and a system of calisthenics, deep breathing exercises, &c, to be also included.

If these simple measure are carried out the enormous friction which would ensue upon attempting to reform the present medical and educational systems would be avoided, and the needs of the case fairly met.



Chief Accountant.