

Excerpts concerning student health, student deaths and school conditions at the Kuper Island Residential School from the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports

1890

The schools started at Kuper Island in the Cowichan Agency, on Vancouver Island, and at Kamloops, on the mainland, are very much appreciated by the natives, and will undoubtedly do much good. . . .

Early in June, during Mr. Inspector Macrae's visit the industrial school on Kuper Island was opened. At first there was considerable friction - parents uneasy about their children - boys running away; but on my last visit I found things working, not only smoothly, but successfully. A great amount of work has been done by the boys in clearing the surroundings of the buildings, making roads and other improvements, and they also show a wonderful aptitude in learning. Some are already able to do difficult sums in arithmetic. **All seem happy and contented.** The buildings are kept clean and tidy; indeed, great credit is due to the Rev. Father Donckele, the Principal, and to the foreman, Mr. Donahue, for the excellent manner in which they have managed the boys, who a few months ago **were under no parental control whatever** and merely followed the usages of their tribes.

1891

The Kuper Industrial Schools, which were opened last year, have so far been successful, and under the Rev. Father Donckele's management all seem happy and contented. At first there was a tendency to run away on the part of the boys, and to make complaints on the part of parent, but at present there are **more applications for admission than we have room for.** . . .

The health of the children was very good until the beginning of the summer, when the epidemic commonly called "la grippe" made its appearance at the school. Thirteen children suffered from that disease; happily **all have recovered under the careful treatment of the matron, Sister Mary Joachim.** . . .

Our greatest difficulty at present consists in making the children speak English. Although they understand a good deal of it, **they are always inclined to speak the Indian dialect amongst themselves.**

1892

The Kuper Industrial Schools, which have now been opened for two years, have proved a great success; at first, as before reported the boys could not stand confinement and several ran away, but the action of the principal in not allowing any of these to return had a wonderful effect, and now it is considered a great favour to be admitted and **were the school twice the size it could be filled in a week.** . . .

Health.

During the year several pupils suffered from scrofulous complaints and two West Coast boys from congestion of the lungs; **these last did not recover.** At present the health of the pupils is very satisfactory.

1893

Last year the vacation extended from the 4th of July to the 13th of August, and it proved how much the school is valued by the fact that **on re-opening day every pupil was present, though some had to come about sixty miles**, having been employed on the Fraser River canneries. . . .

Health.

The health of the children in general has been good.

1894

Health.

The general health of the pupils has been good. Six of our boys had an attack of "la grippe," **five of them were treated at the school and recovered, but one was taken home for treatment by his father and died.**

1895

Notwithstanding the fact that many Indians of this coast suffer from pulmonary and scrofulous diseases, yet the health in general has been good. I am sorry that I have to record the death of our senior pupil, **Simon**. On the 12th of May he had an attack of pleurisy and his parents insisted upon treating him **at home, where he died on the 18th of May. It is greatly to be regretted that as soon as a pupil gets sick his parents withdraw him from the school and expose him to die from the want of proper nursing.**

1896

Religious Instruction. - Religious instruction is regularly imparted to the pupils. Their conduct was satisfactory, with the exception of one, who is incorrigible, and three who in the month of November last **attempted to set fire to the buildings**; these boys, when questioned as to the reason for their misbehaviour, said: "We have done so because **we were informed that henceforth the holidays would be abolished.**"

Discipline. - The discipline laid down in the regulations of the department was strictly carried out, and for punishment for occasional infractions **moral persuasion seemed to have better effect than any kind of corporal punishment.**

Health. - The general health of the pupils was better than ever before; although in the fall of the year we were visited by all epidemic of measles, and later on by the whooping-cough, and nearly one-half of the pupils were stricken down with these complaints. They all recovered, owing, no doubt, to the **skilful nursing they received from the hands of the Sisters.**

1897

Health and Sanitary Condition. - The standard of health of the pupils seems to improve. **The new pupils have first to pass a medical examination before they are admitted.** I am sorry, however, that I have to record the death of **George Baptist No. 66, who died at home** of consumption of the bowels. Very careful attention has to be paid to the health of our scholars, as the stamina of their constitution seems to be much weaker than that of white children. Although they all look well and healthy, still the least little complaint is likely to bring on serious sickness and to endanger their lives.

The sanitary condition of a school is now very good; underground drains to carry off the water from the kitchen, laundry and lavatory to the sea, have been constructed, and the ventilation of the dormitories and school-rooms is carefully attended to.

1898

Attendance. - During the year thirty-eight boys and twenty girls were on the roll. Eighteen new pupils were admitted; seven were discharged with the consent of Mr. Superintendent Vowell, and **three died at home** of consumption.

1899

Much good is being done at the Kuper island school where several trades are taught; great credit is due to the Rev. Father Donckele, the principal, and his assistants, the Sisters of St. Ann, who although exceeding the number of pupils for which he obtains per capita grant, still has a **great number of applications for admission** which can not be entertained owing to want of accommodation.

Health and Sanitary Condition. - In the month of August the measles epidemic visited the school. Twelve of our pupils caught the disease, but **all recovered**. Apart from this epidemic the health of the pupils was good.

The sanitary condition of the school is well looked after; the sewerage drains are kept in good order and the ventilation of the dormitories and school-rooms is carefully attended to.

1900

Conduct. - The conduct of all the pupils has been exceptionally good.

Health and Sanitary Condition. - On the whole, the health of the pupils has been good. This year the **sanitary condition of the school has again been improved**, four new patent Philadelphia hoppers were placed on the upper and lower floors, with a regular sewerage drain of vitrified pipes, to the sea. The spacious dormitories and school rooms are **carefully ventilated**.

1901

Health and Sanitary Condition. - I regret to have to report that during the Year **one pupil died at the school** and **three died at home**, where they had been for a long time on sick leave. We were also visited by an epidemic of mumps from which almost every pupil suffered, and we had two cases of pleurisy and two of pneumonia, which were **successfully treated at the school**.

1902

Accommodation. - The school can accommodate comfortably seventy-five pupils and eight officers.

Attendance. - The average attendance during the year was a fraction over sixty-two.

Class-room Work. - The work in the school-rooms has been very gratifying. The monthly written and oral examinations which were introduced this year, seemed to stimulate the pupils' ambition. . . .

Health and Sanitation. - The health of the pupils was good. **No deaths occurred**, and with one or two exceptions, none were seriously sick. **The sanitary condition is now almost perfect.** The ventilation of the schoolrooms and dormitories is carefully attended to, and the premises are kept scrupulously clean. . . .

Recreation. - Baseball, football, swimming and boating are the principal outdoor amusements of the boys. They continue to take great delight in their band practices. The girls enjoy skipping, swinging and handball. The indoor games for all consist of chess, checkers, dominoes, lotto and picture puzzles.

1903

Health and Sanitation. - The health of the pupils was remarkably good, in fact it has never been better. We had **not a single case of serious sickness.** This excellent state of health, is no doubt due to the good ventilation of the buildings and the improvement of our sewer system, which was so wisely approved by the department.

1904

Health and Sanitation. - On the whole the health of the pupils was good; however, two boys were discharged upon the doctor's advice and **one of them died at home** of consumption, that dreadful disease so prevalent amongst Indians. One girl, whilst attending to the fire in the kitchen, ignited her clothes and got terribly scorched; she was for several months in the **Chemainus General Hospital** and is now well again. Another girl suffered from inflammatory rheumatism. The sanitary condition of the school is very satisfactory.

1905

Health and Sanitation. - The general health of the pupils has been very good. **No deaths occurred during the year**, however, a few children suffered from scrofula and two from incipient tuberculosis. The sanitary condition of the school is excellent and the buildings are properly ventilated.

1906

Health and Sanitation. - During the year two pupils suffered from erysipelas, an epidemic of measles visited the school and prostrated about 30 of our scholars; a few children were also afflicted with scrofula; I had to be sent home on account of repeated attacks of inflammatory rheumatism; **our smallest boy, Amos Johnson, caught typhoid fever and, I am sorry to say, died on January 27, in the Chemainus general hospital.** The sanitary condition of the school is good, the sewerage is excellent and the buildings are properly ventilated.

1907

Health and Sanitation. - The health of the children has been very good during winter. One little girl **became ill soon after her arrival at school and died at home.** One boy suffered from pleurisy, but soon recovered; another boy lost by accident his left eye. The sanitary condition of the school might be improved as far as the location of the buildings is concerned. The buildings are fairly well ventilated, and the sewerage is in good order.

1908

Health and Sanitation. - The health of the children was very good, **One boy showing symptoms of consumption was sent home; a little girl, by imprudence of the parents, developed serious heart trouble and died at home.** The sanitary condition of the buildings - as good as such old structures allow - is wanting in many respects. Ventilation and sewerage have been provided for, as well as could be done under the present circumstances.

General Remarks. - **The Very Rev. Father Donckele, who for 17 years as principal of the school, devoted himself to the welfare of the Indian children, died May 30, 1907. According to his wish, his burial took place at Kuper island. An immense crowd of Indians and whites of all denominations came to testify to their grief and veneration for the departed.**

A proof that the industrial school has become very popular among the Indians of the district is the fact that many **parents, who once were reluctant, now are very anxious to have their children educated at our school,** and many Roman Catholic children **had to be turned away,** or delayed, for want of space and sufficient grant.

1909

The Indians throughout this agency have done fairly well during the past year, always getting good wages. **One of the ex-pupils of the Kuper Island industrial school finds steady employment as an engineer in a local saw-mill, another is engaged as teacher at the Tsawout day school, and giving very good satisfaction.**

While under quarantine, during the epidemic of small-pox, their conduct was very satisfactory.

The work of the industrial and day schools is much appreciated by the Indians, many of the ex-pupils, by their exemplary lives, have an elevating influence upon the other Indians.

The death-rate was lower than in the former year, the principal cause of death being tuberculosis. . . .

Location. - This school is situated on Telegraph bay, on the southwest side of Kuper island, about 5 miles from Chemainus station, on Vancouver island. The scenery of the bay, sheltered on three sides, widening southward into Stuart channel, with a blue mountain range for background, is truly magnificent.

Land. - The land in connection with the school was surrendered by the Penelakut Indians, and forms **part of the Kuper Island reserve.** It extends over an almost square area of 70 acres. Most of it is under cultivation. The soil is good and suitable for mixed farming. . . .

Attendance. - During the year 89 different pupils were in attendance. The average attendance was 75. Two pupils were discharged with the consent of Superintendent Vowell. Eight new pupils were admitted. **One girl, 12 years old, died at the school from meningitis, and one boy, sent home on account of tubercular symptoms, died lately. . . .**

Health and Sanitation. - The **health of the children was very good**. We had a mild and short-lived epidemic of whooping-cough last summer, and of itch this winter. The **sanitary condition of the buildings, although attended to with great care**, is yet wanting in many respects, on account of defective old buildings and their location.

1910

Saanich.

The attendance at this school is also poor, the Indians showing very little interest in the education of their children. The inspector and the agent have impressed upon them the necessity of keeping their children in regular attendance, and it is hoped that their efforts will meet with success. **The teacher, Mr. Daniel Dick, is a graduate of the Kuper Island industrial school**, and is competent to do good work, but it is impossible to attain any measure of success under present conditions. . . .

Quamichan (Roman Catholic).

Miss Magdalene Wilson, a native and graduate of the Kuper Island industrial school, was in charge of this school up to January 24, last, when she was succeeded by Miss Lilly Frumento. . . .

Quamichan (Methodist).

A grant has been allowed this school only since July 1, 1909, although it has been in operation for some years. An inspection was made on January 13, 1910. **The present teacher, Miss Josephine Johnny, is a graduate of Kuper Island industrial school**, and the inspector reports that very fair progress is being made. . . .

Quamichan Day School (Roman Catholic).

Inspected January 13, 1910. There were 24 children of school age, of whom 19 were enrolled, with an average attendance of 9. Eight were present at inspection. **Magdalen Wilson, an ex-pupil of Kuper Island industrial school, is the teacher, and was doing very well**. . . .

Cowichan Day School (Methodist).

Inspected January, 1910. Number present at inspection, 14. Number on the roll, 16, and an average attendance of 10. **The teacher is Miss Josephine Johnny, a graduate of the Kuper Island industrial school**. She had only been teaching a short time, but was doing nicely. . . .

Saanich Day School (Roman Catholic).

Daniel Dick, from the Kuper Island industrial school, is the teacher. Of the 20 children that should attend, 10 were enrolled, with an average attendance of 4. I found only one present. **With the teacher I visited every house and told them that unless they sent their children, the school would have to be closed**. As some of the men were absent from the village, I arranged for a meeting, when Mr. Agent Robertson would be present. **The meeting was held and the Indians promised to see that their children attend more regularly**. . . .

Health and Sanitation. - The **health of the children was exceptionally good** since last summer.

1911

Kuper Island Industrial School (Roman Catholic)
Inspected April, 1910, and February, 1911

One girl died in January of consumption. The others all appeared to be healthy.

I met some of the ex-pupils at Victoria, two at Saanich and three at Cowichan; these were doing well. But at Duncan I heard of four boys who had been in trouble through drink.

Saanich Day School (Roman Catholic)

Inspected January 26, 1911. **The teacher, Daniel Dick, is a graduate from Kuper Island industrial school.** There are fourteen children of school age, eleven being enrolled. The average for the quarter before my visit was only a fraction over two. **I saw the Indians and they again asked that the school should not be closed,** and promised to see that their children attend more regularly. The pupils present had made a little progress, but very little. . . .

Kuper Island Industrial School (Roman Catholic).

I visited this school on December 19, 1910. Rev. D. Claessen is the principal in charge.

The only method of ventilating the building is by means of leaving the windows open to permit of a supply of fresh air.

The general health of the pupils during the past year is reported by the principal to have been good. . . .

As it would take a large amount of money to do the necessary alterations and repairs to these buildings, it would be much more desirable to build a new and modern school, with accommodation for 90 or 100 pupils. A school with accommodation for the number of pupils above mentioned, should meet all requirements of the Cowichan agency for many years. . . .

East Saanich Day School (Roman Catholic).

I visited this school on February 24, 1911. The school is situated on the Tsawout Indian reserve, and **Daniel Dick, an ex-pupil of the Kuper Island industrial school, is the teacher.** . . .

Report of Reverend D. Claessen, Principal of the Industrial School, Kuper Island

Attendance. - During the year 76 pupils were in attendance. The average attendance was 74. Four pupils were formally discharged, 6 pupils were admitted. . . .

Health and Sanitation. - The **health of the children was good**, especially among the boys this last winter.

Recreation. - The boys are very fond of basketball and football and played many games against the best aggregations of white. We ascribe their very good health this year to their continual exercise in these games. The girls amuse themselves skipping, playing ball, boating and bathing, when the weather is suitable. We had occasional

concerts with recitations, songs and drills. The boys have a very good brass band and gave selections at exhibitions. Some girls show taste and skill in piano playing.

1912

Quamichan (Roman Catholic).

Miss Douglas resigned her position during the past year and **Mr. Archie Alexander, an ex-pupil of Kuper Island school, who has had no experience as a teacher, was placed in charge.** An effort will be made to obtain the services of a competent teacher. . . .

Kuper Island Industrial School (Roman Catholic).

I visited this school on January 23, 1912 . . .

There were 66 pupils on the register - 37 boys and 29 girls, the grant being for 60. Since my last visit about 14 pupils have been discharged, which has relieved, to quite an extent, the overcrowded state in the girls' dormitory.

The pupils were all making good progress in their studies, and all have enjoyed good health during the past year. **There were no deaths, and the only sickness among them were two light cases of pneumonia.** . . .

Accommodation. - The institution can accommodate from 75 to 80 pupils.

Attendance. - During the year 77 pupils were in attendance. The average attendance was 66; 9 pupils were formally discharged, and 6 admitted. . . .

Health and Sanitation. - A great improvement is noticeable in the health of the children within the past two years. The principles of hygiene in the matter of nutrition, clothing, exercise and ventilation have been closely adhered to.

1913

In this agency there is one industrial school situated on Kuper island, distant from Chemainus on Vancouver island, five miles. Rev. P. Claessen, the principal resigned on the 1st April, 1912, and was succeeded by Rev. A. Urlings. . . .

The conduct of some of the pupils at this school during the year has not been satisfactory and on account of their conduct **a number of them were expelled** from the school. Satisfactory progress was made by the other pupils in the various branches of their studies. **In regard to the ex-pupils** the conduct of some of them has been very satisfactory, then on the other hand the education obtained by some is not used to any advantage, they simply follow the Indian mode of life and **might be termed misfits on the reserve.** . . .

I visited the Kuper Island industrial school on October 24. This school is now in charge of Rev. August Urlings, S.M.M., as principal. . . .

There were 61 pupils on the roll - 33 boys and 28 girls; the grant is for 60. Since my visit in October, 8 of the pupils have been **expelled from the school for breaking out of their dormitories at night.** Four of these were expelled in October, and again 4 were dismissed late in the month of January.

The principal reported that the pupils had been making very good progress with their studies. **Three of the pupils who had been sent to their homes earlier in the year had since died.** Two of these had been quite young. Generally, the health of the pupils had been good.

The buildings were in a poor state of repair, and it is of the utmost importance that they should, at an early date, be **replaced by a new and modern school capable of accommodating at least 100 pupils.** . . .

Health and Sanitation. - **The general health of the children has been very good.** From a sanitary point of view our present buildings are very deficient. By looking well after ventilation and keeping the rooms very clean, we try to obviate as much as possible these defects, inherent to the buildings.

1914

The principal of this school is the Rev. W. Lemmens, who is assisted by a devoted staff.

The pupils have made very satisfactory progress during the past year.

A new building will be erected here in the near future. . . .

When the new school is completed and in operation it will do much to enhance the department's educational system in the Cowichan agency, as there has been for some time past considerable prejudice existing amongst the Indians against the old school on account of **so many deaths having occurred among the pupils, and for this reason they have been very loath to have their children committed to the institution.**

The present buildings are poorly ventilated. There is, however, a good sewerage system and a plentiful water-supply.

The Progress made by the pupils had been fair during the first six months of the year. The general health of the pupils had been all that could be desired and **no deaths had occurred up to that time.**

1915

During the past year, the staff has been handicapped owing to the poor condition of the school buildings, but **the new school, being erected by the department, will soon be completed. The new buildings are situated on a hill overlooking Stuart Channel and they will be finished with all modern conveniences.** . . .

Conditions at the Kuper Island industrial school, the principal of which is Rev. W. Lemmens, have been very favourable during the past year.

There has been an average of 63 pupils, 30 boys and 33 girls on the register. The school receives a grant for 60 pupils. The children have been making excellent

progress in their studies during the year and **have enjoyed first-class health. There have been no deaths amongst the pupils. . . .**

A new and up-to-date school is now in the course of construction to take the place of the old building, which was erected in 1892. **The new building is expected to be completed by June 1 next and will have a capacity for 100 pupils. When completed the principal anticipates that there will be no difficulty in obtaining the full number of pupils for which the school has accommodation.**

1916

At this school, the principal of which is Rev. W. Lemmens, the pupils have been making good progress during the past year. . . The pupils **enjoyed splendid health** during the whole of the year, notwithstanding the fact that the weather, during the months of January and February, was very severe. The school receives a grant for sixty pupils and **this number has been kept up continuously.**

Before the present month is closed, the pupils will be transferred to the **new school**, when it is expected that the grant will be increased to at least seventy-five, though the school building has a capacity for 100 pupils. The furniture is being placed in the new school at the time of writing. First-class equipment has been procured for both the classrooms and manual training rooms.

The water-supply for the new school is now beyond any question of doubt.

1917

[WWI. No detailed report.]