

ST MICHAEL'S INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, ALERT BAY, BC

15 students were listed on the NCTR website in 2021 as having died at the former St Michael's Indian Residential School:

<https://nctr.ca/residential-schools/british-columbia/st-michaels-alert-bay/>

Name	Date of Death (Year/Month/Day)
Andrea Helen Alfred	1965-06-04
Alfred McKay	1932-01-01
Douglas Benson	Not known
Eva George	ca. 1944
George L. Humchitt	1944-08-30
Jackie Archie James	Not known
Lucy Gordon	ca. 1933-01-01
Molly Irene Moon	1961-08-23
Mona	1902-01-01 – 1903-12-31
Reggie Allan	1948-05-20
Samson Edgar	1939-05-01 – 1939-09-30
Samson Harris	1923-01-12
Sophia Edgar	1939-05-01 – 1939-05-31
Thomas Mason	1925-09-19
May Nysok	1932-04-09

The above-referenced 15 students are not 'missing'. They are listed below in the order in which they appear on the NCTR website with the following indications as to the federal and provincial government and residential school records which have information concerning the date of death, cause of death, and place of burial for each student.

THE TYPES OF RECORDS CONSULTED

(1) Provincial Government Death Certificates

The letter [C] following a name indicates that a microfilmed copy of the provincial death certificate is available online at the BC Archives at:

<http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy>

An asterisk following a name indicates that the microfilmed copy of the provincial death certificate is not available online, but can be accessed free of charge at the BC Archives and at major BC public libraries.

(2) Inquiries Into Student Deaths

The Department of Indian Affairs mandated, on Form No. 414, that there be an inquiry into the death of any student who died at a residential school:

When a pupil of an Indian Residential School dies, the Principal is required to inform the Indian Agent at once.

On receipt of the Principal's notice the Indian Agent shall convene a Board of Inquiry, consisting of himself as Chairman, the Principal of the Residential School, and the Medical Officer who attended the deceased pupil. These members of the Board shall, in each other's presence, complete this memorandum, which shall then be forwarded to the Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, in one copy.

The Board of Inquiry shall, if at all practicable assemble within 48 hours of the pupil's death.

The parents or guardians of the deceased pupil shall be given notice of this inquiry and be permitted to attend it or to send a representative. They or their representative shall be asked if they wish to make a statement. In the event of their so wishing, their statement shall be attached to the report. The inquiry, however, shall not be delayed more than 72 hours after the time at which it would otherwise be held to enable them to attend it. . . .

This inquiry is not designed to take the place of, or prevent, any other inquiry including an inquest, which may be required by law.

If the pupil died as the result of an accident, the Indian Agent is required to take the statements of the witnesses of the accident and attached them to this memorandum.

Inquiry reports for deaths which occurred at St Michael's Indian Residential School in the year 1948 were microfilmed by Library and Archives Canada. To access them, go to this link for LAC c-8758, and insert the page number 2298:

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/school-files-1879-1953/Pages/item.aspx?PageID=2469009>

(3) Quarterly Returns

A unique register number was used to meticulously track every student from the time the student was admitted to a residential school until the time the student ceased to attend and was formally recorded as 'discharged'. In the entries below the student's unique register number at St Michael's Indian Residential School has been added from extant quarterly returns and DIA inquiries into student deaths.

Quarterly returns which included student names, register numbers and attendance data were sent to Ottawa by school principals via the local Indian Agent every quarter in order for the school to qualify for the per capita grant paid by the federal government for each eligible status Indian student.

Quarterly returns for St Michael's Indian Residential School for 1943-1949 were microfilmed by Library and Archives Canada. To access them, go to this link for LAC c-8756, and insert the page number 791:

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/school-files-1879-1953/Pages/item.aspx?PageID=2464926>

(4) Application Forms Signed By Parents

The local Indian Agent was required to submit an individual application form signed by a parent to the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa for each student for whom admission to a residential school was requested, and each application was then formally approved or rejected in writing by Department officials in Ottawa.

Similarly, the Indian Agent was required to submit an application to Ottawa before any student could be discharged from the school, and each discharge was also formally approved in writing by Department officials in Ottawa. In addition, a form summarizing the applications for admission and discharge of students was sent to Ottawa by school principals through the Indian Agent every quarter along with the quarterly returns.

Unfortunately Library and Archives Canada did not film any applications for St Michael's Indian Residential School.

(5) Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports

Until about 1915, annual reports by principals, which included information on school health conditions and student deaths, were printed in the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report. DIA Annual Reports can be accessed at the Library and Archives Canada website at this link:

https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Search?DataSource=Library|IndAffAnnRep&q_exact=for%20the%20year%20ended&DateBucket=%7C1864-1969&

See also:

<https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.846380/publication.html>

STUDENT BIOGRAPHIES COMPILED FROM THE ABOVE RECORDS

Andrea Helen Alfred (1965/6/4), [C]; 6 yrs old; born 15 February 1959, Alert Bay; parents Phillip Alfred, Edna Coon, both born Alert Bay; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; massive pulmonary atelectasis; operation; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Alert Bay Indian Cemetery [NB: not identified as a student in death certificate]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Edna May Coon, store clerk, Nimpkish Band; born 19 February 1939, Alert Bay; parents Harry Coon, born Gilford Island, Helen Scow,

born Alert Bay; married (husband Philip Alfred); d. 11 May 1976, St George's Hospital, Alert Bay, aged 37; death certificate signed by aunt, Eva Cook, and doctor; buried Nimpkish Burial Grounds, Alert Bay]

Alfred McKay* (1932/1/1), 11 yrs old; Greenville Band (Nass River); born Greenville; parents Alfred McKay deceased, Jane Allen, both born Nass River; d. Vancouver General Hospital; acute pyelonephrosis, multiple lung abscesses; death certificate signed by Indian Agent (informant F. Earl Anfield, principal), and doctor; buried Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1932/4/18] [NB: for burial plot, see Find A Grave at:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/26327679/alfred-mckay>

[NB: death certificate for father, Alfred McKay, fisherman; Nishka Band; born Greenville (father David McKay, born Ankida, mother unknown); married; d. 9 August 1924, Kincolith, aged 58; food poisoning; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Kincolith Cemetery]

[NB: mother born Jane Morven; certificate for mother's second marriage states Albert Allen, fisherman, residence Kincolith, born Angkida (Ank'idaa) (father Peter Allen, born Port Simpson, mother Darlagn(?)), widower; aged 58, and Janie McKay, residence Greenville, born Victoria (father Charlie Morven, born Victoria, mother Letqu(?)), widow, aged 50, were married 4 October 1926, Kincolith, witnesses W.J. Stewart, S.P. Barton, Oliver Thorne officiating]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Jane Allen, residence Greenville, Nass River; born 6 October 1879, Aiyansh; father unknown, mother Morven; widowed (husband Albert Allen); d. 1 May 1957, Greenville, Nass River, aged 77; death certificate signed by coroner; buried by relatives, friends, Greenville Cemetery]

[NB: for sister Flora McKay, born 1895, see entry for her daughter, **May Nysok** below]

Douglas Benson* (date of death unknown), 17 yrs old; Kitkatla Band; born Kitkatla; d. Alert Bay; influenza; death certificate signed by doctor [NB: death certificate states date of death was **1918/10/31**] [NB: not identified as a student in death certificate]

Eva George* (ca. 1944), Register #391; 10 yrs old; Nakwakto Band; residence Blunden Harbour; born 20 September 1933, Rivers Inlet; parents Charlie George, born Hope Island, Alice King deceased, born Kingcome Inlet; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; shock and toxemia, second degree burns (kerosene explosion at home); death certificate signed by doctor; buried Alert Bay Indian Cemetery [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1944/8/20] [NB: quarterly return dated 30 September 1944 states she was admitted 25 June 1938 (see LAC c-8756, p. 894)] [NB: return states: 'Dis. Fatally burned on vacation']

George L. Humchitt* (1944/8/30), Register #794; 15 yrs old; Bella Bella Band; residence Bella Bella; born 23 July 1929, Bella Bella; mother Maggie Mason, born Bella Bella, father unknown; d. Namu; accidental drowning ('fell off a gas boat'); coroner's inquiry; death certificate signed by mother, Maggie Humchitt, and coroner;

buried by friends, Bella Bella Indian Cemetery [NB: death certificate states name was George **Mason** Humchitt] [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1944/8/18] [NB: quarterly return dated 30 September 1944 states: 'Drowned at Bella Bella while on vacation. Dis. 30/8/44.' (see LAC c-8756, p. 898)] [NB: return states he was **14** yrs old]

[NB: certificate for mother's first marriage states Caleb Star, labourer, residence Bella Bella, born Bella Bella (parents Samson Star, born Bella Bella, Matilda Carpenter), bachelor, aged 18, and Maggie Mason, residence Bella Bella, born Bella Bella (parents Robert Mason, born China Hat, Ada Jackson), spinster, aged 17, were married 6 January 1925, Bella Bella Church, witnesses Wilfred D. Martin, Mrs. H. Ganable, J.C. Spencer officiating]

[NB: certificate for mother's second marriage states Moses Humchitt, fisherman, residence Bella Bella, born Bella Bella (parents Robert Humchitt, born Bella Bella, Lizzie Wallace (Humchitt)), bachelor, aged 21, and Meggie Mason Starr, residence Bella Bella, born Bella Bella (parents Edward Mason, born Klemtu, mother unknown), widow, aged 25, were married 24 November 1934, United Church, Bella Bella, witnesses Mary White, Charlie Humchitt, Reverend W. Hewison Gibson officiating]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Maggie Mason; born 25 March 1919, Klemtu; parents Robert Mason, born Klemtu, Ada Jackson; d. 22 August 1984, R.W. Large Memorial Hospital, Bella Bella, aged 75; death certificate signed by son, Tommy Humchitt, Waglisla, BC, and doctor; buried Grave Island, Waglisla]

Jackie Archie James (date of death unknown) [DEATH CERTIFICATE NOT YET LOCATED]

Lucy Gordon (ca. 1933/1/1) [DEATH CERTIFICATE NOT YET LOCATED]

Molly Irene Moon (1961/8/23), [C]; 10 yrs old; born 23 January 1951, Kingcome Inlet; residence Kingcome Inlet; parents Peter Moon, born Hopetown, Molly Willie, born Kingcome Inlet; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; pulmonary infarct; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Kingcome Inlet Indian Cemetery [NB: death certificate states name was Molly Moon] [NB: not identified as a student in death certificate]

[NB: parents' marriage certificate states Peter Moon, fisherman, residence Kingcome Reserve, Kingcome Inlet, Tsawataineuk, born Kingcome Inlet (father surnamed Moon, mother Maria Williams), bachelor, aged 28, and Molly Sandy, residence Kingcome Inlet, Tsawataineuk, born Kingcome Inlet (parents William Sandy (Willie), born Kingcome Inlet, Jane Pott Smith), spinster, aged 16, were married 5 April 1937, Kingcome Inlet, witnesses Phyllis M. Arrowsmith, Amy E. Wakefield, B.H.L. Dance officiating]

[NB: death certificate for father, Peter Moon; born 25 December 1909, Hopetown; parents John Moon, Mary Williams, both born Kingcome Inlet; married (wife Mollie Willie); d. 20 December 1968, Fir Street, Alert Bay, aged 88; death certificate signed by sister, Annie Cedar, and doctor; buried Alert Bay Indian Cemetery]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Molly Willie, born 6 September 1921; parents Billie Sandy Willie, Jane Smith; d. 5 February 1981, Victoria General Hospital, Victoria, aged 59; death certificate signed by brother, John Moon, Kingcome Inlet, and doctor; buried Kingcome Inlet Indian Cemetery]

Mona (1902/1/1- 1903/12/31) [NB: DIA Annual Report dated 30 June 1903 states: 'The health of the pupils has been good with one exception. In June Mona died of pneumonia.'] [NB: death occurred in **June 1903**]

Reggie Allan* (1948/5/20), Register #830; 13 yrs old; Kincolith Band; residence Kincolith; born 20 February 1935; mother Katherine Morgan, father unknown; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; fractured skull; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Fairview Cemetery, Prince Rupert; DIA inquiry (see LAC c-8758, pp. 2299-302)) [NB: death certificate states name was Reggie **Maxwell Morgan (commonly known as Allen)**] [NB: quarterly return dated 30 June 1948 states: 'accidental death May 20, 1948' (see LAC c-8756, p. 1173)] [NB: return states he was **11** yrs old, was admitted to St George's 26 August 1945] [NB: principal's statement at DIA inquiry: 'Five boys decided to go out of limits beyond the Preventorium and fix up a rope in one of the high trees overlooking the old logging road. Four of the boys made a successful swing but Reggie lost his nerve when at the full swing of the pendulum and he fell at least fifty feet.')] [NB: Indian Agent's recommendations at DIA inquiry:

(1) Remove all means of amusement within school property which are dangerous.

(2) The Department to insist that all children enrolled in this school be properly supervised at all times.

Supervision in this school is lacking and has been for the past four years or more. Children are allowed to roam around at will when they are out of the classroom. The staff are not aware of where they are or what they are doing. I have complained about this before but no improvement is noticeable.

The school lacks organization of the right type and this must originate with the principal.

I do not think we will ever have proper supervision until adequate, efficient staff of the right type is employed. This means paying proper remuneration to employees, something which is not done at the present time.]

Samson Edgar* (1939/5/1 – 1939/9/30), fisherman; 21 yrs old; Bella Coola Band; born Bella Coola Reserve; parents Joseph Edgar, Mildred King, both born Bella Coola Reserve; single; d. Bella Coola General Hospital; pulmonary tuberculosis; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Bella Coola Reserve Cemetery [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1939/**6/21**] [NB: fisherman aged 21; not a student at St Michael's Indian Residential School at time of death] [NB: brother of **Sophia Edgar** below]

[NB: death certificate for father, Joseph Edgar, born 13 July 1900, Bella Coola; parents John Edgar, Annie Williams; married (wife Mildred King); d. 29 February 1960, Bella Coola General Hospital, aged 59; death certificate signed by doctor;

buried by family, Bella Coola Indian Cemetery]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Mildred King, born 7 March 1902, Bella Coola; parents Sam Pootlass, Sheila Moody, both born Bella Coola; d. 6 April 1978, Bella Coola General Hospital, aged 76; death certificate signed by daughter, Josie Edgar, Bella Coola, and doctor; buried by Josie Edgar, Bella Coola Indian Cemetery]

Samson Harris* (1923/1/12), 12 yrs old; Nimkish Band; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; tubercular meningitis; death certificate signed by Indian Agent [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1923/1/7]

Sophia Edgar* (1939/5/1 – 1939/5/31), 11 yrs old; Bella Coola Band; parents Joseph Edgar, Mildred King, both born Bella Coola; d. Bella Coola Hospital; tuberculous meningitis; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Bella Coola Indian Reserve Cemetery [NB: death record states date of death was 1939/4/26] [sister of **Samson Edgar** above]

Thomas Mason* (1925/9/19), fisherman; 20 yrs old; Hartley Bay Band; born Bella Bella (parents unknown); married; d. Bella Bella; 'Presumably tuberculosis. Was not in hospital at time of death.'; death certificate signed by doctor; buried Bella Bella [NB: fisherman aged 20; not a student at St Michael's Indian Residential School]

May Nysok* (1932/4/9), **first death certificate dated 5 April 1932:** May Nisyok, 10 yrs old; Gitlakdamix Band; born Fishery Bay; parents Titus Nisyok, born Gitlakdamix, Flora McKay, born Greenville; d. Alert Bay (Residential School); appendicitis; death certificate signed by Indian Agent (informant Rev. S. Kinley, Aiyansh); buried Gitlakdamix; **second death certificate dated 9 April 1932:** 9 yrs old; born Aiyansh, Nass River; parents Titus Nysok, Flora, both born Nass River; d. St George's Hospital, Alert Bay; acute appendicitis, catarrh, jaundice, terminal broncho-pneumonia; operation (appendectomy); death certificate signed by Indian Agent (informant F.E. Anfield, principal) and doctor; buried Aiyansh [NB: death certificate states date of death was 1932/4/5]

[NB: death certificate for mother, Flora Angelina McKay; Aiyansh Band; residence Aiyansh; born 1895; parents Alfred McKay, Jane Morven; married; d. 30 March 1950, Prince Rupert General Hospital, aged 55; death certificate signed by husband, Titus Nisyok, Aiyansh, and doctor; buried Aiyansh]

[NB: death certificate for father, Titus Nisyok, retired fisherman; Gitladamix Band; residence Aiyansh; born 18 October 1895, Gitladamix; father Peter Nisyok Gitladamix, mother unknown; widowed (wife unknown); d. 4 June 1978, Hills Memorial Hospital, Terrace, aged 82; death certificate signed by daughter, Violet Gunn, New Aiyansh, and coroner; buried Aiyansh]

[NB: for **Alfred McKay**, brother of Flora Angelina McKay, see entry above]

Excerpt from Indian Agent's report on Alert Bay in the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1904:

Health and Sanitation. - The health of these Indians during the past year has been very poor. There has been no epidemic of any kind, the principal ailments being Pneumonia, bronchitis and consumption. It will be noticed in the statistics that, although there has been quite a large number of births, there has been a still greater number of deaths, resulting in a decrease in population throughout the agency of twenty-eight. Every effort has been made to inculcate habits of cleanliness, and I am pleased to be able to report considerable improvement in that direction during the part year. The water-supply has been carefully looked after, and is now as good as one could wish; the absence of typhoid fever and similar diseases is pretty good evidence that there is little or no sickness resulting from that source. **Vaccination has been attended to** but the effects of it on these Indians is so severe that it is most difficult to carry out a thorough system in that direction. **The principal cause of so much sickness and the decrease in the population can be largely attributed to the habit of the Indians of congregating in large numbers during the winter months;** the insufficient shelter, and, at times, scarcity of food leaves them in the spring, after a long siege, in a more or less debilitated condition. An effort was made last April to break up this practice and get the Indians back to their several homes, but the result was not altogether successful.

Compiled by Nina Green 25 November 2021; updated 7 April 2023.