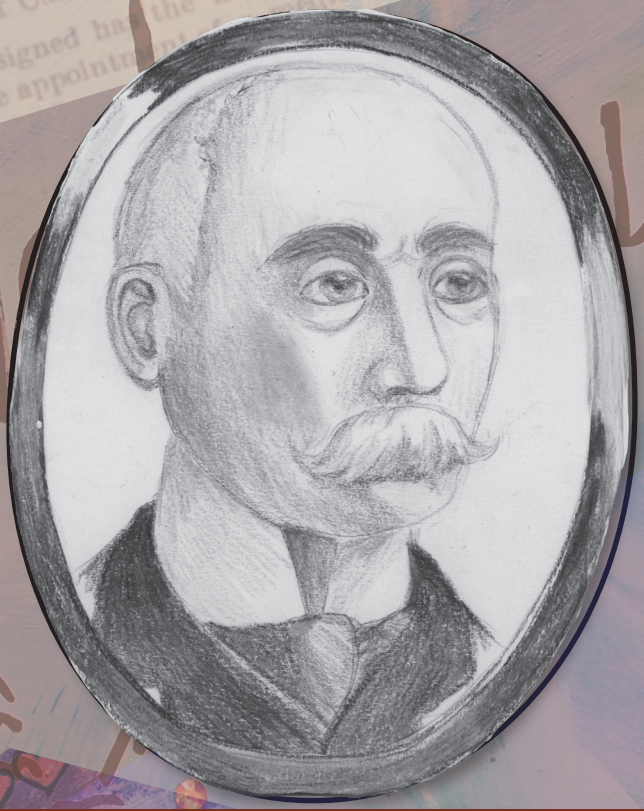
Dr. Peter H. Bryce



BCTF

Illustration of Peter Bryce by: Alliah Flavie

Thank you for whistle blowing, Peter

Before starting this unit, teachers will want to ensure their students have some foundational knowledge of residential schools in Canada, as well as the conditions Aboriginal children endured, so they can better understand just how important Doctor Peter Henderson Bryce was and is today. He was a remarkable scholar, doctor, and man of great strength and character. As the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Indian Affairs (1904–1914), Bryce personally inspected residential schools and reported on the widespread illnesses (often TB) caused by malnutrition and unsanitary conditions. Bryce continued to report and speak up about the appalling conditions despite the personal hardship it caused him. He was ignored by government officials, ridiculed by many, and had his reputation purposely undermined.

In more recent times, Bryce's commitment and unfailing work on behalf of Indigenous children has been widely recognized and valued. Peter Bryce was designated as a national historical person in 2024. See *parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/personnage-person/peter-henderson-bryce.* Dr. Bryce has been honoured as an ally and hero to many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As you learn about Peter Henderson Bryce, you and your students will understand why he is considered such a hero.

In the face of today's denialism about residential schools, Dr. Bryce, a non-Indigenous doctor and leader, left behind staunch support for the truth about residential schools. His records, including a book he published at his own expense, itemizing the neglect and unhealthy conditions, provide copious evidence gathered at the time the schools were in operation. Bryce's book, *The Story of A National Crime*, was published in 1922.

This unit was done over three days with a Grade 3 class. The class already had a solid background knowledge about the history of residential schools in Canada and their devastating impact on the children who went to them. As a result, they were well prepared to study Dr. Bryce's involvement in residential schools. However, they knew nothing about Peter Bryce himself, which made it easy to present as a mystery to be solved. All they were told was that they were going to learn about a very important person and their job was to discover who the person was, what they did, and why they were so important.

Our class loves playing hangman and we often use it to learn/recall important words/concepts the children cannot recall (e.g., "context clues," "commutative principle"). The children were immediately engaged. Presenting new learning as a game or a challenge is a great way to get and hold children's attention. Telling students up front exactly what what they are expected to know can reduce the interest and joy in learning something new. The level of motivation and engagement during this project, as well as the quality of work, was heightened from start to finish. We played three games of Hangman—one for each of Peter Henderson Bryce's names. Of course, at the end of the games they still had no idea who Dr. Bryce was, but they were sure ready to find out!

One of the goals of this learning was NOT to provide all the answers from the outset but to entice the children into wanting to read, research, discover, make judgements, discuss ideas with each other, etc. This format worked extremely well with the class, and they often surprised us with their enthusiasm, determination, and quality of work.

To help focus attention and improve effective and accurate note-taking on important facts, the children were divided into small groups of four or five. Half the groups were given Article 1 (page 12), the other groups were given Article 2 (page 14). Both articles contain similar information. The groups were asked to trade articles to confirm or check information as



appropriate. After each section of the booklet was completed, we had rich discussions about what we were discovering and what children thought were the most important facts that belonged in each section. Each student was required to complete their own booklet, but they were encouraged to share ideas and help each other so everyone could be successful. The teacher asked leading questions such as, "What are the most important ideas/facts for this section? Why/why not? "Does your fact belong in this section or one of the other sections?" Why/why not?" Allow lots of time for this; it allows children to use critical thinking skills, think deeply while evaluating, organizing, analyzing and consolidating the information. The children were given a lot of guidance, modelling, and practice with research skills as they began to learn these challenging skills, such as identifying main ideas vs. supporting facts, putting their notes into their own words rather than copying, organizing their ideas into sections, writing paragraphs, etc.

The pages in the booklet are self-explanatory. Our objective was to have the children learn about Dr. Peter Bryce in a collaborative, engaging and meaningful way. When the students found out they would be presenting their ideas and powerful message(s) artistically by creating huge hearts, they were excited and eager to get started. Each of their hearts would be part of a very large visual display for the BCTF AGM. Over 700 teachers would see their work! Knowing their work really matters and will reach a larger audience than the classroom always motivates and appeals to children. Consider displaying or presenting your students' work to a larger audience—hall display, other classes, assembly presentation, etc.

With their innate sense of fairness, the children understood how completely wrong the residential schools were. The importance of Dr. Bryce's work in trying to help the children in residential schools engaged the students minds and hearts. They worked hard to find answers to the questions and produced remarkable artwork and writing to show their learning and their caring. Throughout this booklet you will see examples of the hearts created by the children, which were then displayed as a huge heart garden at the BCTF AGM. Acrylic paints were used and are recommended. Kids were able to blend their colours and to write on the hearts afterwards with acrylic paint markers. Water colours would likely be very messy and hard to work with.

Don't be afraid to challenge your students to create their own heartfelt, appropriate message for their heart. Insist that each student come up with their own message—write each message on the whiteboard or chart paper so kids have a "good copy" to look at when copying it on their hearts, and others can see what kind of ideas children are coming up with. This will also save you lots of time proofreading or correcting work. One of my children who often struggles to be independent and complete work was the last to come up with a message. We would have eventually helped him but there was no need to. He came up with his own message: "Thank you for whistle blowing." He was so proud when the class praised him for coming up with such a powerful message.

Doing this project over three days allowed us to be immersed in the topic and take as much time as was needed for discussing and completing each section. It gave the children time to think deeply, share and organize ideas collaboratively, and have extended periods of time to create their artwork. We highly recommend this integrated, holistic approach wherein children discover and share information and ideas verbally, collaboratively and artistically, with choices given wherever possible.

This approach works very well for embedding Aboriginal Education across the curriculum.

As a final activity for this unit, the teacher helped students turn their notes into an essay. As the class decided on the most important information for each section, the teacher wrote the students' ideas down on her copy of the booklet and projected it up on the screen. Paragraphs were then written for each of the sections using the children's notes. A copy of this essay is attached. Much more time could have been spent on this part of the research process.



Materials, Tips, and Suggestions:

One copy of the blank booklet for each student pages 4 to 11. We provided the first page (hangman page) separately to avoid distraction, then added the rest of the pages.

Photocopies of Article 1 on page 12 for half the class and Article 2 on page 14 for the other half of the class.

Article 3 on page 20 is optional. Article 4 on page 21 is for teachers who wish to take this learning to an even deeper level by comparing and contrasting Peter Henderson Bryce and John A. MacDonald. Teachers may want to have pairs or small groups of students study the article, complete a Venn Diagram, evaluate the facts and draw their own conclusions. This activity is recommended for Grades 4 and up.

Photocopy of Lesson 8 from *Gladys We Never Knew* on page 25 provides more information about Dr. Bryce, the characteristics that make him a hero, and how he has been honoured. It also suggests additional resources and activities. **Do not copy and hand this lesson** out until the booklet is finished (it gives too much of the information you want students to discover on their own).

Posterboards cut into large hearts—make one master to trace (we made the large hearts to save time and frustration for the children.)

Variety of acrylic paints—think about what colours you want the children to use/not use before placing them out for children (two or three colours is best). Students will go through a lot of paint.

Paint or sponge brushes. Sponge brushes seemed to work best: kids could mix a good amount of paint by dipping the sponge in the colours first (give each child a plate/palate with their colours of choice placed right beside each other in the middle for ease of mixing).

Acrylic paint markers. We used some from the dollar store that worked well. Ensure the markers have broad tips and kids use colours that will show up on their heart. To avoid mistakes, make sure your kids write the message on straight ruler lines in pencil first and check with you that they have made their printing neat and big enough before they use the acrylic markers.

NAME: _____

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

Who is this person?

What important things is he known for?

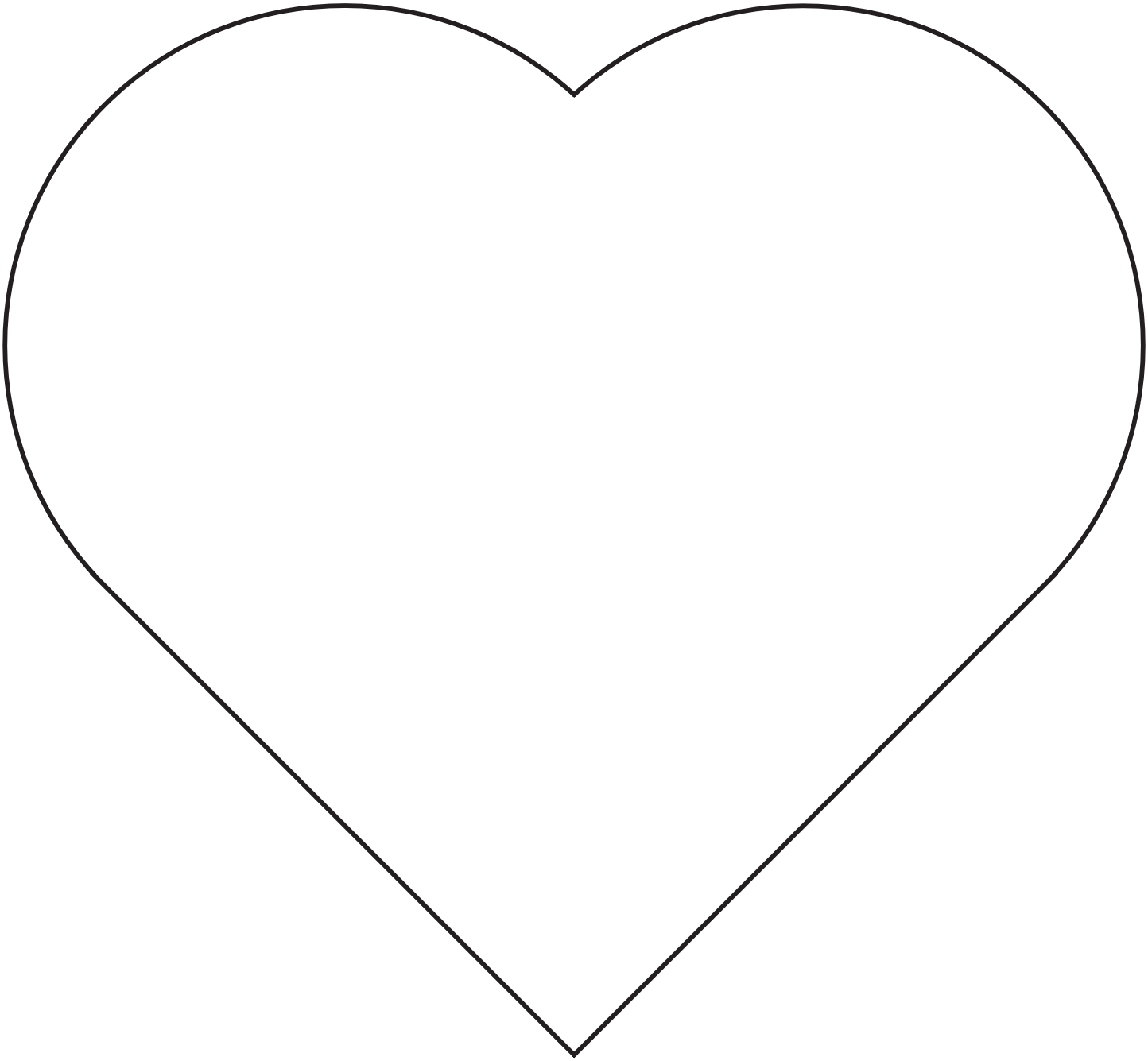
Describe what kind of person he was.
(Personality Characteristics)

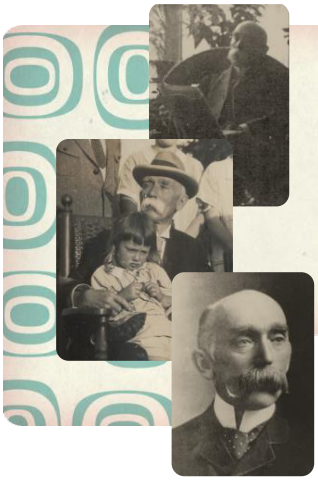
How might you describe somebody who is like him and does the type of things he did?

Why is he important??

If you could meet him in person, what would you say to him?

Draft of your heart creation that expresses your feelings and ideas (background colours, designs, words, etc.)





Peter Henderson Bryce, M.D.

Award for Health Professionals

Advocating for the Health and Well-Being
of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children and Youth

Peter Hender Bryce, Medical Doctor (M.D.), 1853-1932

Who Was Peter Henderson Bryce?

Peter Henderson Bryce was born in Mount Pleasant Ontario in 1853 and graduated from the University of Toronto in 1876 when Canada was only nine years old. He went on to receive a medical degree and become an expert on tuberculosis. He served as President of the American Health Association, founder of the Canadian Public Health Association and Ontario's first Secretary of Health (1882–1904) before accepting a post as Chief Medical Officer at the Indian Department in 1904.

Bryce wrote many articles on public health and served as founder and member of numerous professional organizations. In 1907, Bryce inspected 35 residential schools in three prairie Provinces. He found that 24 percent of the children in these residential schools had died of preventable diseases like tuberculosis. At File Hills Residential School, over 75 percent of the children had died. Bryce said, "medical science knows just what to do" to stop the children from dying and he sent many recommendations to the government to improve the health conditions in the schools. The Government of Canada ignored his calls for action and the children continued to die, prompting Bryce to continue to speak out by publishing articles in the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper, *Saturday Night Magazine* and a book called *The Story of a National Crime: An appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada*. Bryce also engaged his colleagues to join him in pressuring the government including S.H. Blake, a leading human rights lawyer of the time, who wrote that "if Canada fails to obviate the preventable causes of death [to the children in residential schools] it brings itself into unpleasant nearness to manslaughter." Bryce continued his advocacy until he died in 1932.

The Government of Canada failed to make the changes Bryce recommended, pushed him out of government and tried to undermine his arguments. Despite the personal risk and sacrifices, Bryce never gave up. He was a man of moral courage who acted on his values and responsibilities as a health professional to support First Nations children at a time when many others were silent. His efforts to save the lives of children in the residential schools was acknowledged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its final report.

Caring Society

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society
Suite 202, 350 Sparks Street, Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8
613-230-5885
info@fncaringsociety.com
www.fncaringsociety.com

Other Ways P.H. Bryce Made a Difference

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce was very active in his community. Many of the organizations he founded or participated in continue to play an active role in supporting health and wellness today. For example, Bryce served in the following capacities:

- The Canadian Public Health Association (founder)
- American Public Health Association (served as president and honorary fellow)
- The American Journal of Public Health (contributor)
- Canadian Medical Association, Public Health Section (chairman)
- Canadian Historical Association (founder)
- Ontario Department of Health (founder)
- Upper Canada College (alumni)
- University of Toronto (alumni)
- Arts and Letters Club of Ottawa (served as president)

The University of Toronto and Dr. Michael Dan recognized Dr. Bryce's courageous and principled commitment to public health in 2015 by opening the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health.

The Award

This award recognizes health professionals who courageously advocate for the safety, health or well-being of Inuit, Métis and First Nations children and youth. Although the individual might be working to help one child or one community, it is important to show how these efforts could help other First Nations, Métis and Inuit children.

The award committee recognizes that a wide range of people work for the holistic health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and thus we welcome nominations of traditional healers, community health advocates, physicians, dental and optical health professionals, mental health professionals, nurses, occupational/physical therapists, etc.

In keeping with Dr. Bryce's example, nominations must specifically point out how the nominee overcame personal and professional challenges and risks to stand up for the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children as described in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchilldfriendlylanguage.pdf).

Proposed Benefit of the Award

Dr. Bryce stood up for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children even when it was a hard thing to do because other people criticized him. He knew what was right and, in a peaceful and respectful way, kept standing with First Nations children. We want others to follow his example by having the courage to stand up for the right thing and help this

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce: A Story of Courage

July 2016

Introduction

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce was a Canadian doctor and a leader in the field of Public Health at the turn of the 20th century. He wrote Canada's first Health Code for the province of Ontario in 1884. He later served as president of the American Public Health Association and was a founding member of the Canadian Public Health Association (FNCFCS, 2016). Dr. Bryce was also a member of the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, which was his area of expertise (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Today, 100 years after his career as a doctor, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce is most recognized for his persistence in advocating for better health conditions for Aboriginal children living in Indian Residential Schools (Bryce, 2012).

In 1904, after years of work in Public Health, Dr. Bryce was hired to work as Chief Medical Officer for the federal government. He played an important role in Canadian history as a "whistleblower", someone who documented and released evidence of the rate of Aboriginal children who were dying in residential schools. Dr. Bryce spoke out against the people who were running these schools, including the Canadian government, because these people knew about these deaths and had the means to save many lives but failed to take adequate action (Deachman, 2015).

The story of Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce is an important part of our history and demonstrates to us the importance of speaking out for what is right and just, even when it is difficult to do so.

"The Bryce Report" of 1907

As part of his work as the Medical Inspector to the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs, Dr. Bryce was asked to inspect residential schools (also called industrial or boarding schools) located in Western Canada and to report back on the sanitary conditions of these schools. In 1907, Dr. Bryce visited 35 residential schools and found that the schools were overcrowded and poorly ventilated, conditions known at the time to facilitate the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases among students. He found a clear connection between the sanitation and health conditions within the schools and the incredible number of child deaths (Milloy, 1999).

After inspecting these schools, Dr. Bryce wrote his 1907 "Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories" which is commonly known as "The Bryce Report". Dr. Bryce used a survey to gather information from school principals about the health history of children in these schools, and he reported:

It suffices for us to know… that of a total of 1,537 pupils reported upon nearly 25 per cent are dead, of one school with an absolutely accurate statement, 69 per cent of ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death given is tuberculosis (Bryce, 1907, p.18).

Further evidence from Dr. Bryce's inspections suggested that the numbers of student deaths over time were much higher, when taking into account that many children died shortly after leaving the schools (Milloy, 1999). In addition to bringing attention to the incredibly high death rates and poor health conditions in residential schools, Dr. Bryce also made it clear that the people running the schools – the churches and the Canadian government – were responsible for the health of these children.

In his 1907 report, Bryce writes:

It is apparent that…the old-fashioned buildings, their very varied and imperfect methods of heating and an almost complete lack of knowledge of the meaning of ventilation and of methods for accomplishing it in the different schools, that are responsible for this most serious condition which has been demonstrated and which demands for immediate remedy (p.19).

In reflecting upon the lack of proper ventilation in residential schools which contributed to tuberculosis infections and deaths among the students, Dr. Bryce also wrote "We have created a situation so dangerous to health that I was often surprised that the results were not even worse than they have been shown statistically to be" (Bryce, 1907, p. 19).

Dr. Bryce documented the alarming rates of student deaths in Indian

generation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth have the same chance to succeed as other children and youth in Canada.

Award Criteria

- The nominee must be currently engaged as a health professional.
- The nominee is actively standing up for the health and well-being of Métis, Inuit or First Nations children and youth in Canada in peaceful and respectful ways.
- Nomination shows how the efforts can help First Nations, Métis and Inuit children beyond the specific child/youth or group the award nominee is working with.
- The nominee has overcome personal or professional challenges and risks to stand up for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- The nominee inspires others to learn, care and take action to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- The nominee's work supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Nomination Process

The Peter Henderson Bryce Award nomination form must be completed along with a cover letter telling us why the nominee should get this award and two letters of support for the nomination. You are also welcome to include supporting materials (written work, videos, pictures, etc.) that demonstrate the candidate's work relevant to the award criteria.

The complete nomination package (nomination form, cover letter and letters of support and supporting materials relevant to the nomination) must be received by **11:45 pm EST on June 30, 2024**. If sending by mail, please send the complete nomination package, including letters of support to:

Source of this article:

Peter Henderson Bryce Award Committee,
c/o First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada
Suite 202, 350 Sparks Street, Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8

For more information please contact info@fncaringsociety.com

Please note that incomplete nomination packages will not be considered.

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

Residential Schools and outlined clear recommendations to prevent unnecessary student deaths. Among his recommendations, Dr. Bryce called for the reform of the residential school system, including changes to ensure that "the health interests of the pupils be guarded by a proper medical inspection and that the local physicians be encouraged through the provision at each school of fresh air methods in the care and treatment of cases of tuberculosis" (Milloy, 1999, p. 93).

The 1907 report was distributed to Members of Parliament and to the churches (Milloy, 1999). On November 15, 1907, the front page of "The Evening Citizen" newspaper (now called The Ottawa Citizen) included an article on Bryce's report. The title read: "Schools Aid White Plague - Startling Death Rolls Revealed Among Indians - Absolute Inattention to the Bare Necessities of Health" (Evening Citizen, 1907). Similar stories also appeared in the Saturday Night magazine and the Montreal Star newspaper (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). In reporting this to the media, Dr. Bryce briefly brought the issue to the attention of a wide audience of people across Canada. Although Parliamentarians, scholars and activists as well as thousands of ordinary citizens surely read these articles, it did not lead to any concrete change and the government continued on with business as usual. The churches and the federal government, the people who were in charge of running residential schools, were well aware of the numbers of children dying within the schools and the causes of their deaths.

For example, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce called repeatedly upon Duncan Campbell Scott, federal Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, to improve conditions in the schools to prevent unnecessary illness and death amongst the children who attended them. Duncan Campbell Scott made it clear that he understood the extent of the death rates in residential schools, and once estimated that "fifty per cent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein" (Milloy, 1999, p. 51). Duncan Campbell Scott and other bureaucrats working for the Department of Indian Affairs made deliberate decisions to disregard Dr. Bryce's findings and recommendations and to continue with the assimilation policy of residential schools. Duncan Campbell Scott wrote:

It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habituating so closely in the residential schools and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this does not justify a change in the policy of this Department which is geared towards a final solution of our Indian Problem (BC Teachers' Federation, 2015, p.8).

Dr. Bryce was not the only person at this time to raise the alarm about residential schools and to speak out about the government's inaction to protect Aboriginal children. For example, the Honorable Samuel Hugh Blake, an influential judge and member of the Anglican community, described the state of residential schools to the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs: "The appalling number of deaths among the younger children appeals loudly to the guardians of our Indians. In doing nothing to obviate the preventable causes of death, brings the Department within unpleasant nearness to the charge of manslaughter" (Milloy, 1999, p. 77).

In these challenging circumstances, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce worked tirelessly to urge the government and the public to pay attention to this pressing issue. However, Dr. Bryce's recommendations for improvements to residential schools came into direct conflict with Duncan Campbell Scott's work to reduce the spending of the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1913, Duncan Campbell Scott suspended the funding for Bryce's research on child deaths in residential schools and blocked Dr. Bryce's presentations of his research findings at academic conferences. Further, Dr. Bryce was denied positions within the federal civil service for which he was eminently qualified (Bryce, 1922). The federal government forced Dr. Bryce out of public service and into retirement in 1921. At this time, he was again able to speak out publicly about the health conditions of Aboriginal children in residential schools and the government's role in perpetuating these deaths.

An Advocate for Aboriginal Children's Health

In 1922, Dr. Bryce wrote a book "The Story of a National Crime: An Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada". This book provides clear evidence of the government's role in creating and maintaining conditions that led to the huge number of student deaths. In particular, this book outlined the fact that the government had chosen not to take any action since Bryce's original report in 1907. In his 1922 book, Dr. Bryce draws attention once again to the failure of the government to act: "[In the schools, a] trail of disease and death has gone almost unchecked by any serious efforts on the part of the Department of Indian Affairs" (Milloy, 1999, p. 51).

Despite this evidence, the number of residential schools in Canada continued to increase in the decades to follow. Thousands of children continued to live in unsafe buildings, with high infection rates of tuberculosis, under the power of a government that was not willing to spend more money to make sure that the children were safe (Milloy, 1999). In total, there were over 130 different residential schools located across Canada, with the last federally supported school operating until the late 1990s (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

The people working in the Department of Indian Affairs held within

their power the ability to make decisions about funding, inspections and regulations that could have changed the health conditions for children living in residential schools. In reality, these people failed to act to protect children from illness and death, despite Dr. Bryce's incessant encouragement. What was so remarkable about Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce was his ability to boldly speak out about the injustices that witnessed and the rights of Aboriginal children, even when few others were doing the same.

The Legacy of a Hero

Dr. Bryce acted as a witness to the unnecessary suffering of Aboriginal children in Canada, and held the government and churches to account for creating and maintaining the conditions that led to children's deaths. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report on Canada's Residential schools includes a section about Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce, the contributions of his 1907 report and the recommendations that he put forward to the federal government (2015, p. 401-407).

Although the government deliberately chose not to act upon his recommendations, Bryce's work can help us understand what conditions were like in these residential schools and allow us to recognize the consequences of the actions (and inactions) of the government and churches who ran these schools. Dr. Bryce provided evidence of child death and disease in residential schools and exposed the truth when few others were willing to talk about it (BC Teachers' Federation, 2015).

In 2015, a Historical Plaque was erected at Dr. Bryce's gravesite in the Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, Ontario, to honour his work in standing up for the health and rights of Aboriginal children. Cindy Blackstock says that "[o]ther people need to be inspired by Bryce's example of being courageous. Bryce had the moral courage to stand up for the kids and take all the pushback that comes with that. Bryce really confronts us with the reality that people knew then about the harms, had a choice to make it different, and that there were people like him who spoke out" (Deachman, 2015).

The story of Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce is about the strength of people who make a choice to stand up for what is right for children in a peaceful and respectful way, even when faced with doubt and criticism. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society honours Dr. Bryce's achievement and struggles by championing the Peter Henderson Bryce Award. This award is given out every two years to recognize children and adults who advocate for the safety, health or well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth.

"We want others to follow his example by having the courage to stand up for the right thing and help this generation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth to have the same chance to succeed as other children and youth in Canada" (FNCFCS, 2016).

Produced by: Jocelyn Wattam

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Source of this article:

Student Heart Garden Exhibit



Student Heart Garden Exhibit presented at the 2025 AGM
Paper Hearts—Noel Booth Elementary
11x17 collages—Langley Fine Arts Secondary

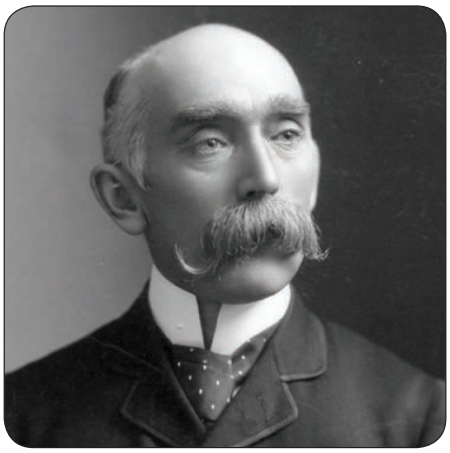

Thank You Dr. Bryce.
Thank You for Whistleblowing
You did the right thing
Dr. Bryce is the Best
WE LOVE YOU
You Never Gave UP
Hero
EDUCATION
THE STORY A NATIONAL CRIME P.H. BRYCE, M.A., M.D.

Article 3

AWARDS PROGRAM | PROGRAMME DES PRIX

R.D. DEFRIES AWARD

Dr. Peter H. Bryce, a charter member of the Canadian Public Health Association, was a leader in the field of public health at the turn of the 20th Century. He played an important role in Canadian history as a whistleblower who documented and released evidence of the rate of Indigenous children who were dying in residential schools.



PETER HENDERSON BRYCE
(posthumously/à titre posthume)

In 1904, Bryce was hired by Indian Affairs Department in Ottawa to report on the health conditions of the Canadian residential school system in western Canada. In 1907, he visited 35 residential schools and found that the schools were overcrowded and poorly ventilated, conditions known at the time to facilitate the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases among students. Bryce was so disgusted by what he saw that he devoted the rest of his career to exposing the truth about the conditions in residential schools.

After inspecting these schools, Dr. Bryce wrote his 1907 "Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories." In it, he reported, "It suffices for us to know... that of a total of 1,537 pupils reported upon nearly 25% are dead, of one school with an absolutely accurate statement, 69% of ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death given is tuberculosis." Dr. Bryce also made it clear that the people running the schools – the churches and the Canadian government – were responsible for the health of these children.

Dr. Bryce repeatedly called upon Duncan Campbell Scott, federal Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, to improve conditions in the schools. Scott made it clear that he understood the extent of the death rates in residential schools, and wrote, "It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habitating so closely in the residential schools and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this does not justify a change in the policy of this Department which is geared towards a final solution of our Indian Problem."

In 1922, Bryce published *The Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada*, in which he provided clear evidence of the government's role in creating and maintaining conditions that led to the huge number of student deaths in residential schools. In particular, the report outlined the fact that the government had chosen not to take any action since Bryce's 1907 report.

Source of this article:



Article 4

Source of this article:

Peter Bryce and Duncan Campbell Scott: The road not taken on residential schools

by Charlie Angus
December 30, 2013

Working on the musical-historical project Four Horses, Charlie Angus came across a dark chapter in Canadian history, and discovered a civil servant who tried to do the right thing.



This past fall, I was involved in the musical-historical project Four Horses that tells the story of a dark chapter in Canadian history. Working with University of Regina Press (publishers of Clearing the Plains) we set out to introduce a new generation to the story of how the federal government used disease and famine in an attempt to destroy First Nation identity in Canada. Until I was involved in this project, I would have thought that such accusations couldn't be true in a country such as ours. The Four Horses project forced me to look closer, and the closer I looked, the starker the picture became.

So let's look at the residential schools and the legacy of two men: one famous and one obscure. The famous man is Duncan Campbell Scott — the architect of the 20th century's brutal residential school regime. The obscure figure is a crusading bureaucrat named Peter Henderson Bryce.

Bryce was the Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Indian Affairs at the turn of the 20th

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century. In 1907 he released an explosive report On the Indian Schools Of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories that exposed the atrocious death rates of tuberculosis among children in the residential school system.

He laid the blame on both the Churches and the Federal government. To Bryce, it wasn't simply a case of negligent local school officials but a systemic failure of the federal government to ensure adequately funded education and health support for Aboriginal children. He pointed out that a number of institutions didn't even bother to provide soap or clean water for the children.

Bryce insisted that all Indian Affairs officials under his watch begin tracking the monthly rates of illness in First Nation communities. This compilation of statistics showed that students were dying at rates between 24 and 69%.

In the larger Aboriginal population, Bryce found that tuberculosis was killing an estimated 34.7 per 1,000, compared to the non-Native rate of approximately 1.8 per 1,000 people. On the prairies the death rate was closer to 90 per 1000.

Medical authorities knew the importance of public health initiatives to fight the spread of TB but federal officials did little to stop the devastation in First nation populations. Bryce pointed out that the Department of Indian Affairs was spending a mere $10 annually on TB prevention to cover off three hundred First Nation bands. By comparison, the City of Ottawa was spending $342,000 annually on programs to stop the disease.

Bryce pushed the federal government to establish proper hospitals and hire nurses who could slow the spread of the illness. He pushed to have the Churches removed from Indian education and put forth recommendations to ensure to an overhaul of federal education responsibilities with adequate financial support.

Such recommendations did not please Indian Affairs head Duncan Campbell Scott. He was in a long line of department bureaucrats who saw their role as saving the federal government money by ignoring Treaty obligations. In a five-year period, the First Nation population dropped a staggering 17% with TB accounting for the majority of deaths. To Department bureaucrats higher deaths meant fewer expenses for the Department.

Writer Cathy Sproule Jones points out that the department officials viewed the death rates on the prairies as "an opportunity to reduce expenditure on services like education and medical attention. Between 1891 and 1896 alone, the native population in Canada dropped from 120,638 to 100,027."

Bryce, who was a believer in the Social Gospel was appalled at this attitude. In a letter to Archdeacon Tims who ran an Aboriginal industrial school in Calgary Bryce wrote:

"How in the world you can be satisfied with statistics which show that out from 900 to 1,000 children which pass through our Indian schools 300 of them pass out of our hands to the grave within ten or twelve years? I cannot conceive except upon the hypothesis that we grow callous amidst such a frightful death rate?"

Duncan Scott had enough of the reforming efforts of Bryce. In 1913, he suspended funding for Bryce's research work stating that the cost of gathering statistics on child deaths from far outweighed the "benefit" of the information provided.

To Scott, the role of the residential schools was to brutally simple: "get rid of the Indian problem… Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department."

Scott not only rejected the majority of Bryce's reforms but signed into law an order that forced every First Nation child to be removed from their parents and put in the church run schools. Children were forcibly removed from their home communities and put into a system that the Department knew was fundamentally unsafe for children. Scott and his officials knew the death rates and the incompetency of the Churches for providing for

basic health, safety and education. But rather than take action to protect the children, Scott set out to erase the evidence. He ended the position of Chief Medical inspector for the schools.

Scott went on to be celebrated for his years of "public service" while Bryce quit the federal service in disgust. Nonetheless, with his professional career in tatters, Bryce called out both Duncan Scott and the Federal government in an article entitled "The Story of a National Crime." He accused them of "criminal disregard" of their Treaty obligations.

So what is there to learn from these two men? Ninety years on, the Department of Indian Affairs continues to act as a bureaucratic impediment to basic improvements in education, health and social improvement. There is nothing accidental about this dysfunction. It is the result of decades of deliberate policy choices — the same choices that promoted Duncan Campell Scott while suppressing the work of Peter Henderson Bryce.

Ninety years on, we have the job of undoing these wrong choices. It is time that we put our nation back on the right road with our treaty partners. So, it may seem like a century too late but thank you Peter Bryce for your dedication and public service.









Sources:

Bryce, Peter Henderson. The Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada. James Hope and Sons. 1922.

Sproule-Jones, Megan. Dr. Peter Bryce, Public Health and Prairie Residential Schools. Canadian Bulletin of Medical History.Volume 13, 1996

Daschuk, James. Clearing the Plains. University of Regina Press. 2013.

Student Heart Garden Exhibit





Student Heart Garden Exhibit presented at the 2025 AGM
Paper Hearts—Noel Booth Elementary
11x17 collages—Langley Fine Arts Secondary

Do not show until student note-taking is finished.

LESSON 8: The National Crime of Indian Residential Schools

Student

The Courage to Speak Up and Act—Then (Dr. P. H. Bryce) and Now (You)

Objective

To connect to the work of Dr. P. H. Bryce and the importance of what he did. To have students understand the importance and responsibility of everyone to speak up and act when something we know is wrong happens, even when it may be very difficult for us.

Historical Content

In 1907, Dr. P. H. Bryce wrote a report on the IRS system. Dr. Bryce was Canada's first Chief Medical Health Officer. In 1907, he visited 35 residential schools and concluded they were "a national crime." In his report, Bryce gave evidence that the average mortality rate (number of deaths) was 25% at some schools due to illnesses such as tuberculosis. At one school, the mortality rate was as high as 75%. Dr. Bryce reported that sickness and death of children at residential schools was directly related to poor nutrition, lack of adequate sanitation (cleanliness) and ventilation, and the close quarters that students lived in. His findings were ignored and silenced by the government and resulted in Dr. Bryce losing his job.

Gladys went to the Kamloops Indian Residential School 24 years after the 1907 report. Unfortunately, conditions at the school had not been improved since Bryce's report. As a result, Gladys and many other students at her school died.

In 1922, Bryce managed to publish his book, *A National Crime*, on his own. However, it wasn't until 2015 (almost 100 years later!) that Dr. Bryce was finally recognized for his significant contribution in bringing to light the appalling conditions at Indian Residential Schools. Today, Bryce is a symbol and powerful role model of integrity, compassion, and courage. Dr. Bryce had the courage to speak up for the children and to speak out against those in government who tried to ignore and silence him. Dr. Bryce did not give up or stop, even at great personal cost. He ended up losing both his job and his reputation for standing up and fighting for the health and welfare of the children in residential schools.

Dr. Bryce is now regarded as a hero for what he did. What heroic qualities or characteristics do you think Dr. Bryce exemplifies? Brainstorm and list words or phrases. Please think more about this as you watch a video dedicated to Dr. Bryce called "Finding Heart." Please also pay close attention to the hearts being made by students in the video.

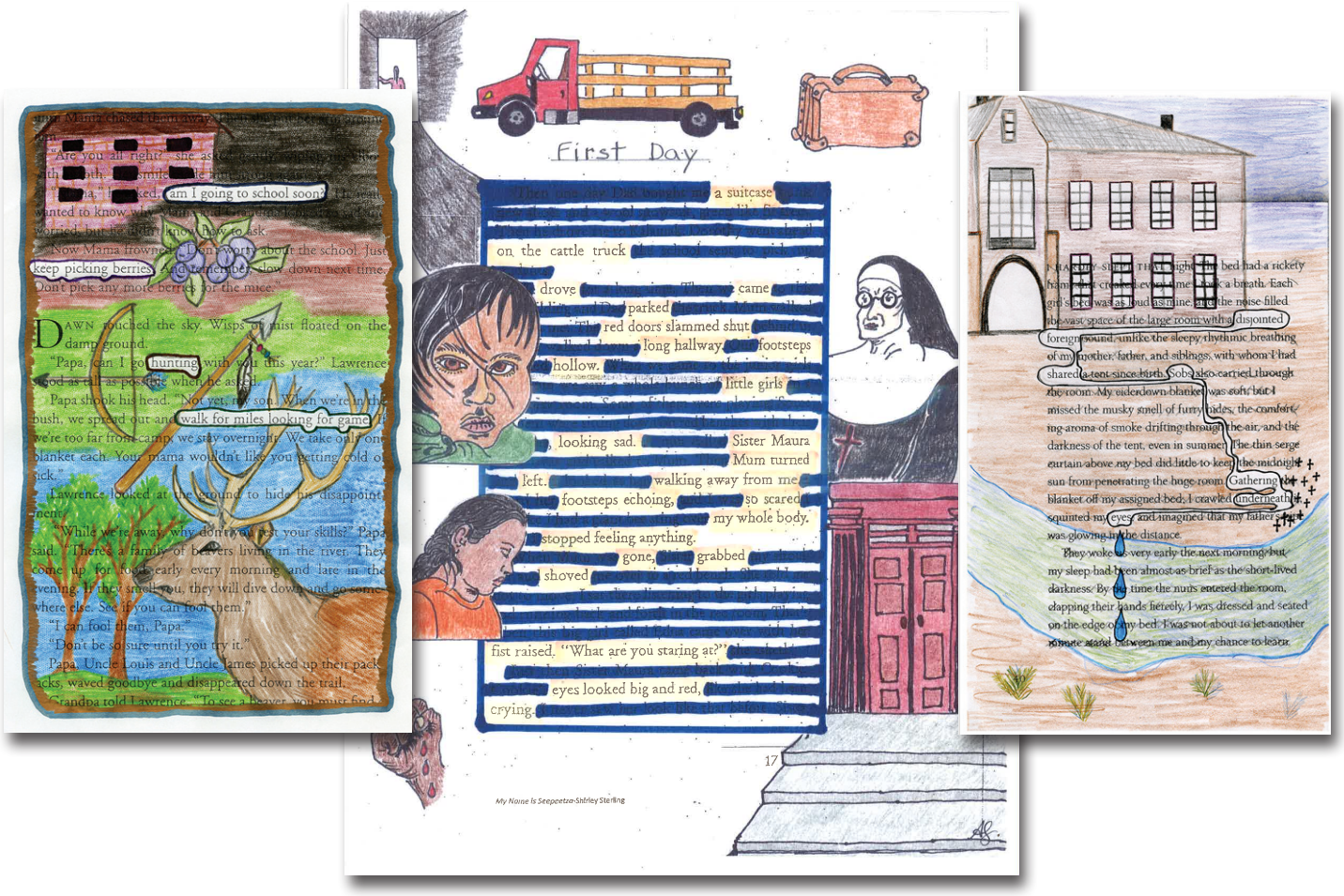
Can you add any more qualities or characteristics to our list of how Bryce was, indeed, a hero? Do you think it is important that we celebrate him and his work so long after his death? Why? Do you think you will have the courage to speak up and act when you witness racism, stereotyping, and unfair practices? How can you speak up and act now to help Reconciliation in Canada?



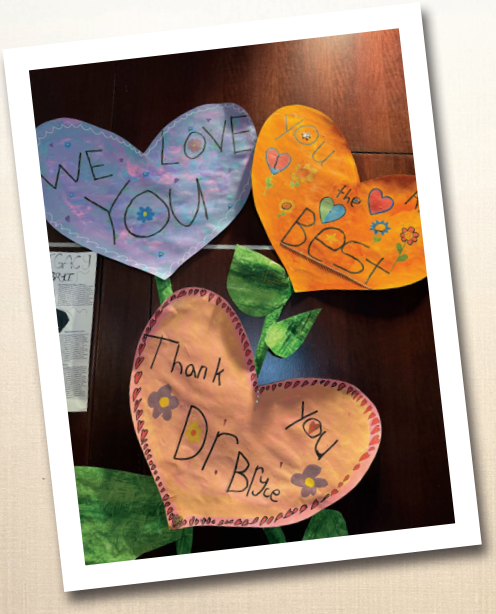
Suggested Activities

Heart Garden: Create a heart garden along the lines of the ones shown in the video—hearts with a design on one side and a message on the other honouring survivors and their families. You may wish to honour Gladys in some way on your heart. The heart garden could also be done as a wall display inside the school. See the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society link for more examples of heart gardens. *fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams*.

Found Poem: Create and illustrate a Found Poem, using a variety of written materials about residential schools, such as excerpts from poems, books, articles (e.g., *Fatty Legs, My Name is Sepeetza*). Your poem should represent what has stood out for you in your learning about Indian Residential Schools and help you to process the information you have been learning.



Student Heart Garden Exhibit





Student Heart Garden Exhibit presented at the 2025 AGM
Paper Hearts—Noel Booth Elementary
11x17 collages—Langley Fine Arts Secondary

NAME: Georgina

Peter

Henderson

Bryce



Peter Henderson Bryce, M.D.

Award for Health Professionals

Advocating for the Health and Well-Being
of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children and Youth

Peter Hender Bryce, Medical Doctor (M.D.), 1853-1932

Who Was Peter Henderson Bryce?

Peter Henderson Bryce was born in Mount Pleasant Ontario in 1853 and graduated from the University of Toronto in 1876 when Canada was only nine years old. He went on to receive a medical degree and become an expert on tuberculosis. He served as President of the American Health Association, founder of the Canadian Public Health Association and Ontario's first Secretary of Health (1882–1904) before accepting a post as Chief Medical Officer at the Indian Department in 1904.

Bryce wrote many articles on public health and served as founder and member of numerous professional organizations. In 1907, Bryce inspected 35 residential schools in three prairie Provinces. He found that 24 percent of the children in these residential schools had died of preventable diseases like tuberculosis. At File Hills Residential School, over 75 percent of the children had died. Bryce said, "medical science knows just what to do" to stop the children from dying and he sent many recommendations to the government to improve the health conditions in the schools. The Government of Canada ignored his calls for action and the children continued to die, prompting Bryce to continue to speak out by publishing articles in the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper, *Saturday Night Magazine* and a book called *The Story of a National Crime: An appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada*. Bryce also engaged his colleagues to join him in pressuring the government including S.H. Blake, a leading human rights lawyer of the time, who wrote that "if Canada fails to obviate the preventable causes of death [to the children in residential schools] it brings itself into unpleasant nearness to manslaughter." Bryce continued his advocacy until he died in 1932.

The Government of Canada failed to make the changes Bryce recommended, pushed him out of government and tried to undermine his arguments. Despite the personal risk and sacrifices, Bryce never gave up. He was a man of moral courage who acted on his values and responsibilities as a health professional to support First Nations children at a time when many others were silent. His efforts to save the lives of children in the residential schools was acknowledged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its final report.

Caring Society

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society
Suite 202, 350 Sparks Street, Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8
613-230-5885
info@fncaringsociety.com
www.fncaringsociety.com

Other Ways P.H. Bryce Made a Difference

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce was very active in his community. Many of the organizations he founded or participated in continue to play an active role in supporting health and wellness today. For example, Bryce served in the following capacities:

- The Canadian Public Health Association (founder)
- American Public Health Association (served as president and honorary fellow)
- The American Journal of Public Health (contributor)
- Canadian Medical Association, Public Health Section (chairman)
- Canadian Historical Association (founder)
- Ontario Department of Health (founder)
- Upper Canada College (alumni)
- University of Toronto (alumni)
- Arts and Letters Club of Ottawa (served as president)

The University of Toronto and Dr. Michael Dan recognized Dr. Bryce's courageous and principled commitment to public health in 2015 by opening the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health.

The Award

This award recognizes health professionals who courageously advocate for the safety, health or well-being of Inuit, Métis and First Nations children and youth. Although the individual might be working to help one child or one community, it is important to show how these efforts could help other First Nations, Métis and Inuit children.

The award committee recognizes that a wide range of people work for the holistic health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and thus we welcome nominations of traditional healers, community health advocates, physicians, dental and optical health professionals, mental health professionals, nurses, occupational/physical therapists, etc.

In keeping with Dr. Bryce's example, nominations must specifically point out how the nominee overcame personal and professional challenges and risks to stand up for the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children as described in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchilldfriendlylanguage.pdf).

Proposed Benefit of the Award

Dr. Bryce stood up for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children even when it was a hard thing to do because other people criticized him. He knew what was right and, in a peaceful and respectful way, kept standing with First Nations children. We want others to follow his example by having the courage to stand up for the right thing and help this

generation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth have the same chance to succeed as other children and youth in Canada.

Award Criteria

- The nominee must be currently engaged as a health professional.
- The nominee is actively standing up for the health and well-being of Métis, Inuit or First Nations children and youth in Canada in peaceful and respectful ways.
- Nomination shows how the efforts can help First Nations, Métis and Inuit children beyond the specific child/youth or group the award nominee is working with.
- The nominee has overcome personal or professional challenges and risks to stand up for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- The nominee inspires others to learn, care and take action to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- The nominee's work supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Nomination Process

The Peter Henderson Bryce Award nomination form must be completed along with a cover letter telling us why the nominee should get this award and two letters of support for the nomination. You are also welcome to include supporting materials (written work, videos, pictures, etc.) that demonstrate the candidate's work relevant to the award criteria.

The complete nomination package (nomination form, cover letter and letters of support and supporting materials relevant to the nomination) must be received by **11:45 pm EST on June 30, 2024**. If sending by mail, please send the complete nomination package, including letters of support to:

Peter Henderson Bryce Award Committee,
c/o First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada
Suite 202, 350 Sparks Street, Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8

For more information please contact info@fncaringsociety.com

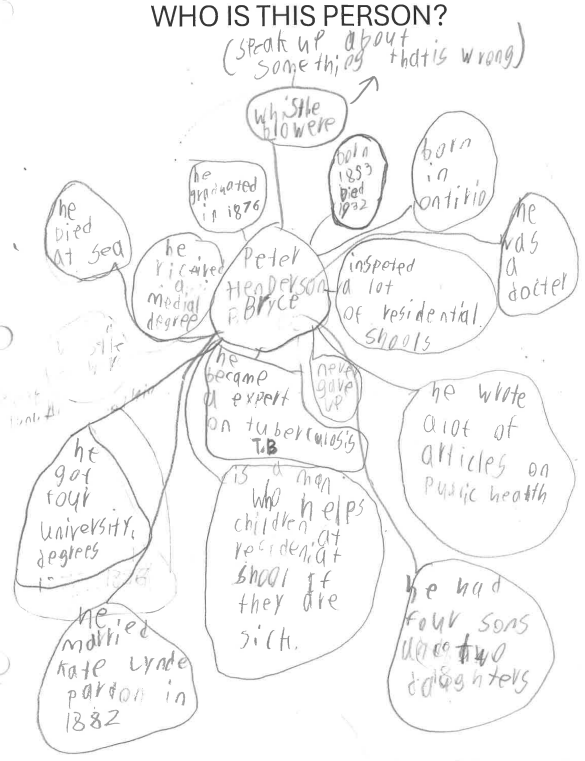
Please note that incomplete nomination packages will not be considered.

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

Godrging

WHO IS THIS PERSON?

(speak up about something that is wrong)



WHAT IMPORTANT THINGS IS HE KNOWN FOR?

he got four University degrees
he was a docter
he found out that 24 perbent of the children in residaugr school Died Because ther where sick and no Dody helped them and did not gave them medicen
he got a awald for heath
Pre chanals
he standed up for indigins people
Inuit, metis (mixed blood)
he helped immigration policies
he was the president of the amerigan health Association
Chief medical officer.
he was an expert on tuberculosis
he never gave up because if he did, he knew that people would kepp on Dying and they would never stop treating the Indigenus children badly.

DESCRIBE WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE WAS

(Personality Characteristics)

he was a person who never gave up
he was helpful
he stood up for what was right
he was integent
he was kindhearted
he was a leader
he was brake
he was detekmined
he was strong
he was a skilled doctor
he was strong willed
he was very impressive

WHAT WOULD YOU CALL A PERSON WHO IS LIKE HIM AND DOES THE TYPE OF THINGS HE DID?

strong hearted
HERO

The government still would not listin to him ; he retired because he was no longer valued and he paid to Publish a book the story A NATIONAL CRIME AN APPEAL FOR JUSTICE CALL OF CANADA

WHY IS HE IMPORTANT??

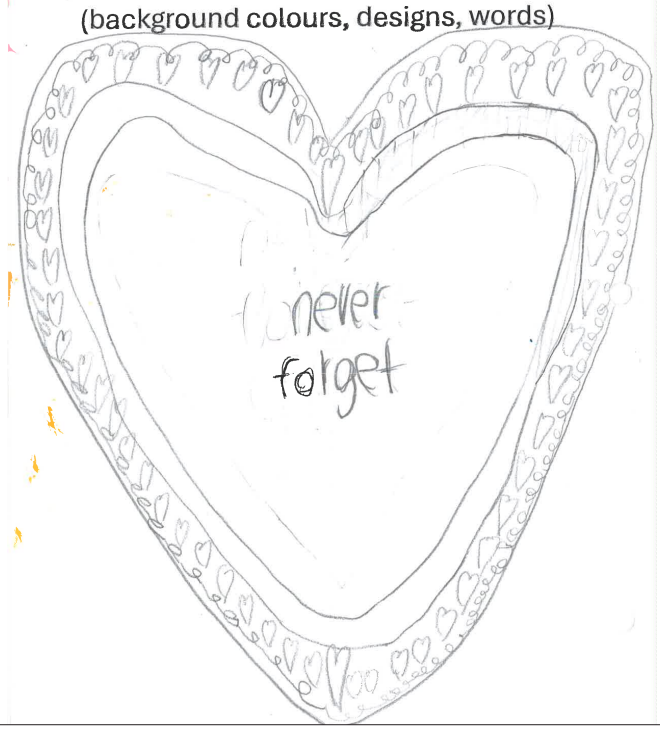
because he tried to stop the children from dying
he cared for the indigenous people and tried to make things fair
no matter what he never gave up and kept trying to free the children
and he did not care if he lost his job and kept trying

IF YOU COULD MEET HIM IN PERSON, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO HIM?

Thank you for trying to save the Indigenous children from residental school, you are such a hero

DRAFT OF YOUR HEART CREATION

(background colours, designs, words)



Collaborative Essay

on

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce

By Division 8

Who is this person?

Peter Bryce was born in Ontario in 1853. He died in 1932. He was a doctor with four university degrees from the University of Toronto. He was an expert on tuberculosis and bacterial infections. He was married with six children. Dr. Bryce helped Indigenous kids who went to residential school. He was a “whistleblower”—somebody who speaks up about something that is wrong.

What important things is he known for?

Dr. Bryce was President of the American Health Association and Chief Medical Officer of Ontario. He was an expert on diseases, especially tuberculosis. He also helped create immigration policies, including making sure new immigrants were well cared for. As Chief Medical Office, he was responsible for inspecting the residential schools. He found out how dirty and crowded they were, and how poorly the children were fed. He spoke up about the bad conditions and said they needed to make them cleaner and healthier. He knew tuberculosis could be controlled.

Bryce’s report about the conditions in residential schools was ignored by the government officials. Dr. Bryce did not give up because he knew the bad conditions would continue and kids would keep dying. It is not clear whether Dr. Bryce was forced out of his job, but he did retire because he was no longer valued. He lost his job and his reputation because he wouldn’t keep quiet. Dr. Bryce even paid with his own money to publish a book about the residential schools called, The Story of a National Crime.

Dr. Bryce stood up for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in residential schools. He never stopped trying to help the children.

What kind of person was Dr. Bryce?

Peter Bryce was an extremely smart man. He was a highly educated and skilled doctor. He was an expert on health, and he stood up for what was right. He was helpful, caring and kind-hearted toward children. Dr. Bryce was a strong-hearted and strong-willed man. He was a mighty doctor. He was impressive. He was a hero.

What would you call a person who is like Dr. Bryce and does the type of things he did?

Fantastic Person

True Leader

Life Saver

Decent Human Being

H E R O

Why is Peter Henderson Bryce important?

Ary says, “He tried to stop residential schools and the Indigenous children from dying.”

Arlo says, “He did a lot for Canada, for health care and disease control.”

Jack says, “He never stopped trying.”

Abby says, “He cared about Indigenous children when nobody else did.”

Vasa says, “He spoke up for the children.”

Emilia says, “He knew he was doing the right thing.”

Baron says, “He helped guide immigration policy so immigrants got good health care.”

Avery says, “He respected and cared for the kids who died in residential schools.”

Aidan says, “He fought for what was right.”

Island says, “He tried to make things fair.”

Georgina says, “No matter what, he never gave up.”

Kelly says, “He tried to make the world a better place.”

If you could meet him in person, what would you say to him?

Thank you so much for trying to solve residential schools. You are the best.

Thank you for trying to help.

Thank you for standing up for Indigenous children.

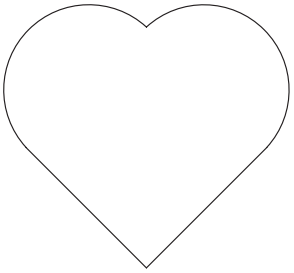
You are one of my heroes for caring so much.

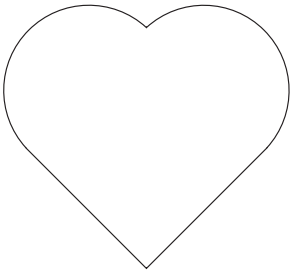
Thank you for being a good role model in this world.

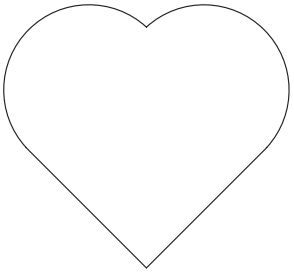
Thank you so much for all that you did for Canada and tried to do for Indigenous kids in residential schools.

And a huge thank you to the children in Division 8 for their incredible sense of fairness, compassion, heart, intelligence, empathy, and insight.

Notes





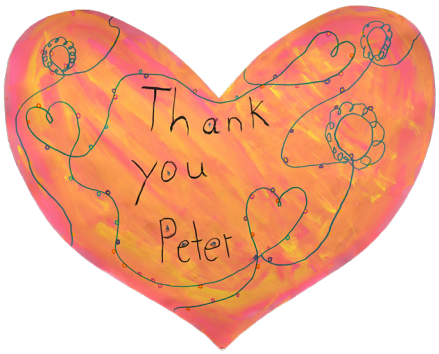



Thank You for What You Did


You Are A Hero


Thank You for Whistleblowing


Hero


Thank you Peter


Dr. Bryce is the Best


You Are the Best


We Will Remember You


Thank You for trying


You did the right thing


LOVE


Thank You Dr. Bryce