



# 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 Henderson 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 obtain a medical degree and climbed quickly to become one of the foremost experts on tuberculosis and served as President of the American Health Association and founder of the Canadian Public Health Association. He also served as Ontario's first Secretary of Health (1882–1904) before accepting a post as Chief Medical Officer at the Indian Department in 1904.

A prolific writer, Bryce authored numerous articles on public health and served as founder and member of many professional organizations. In 1907, Bryce conducted a special inspection of 35 residential schools in three Prairie provinces. The report found that 24 percent of the children who had been in the schools were dead, while over 75 percent of children were dead at File Hills residential school, which filed a complete report. The cause of death was primarily related to tuberculosis. Bryce famously said, “medical science knows just what to do” to stop the children from dying and he sent a number of recommendations to the Canadian government for urgent implementation. The Government of Canada, however, largely ignored Bryce's calls for action and the children continued to die, prompting Bryce to step up his advocacy 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 in pressuring the Canadian 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 to the time of his death in 1932.

The Canadian government failed to implement Bryce's recommendations, relieved Bryce of his post and undertook efforts to undermine his credibility. Despite the personal risk and sacrifices, Bryce never gave up. He was a man of moral conscience who acted on his values and responsibilities as a health professional to benefit the most vulnerable population in Canada at a time when many others were silent. His efforts to save the lives



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of children in the residential schools was acknowledged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in its final report.

## **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 supported, 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 Metis 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 Convention on the Rights of the Child ([www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.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 on trying to help the 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**

- Nominee must be currently engaged as a health professional.
- 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.
- Nominee has overcome personal or professional challenges and risks to stand up for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- Inspires others to learn, care and take action to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.
- Activities support 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 the award, along with two letters of support for the nomination. You are also welcome to include supporting materials 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 April 30, 2019. 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 401, 309 Cooper Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5

OR

Submit package by Email to: [info@fncaringsociety.com](mailto:info@fncaringsociety.com)

For more information please contact us at [info@fncaringsociety.com](mailto:info@fncaringsociety.com)

Please note that incomplete nomination packages will not be considered.

