

- 10 The failure of the First Ministers' Conferences resulted from such fears by many first ministers.
 - 11 *Handbook*, p. v.
 - 12 Frank Cassidy and Robert L. Bish, *Indian Government: Its Meaning in Practice* (Halifax: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1989), pp. 156-57.
 - 13 *Ibid.*
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Pat Sandiford Grygier, *A Long Way from Home: The Tuberculosis Epidemic Among the Inuit*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

review by James B. Waldram

Tuberculosis began to emerge as a serious public health problem in Canada in the late 19th century. By the mid-20th century it had become clear that the Aboriginal population in Canada was suffering extensively from this disease, more so than the non-Aboriginal population. Initially, the response of health officials was the institution of sanatorium therapy, consisting primarily of bed rest and fresh air. It is not possible to determine exactly how many Aboriginal people spent time in these facilities, but today it is clear that the experience, for many, was traumatic.

Grygier has examined the tuberculosis issue with respect to the Inuit. Employing primarily archival materials, including fairly accurate data on the numbers of Inuit institutionalized, the work documents an important era of medical history in Canada. Perhaps more important, the book documents the extent to which Inuit society was disrupted by the extensive evacuation of tubercular patients to the south. The scandalous treatment of these people is clearly detailed: they were all but kidnapped in some instances; the government frequently lost track of which institutions they were in; some were returned to the wrong communities, often poorly dressed and poorly prepared for reintegration into the arctic and Inuit life-style. The trip south, often in overcrowded ships, was traumatic. Their experiences in the south were difficult at best, because most Inuit patients did not speak English, and the treatment staff did not speak Inuktitut. Loneliness was pervasive, resulting in the occasional suicide. Some Inuit children were billeted with non-Aboriginal families, often for years, so they began to lose their language and cultural orientation. Some were simply adopted without the permission of their parents. And back home, families often found it difficult

to get news of their loved ones down south. When patients died at the sanatoria, they were simply buried nearby and not returned to their communities where their families could properly grieve and inter the bodies.

The extensive use of archival materials to document these incidents is excellent. Grygier has pushed the story perhaps as far as it can go using these sources. While he has included material from some interviews with government officials and a few Inuk patients, what is clearly lacking is any sense of the effects of the epidemic and the sanatoria treatment on the Inuit from the viewpoint of the patients and their families. The oral history of Aboriginal peoples contains much rich information on these experiences, but this history remains largely untapped.

Grygier also fails to place the tuberculosis issue in a broader perspective. Canadian government officials viewed sanatoria treatment as an opportunity to facilitate the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples. Diamond Jenness and Duncan Campbell Scott were both known to have expressed such a view. One can sense from Grygier's account that cultural change certainly ensued, but there is no suggestion of the link between the epidemic and the assimilation policies extant at the time. Indeed, the author discusses assimilation (without using the term) as a "side effect" of treatment, which allowed the Inuit to learn more about southern, non-Inuit society through "a form of total immersion" that, while producing "great culture shock" was also "a boon to many younger people" (p. 183). The text reads as if the author is completely detached from the story, as if the politics of health care is not relevant and as if cultural change was, by and large, a good thing. To some extent, Grygier comes across as an apologist for the government by viewing things from the perspective of doctors, nurses and government officials. A Native Studies readership is likely to be critical of the work for its conservative analysis in support of the status quo.

Given the extensive use of archival and historical sources, I would consider the omission of the link between the epidemic and assimilation policies to be a flaw of the work. These materials would be readily available to the author. On the other hand, attempting to do justice to the Inuit oral tradition on the epidemic while also exhausting archival sources would be impossible in one work. Grygier's efforts are important in covering one-half of the data on this story. One can only hope that soon a work on the Inuit view of the epidemic will also surface.
