

Hudson's Bay Company's employés The natives retain the use of the bag to a late period, say until the child passes a year, during which time it is never taken out except to change the moss. To this practice, continued to such an age, I attribute the turned in toes and rather crooked legs of many of these Indians. A child is not weaned until another takes its place, if the mother has milk to give it, and it is no unusual thing for an Indian woman of these tribes to suckle a child three or four years old, even with a baby at her other breast at the time. Respecting the food of infants, the routine is as follows: If the mother has milk they suck so long as she yields it; otherwise, mashed fish, chewed dried meat, or any other nutritious substance that can be had from a not very extended variety is given. A curious and superstitious custom obtains among the Slave, Hare, and Dogrib tribes, of not cutting the nails of female infants till they are four years of age. Their reason for this is, that if they did so earlier the child would, when arrived at womanhood, turn out lazy, and be unable to embroider well in porcupine quill-work, an art which these Indians are very skilful in, and are justly proud of. Another extraordinary practice is their giving no nutriment to infants for the first four days after birth, in order, as they say, to render them capable of enduring starvation in after life, an accomplishment which they are very likely to stand often in need of.

It is difficult to determine exactly the age of puberty. In boys it commences about twelve. Indeed, they endeavor, as soon as they can, to pay their addresses to the sex, and marry, generally, at from sixteen to twenty years of age. To fix the period for girls is still more difficult. They marry sometimes, but not often, at ten, and have their menses about thirteen. The women are capable of bearing children from fourteen to forty-five, a long portion of their lives, but in it very few infants are produced. Families on an average contain three children, including deaths, and ten is the greatest number I have seen. In that instance the natives found it so unusual that they called the father "Hon-nen-na-bé-ta," or the Father of Ten. Twins I have heard of but once. The proportion of births is rather in favor of females, a natural necessity, as it is the women among these tribes who have the shortest lease of life, and there is from various causes a much greater mortality among the girls than among the boys. The period of utero gestation is rather shorter than in Europeans, and seldom exceeds the nine months. Premature deliveries are very rare, and the women experience but little pain in child-birth, a few hours repose, after the occurrence, being sufficient to restore nature.

The duration of life is, on an average, short. Many children die at an early age, and there are few instances of the great longevity that occurs not unfrequently in more temperate climates. Rarely does one of the Tinneh reach the "three score years and ten" allotted to man, though an instance or two of passing this age has occurred within my own knowledge. A Slave woman died at Fort Simpson, in the autumn of 1861, who had already borne three children when Sir Alexander McKenzie, in 1789, descended the river bearing his name. Supposing that she had married at sixteen, and was confined once every three years, a high average for this people, she would have been ninety-seven years of age at the time of her death. For some years prior to her demise she was perfectly bed-ridden, and sadly neglected by her relatives, who evidently fancied that she had troubled them long enough. She lay solitary and forsaken in a miserable camp, composed of a rude shelter and bed of pine brush, her only covering a tattered caribou-skin robe. Such was the malignity of her disposition, even in "articulo mortis," that she reviled at nearly every adult, and struck with a stick at all the children and dogs that passed by her den.

The Tinneh are far from a healthy race. The causes of death proceed rather from weakness of constitution and hereditary taint than from epidemic diseases, though, when the latter do come, they make great havoc. Want of proper and regular nutriment and exposure in childhood in all probability and remain their