

Small-pox has appeared but once among the Upper Thompson Indians; but the Lower Thompsons state that it has broken out three or four times in their tribe. Its first appearance was near the beginning of the century. Nevertheless this disease has reduced the numbers of the tribe more than anything else. It was brought into the country in 1863, and thousands of Indians throughout the interior of British Columbia succumbed to it. If the evidence of the old people can be relied on, it must have carried off from one-fourth to one-third of the tribe. In many cases the Indians became panic-stricken, and fled to the mountains for safety. Numbers of them dropped dead along the trail; and their bodies were buried, or their bones gathered up, a considerable time afterwards. Some took refuge in their sweat-houses, expecting to cure the disease by sweating, and died there.

It was early in spring when the epidemic was raging, and most of the Indians were living in their winter houses, under such conditions that all the inhabitants were constantly exposed to the contagion. The occupants of one group of winter houses near Spences Bridge were completely exterminated; and those of another about three miles away, numbering about twenty people, all died inside of their house. Their friends buried them by letting the roof of the house down on them. Afterwards they removed their bones, and buried them in a graveyard. Since then the tribe has been gradually decreasing, until at present I doubt if it numbers over two thousand souls. About fifteen years ago it was reckoned by a missionary long resident among them as numbering about twenty-five hundred.

Many suppose that the decrease among Indian tribes in general is chiefly due to the dying-off of the old people and to the sterility of the women. My observations lead me to a different conclusion, at least regarding the Upper Thompson Indians. There are comparatively few sterile women among them.

The following statistics concerning the Indians of Spences Bridge will serve as an illustration of the decrease of the Indian community. They were collected by myself, and extend over a period of ten years. While they may be no criterion for the whole tribe (some bands having remained almost stationary during this period, while others have decreased considerably more than the one to be discussed), still I think they will show what is happening, to a greater or less extent, in several bands of the tribe.

In 1884 the Spences Bridge Indians numbered 144 (not including 13 temporary residents from other tribes or bands). During the period 1884-94 I recorded the following changes:—

		INCREASE.	
Births	{ Full-bloods.....	39	
	{ Half-breeds.....	4	
		—	43
Immigration of Indians from other villages.....			10
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Total increase.....			53