

the previous year, but not to name them.³⁵⁰ It was not until 1935 that Indian Affairs adopted a formal policy on how deaths at the schools were to be reported and investigated.³⁵¹

There can be no certainty that all deaths were, in fact, reported to Indian Affairs—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has located reports of student deaths in church records that are not reported in government documents.³⁵² In some cases, school officials appear not to have recognized a responsibility to report student deaths to provincial vital statistics officials, meaning that these records may also be deficient.³⁵³

As part of its work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has established a National Residential School Student Death Register. The creation of this register marks the first effort in Canadian history to properly record the number of students who died in residential schools. The register is made of up three sub-registers:

- 1) the Register of Confirmed Deaths of Named Residential School Students (the “Named Register”);
- 2) the Register of Confirmed Deaths of Unnamed Residential School Students (the “Unnamed Register”); and
- 3) the Register of Deaths that Require Further Investigation (to determine if they should be placed on either the Named or Unnamed register).

A January 2015 statistical analysis of the Named Register for the period from 1867 to 2000 identified 2,040 deaths. The same analysis of a combination of the Named and Unnamed registers identified 3,201 reported deaths. The greatest number of these deaths (1,328 on the Named Register and 2,434 on the Named and Unnamed registers) took place prior to 1940. Graph 3 shows the overall death rate per 1,000 students for the residential schools during this period (figures are based on information in the combined Named and Unnamed registers).

This graph suggests that the peak of the health crisis in the schools occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also shows that the death rate remained high until the 1950s.

The death rates for Aboriginal children in the residential schools were far higher than those experienced by members of the general Canadian population. Graph 4 compares the death rate per 1,000 of the general population of Canadian children aged five to fourteen with the death rates per 1,000 of the Named Register and the Named and Unnamed registers combined. (Given the limitations in Statistics Canada’s historical data, the death rates are provided as five-year averages.) As can be seen, until the 1950s Aboriginal children in residential schools died at a far higher rate than school-aged children in the general population. It is only in the 1950s that the residential school death rates declined to a level comparable to that of the general school-aged population. As late as the 1941–45 period, the Named and Unnamed Combined residential school death rate was 4.90 times higher than the general death rate. In the 1960s, even though the residential school death