

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE VISITOR OF THE DISTRICT SCHOOLS OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

(PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.)

The Visitor of Schools in conformity with the requirements of the law, submits to the Board of Education for the information of the Legislature, a Report on the present state of the District Schools, and the progress of Education generally, throughout the Island during the past year; the following view is exhibited, as correctly as possible being the result of information derived from personal observation.

In comparing the Returns of Schools throughout the Island, generally, for the year 1843, with those for the year previous—it will be observed, that an increase has taken place in the aggregate, although a diminution appears in a few instances in some Townships in the number of the Schools.

There are 92 District Schools now in operation attended by 3864 Scholars, which compared with the Returns of the year 1842, shews an increase of three Schools, and Sixty Scholars. The District School Teachers have received in the past year from public aid £814 8s., and the people contributed £4140.

There are in all, including the Inferior Schools, Female Schools, the National and other Schools, in the Town of Charlottetown, School attached to St. Andrew's College, and the Central Academy—a total of 115 Schools, teaching 4690 Scholars; towards the support of which, the people pay £5175, and the Public Treasury £1087 8s.

Although those, from various causes, are not all in successful operation—many of them as will more particularly appear from the appended details, are conducted with ability and advantage.

The destitution, and deficiencies in the existing means of Education, may be considered under two heads. The first, where no attempt at Education of any kind has been made, and where not the semblance of a provision for supplying it exists. The second, where an attempt to educate has been made, but where the instruction has been so imperfect, as to afford no results of actual value.

An enquiry directed to the ascertainment of the numbers in the different Townships unable to read and write, was instituted during a tour of inspection of the Schools, but from the tedious nature of such an enquiry, and the difficulty of applying the usual means of investigation to populous and extensive settlements—the number in the state of inability to read and write, has not been ascertained with exactness, nor will any more accurate knowledge on the subject be likely obtained, until such time as this head be authorized to be included in the returns of the Census.

In illustration of the foregoing—one or two statistical memoranda, may be instanced. In two continental Townships, out of 210 Children above 6 years of age, 97 only could read. In another settlement—a section of a Township, the number of Children between the ages of 6 and 14 is twenty-eight, of these, fifteen cannot read and are not learning, and twenty-two cannot write and are not learning.

In another Township numbering fifty families, the adults who can write are but 29. These examples may be held to indicate the state of many other settlements, apparently no better furnished with the means of Education.

Although these statistics are thus of necessity incomplete, the instances adduced have however established the following facts. That the want of instruction is yet considerable, and that the people in some cases from indifference, do not, and in others from poverty cannot, procure the services of Teachers for themselves. That there are 43 populous stations at which Schools are required, and where none now exist, and 11 less populous Stations, also in want of Schools, and where an inferior or preparatory class of them might be usefully opened, because in these, it would not be possible to assemble so many pupils together, as to form a regular, or a common District School. And that there are altogether a large proportion of Children within the educational age, who do not attend any school.

The disparity in the efficiency or state of many of the Schools is attributable in a great degree, to insufficient attendance, and this insufficient attendance takes place under a variety of circumstances.

1. The School itself exists only at certain seasons of the year; at other seasons the Teacher finding it his interest to betake himself to the more lucrative employment that labour in the fields offers. This occurs in old as well as in new small settlements, but the instances are rare.

2. The School is by much exertion, and amid some discouragement on the part of the Teacher, continued throughout the year; but the attendance of many of the pupils is only for a portion of the year. The parents cannot pay the fees for a whole year's instruction, or they cannot in the Summer season want the assistance of their children in the fields. The remedy in such cases as these, is to be found perhaps in nothing but a bettering in the worldly condition of the parents—an opening of their minds to the value of Education, and a conviction—and many in the circumstances described, have never yet been convinced of the necessity of making some sacrifice to promote the proper education of their children; and to the Ministers of Religion must we look for that instruction, as well as for those special admonitions on the subject, which will supply the best correction of the evil.

In many instances, a culpable indifference to education exists with regard to female members of Families. Many imagine that these have comparatively but little need of education, and consequently the proportion who attend school is comparatively small, many parents who make no small efforts to send their sons to school, are in that respect totally neglectful of their daughters.

Although no measures have been accomplished to wean the Aborigines from their wandering habits, by giving them a legal right in the soil, and thus attach them to a home, the attempts which have been made to afford them the means of education have been thus far successful. The prejudice which this tribe has been known to entertain against learning to read or write any other language than their own, appears to be gradually giving way, and the value of our rudimentary branches, is now beginning to be known and felt among them. The provision which the Legislature has laudably made for the free instruction of Micmac Children, is paving the way for a more general diffusion of intelligence among them. Although from their habits, it is impossible to ensure that certainty and regularity of attendance on School, essential to their improvement, the progress which nevertheless has been made by three boys and a girl, who have given a desultory attendance at different schools is very pleasing, and proves the capacity of the Aborigines for receiving instruction; this disposition to learn has been fostered and encouraged, by the benevolence of the gentlemen who are in the Commission for Indian Affairs, in making them gifts of Books, Stationery, &c. The eldest boy has attained a correct knowledge of the elements of English Grammar, and the higher rules of Arithmetic. He would make a creditable appearance in a higher seminary, in which it is to be hoped he will yet be placed.

It did not appear necessary to occupy any further space at this time in giving a detailed account of all those schools minutely described in the report of the past year, and in the state of which no remarkable difference was found this year to exist. In instances where any were found deserving of especial notice, from greater extension, or where from any cause they were found to be inefficient, all such as well as those put in operation this year, will be found described below.

Abstract of Returns of District, Acadian, and Inferior Schools, receiving Legislative aid, for the year 1843.

TOWNSHIPS	NAMES OF TEACHERS.	NO. OF SCHOLARS.	DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL	TOWNSHIPS	NAMES OF TEACHERS.	NO. OF SCHOLARS.	DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOLS.
1	Stanislaus Perry	36	Acadian.	34	Robert Robertson	40	
2	Francis Buot	35	do.		Robert Barry	47	
5	(a) Herbert Bell	48	1st Class District School		E. J. M. Cormack	36	
6	John Ronayne	37			Donald M'Leod	48	
7	(b) Neil M'Kinnon	37		35	(f) Patrick M'Quade	46	
	James H. Fitzgerald	46			Angus M'Leod	46	
8	Robert Small	36		37	(g) Patrick M'Quade	37	
11	A. C. Beckford	38		38	Donald M'Kinnon	36	
	Thomas Key	35			Joseph M'Kay	19	Primary.
13	J. Johnston	42		40	(h) John Mackay	33	Dis. Schools.
14	Dubois Smith	33		41	John Keenan	36	
15	Antoine Perry	35	Acadian	43	(i) Patrick Sweeney	35	
	J. Arsnean	36		44	John M'Neill	46	
16	John M'Kinnon	39	Dis. 1st Class.	45	James Stewart	40	
17	(bb) Sebastian Davison	50			Edmund Shea	38	
	Fidelle Gaudet	36	Acadian.		John Banks	19	Primary.
18	(c) John Le Page	30	Dis. 1st Class.	47	(kk) Corn. Harrington	38	Dis. 1st Class
	(cc) Alex. Rae	38			Patrick Kavanagh	29	Primary ditto.
	William Speedie	36	Do. 2d Class.		Duncan Robertson	45	Dis. 1st Class.
	John Taylor	35	Do. 1st Class.		Paul M'Donald	38	
19	Neil Bethune	46		48	J. Butler	58	
	J. B. Newcomb	47			James Maclean	46	
20	Donald Livingston	30	Do. 2d Class	49	James Mackenna	42	
	John M'Lauchlin	39	Do. 1st Class.		Alex. M'Neill	40	
	Innes Reid	46			James Douglas	40	
	(d) Murdoch M'Leod	36			Archibald M'Neill	38	
21	Arch. M'Kinnon	62		50	John Humphrey	19	Inferior School
22	(e) Edward Hill	49		51	Patrick Fitzgerald	46	Dis. 1st Class.
24	Duncan M'Donald	19	Primary.	52	Nathaniel M'Laren	left	
	Alex. Gallant	35	Acadian.		John Stewart	36	
	B. Lefrance	37	do.	53	James Stewart	35	
25	J. H. Knilds	42	2d Class.		William Ross	50	
26	Samuel Warwick	47	Dis. 1st Class.		Donald Graham	46	
	W. J. Pilcher	36			Donald Kelly	19	Primary
27	Allan Stewart	35			Alexander M'Donald	47	Dis. 1st Class.
28	David Thomson	36			Angus Martin	left	
	Thomas Munro	48		58	(l) John M'Lennan jr	46	Dis. 2d Class.
	Alex. Macdonald	45			John M'Sween	50	Dis. 1st Class.
29	Jas. C. B. Bullpitt	43		59	(m) William Lamont	48	
	Lachlan Campbell	43		60	(o) Donald Lamont	37	
	Elias Roberts	39		61	Donald M'Quarrie	39	
30	Mal. M'Kenzie	39		62	Neil Bethune	46	2d Class
	Ewen Lamont	36			Malcolm M'Neill	38	1st Class
31	Malcolm Darrach	48		63	John Stewart	48	
	Charles M'Donald	40		64	John Brooks	49	Dis. 2d Class.
32	John M'Donald	45			John M'Donald	39	1st Class.
	William Dodd	30		65	(p) Donald Shaw	47	
	John Beaton	38			(q) Donald Livingston	40	
33	Colin M'Lennan	37			(r) John M'Eachern	45	
	Alex. Maclean	46		67	John Sinclair	40	
	Daniel Scott	36			Malcolm M'Donald	51	

Charlottetown	(s) Walter Whelan,	45	1st Class.
Charlottetown Royalty	Alex. M'Cabe,	32	do.
Georgetown	(t) John Arbuckle,	50	2d Class.
Princetown	E. J. Blanchard,	40	do.

To which add the School attached to the College—Central Academy—National—Infant, and three Female Schools in Charlottetown, and four Schools not drawing public money, numbering together 490 Scholars, gives a total of Four thousand six hundred and ninety of both sexes receiving public instruction in this Island.

GENERAL RESULT.

No. of Schools in Queen's County, 62—Do. Prince County, 30—Do. King's, 25—total Schools, 117. Do. Scholars, 4,690. Amount paid by people, £5,175. Do. by Treasury, £1,087 8s.—total. £6,262 8s.

METHODS OF TEACHING, DISCIPLINE, BRANCHES TAUGHT, &c.

The utility of the monitorial system has been sufficiently tested, and its advantages acknowledged. It is occasionally employed in the schools of the Island, whenever it is judicious and practicable to do so, but the exclusive employment of this system, notwithstanding the opinions of some who are desirous of making it obtain in all our schools, is quite impracticable in country schools from obvious causes. In numerous attended schools, it is found necessary for the purpose of keeping all the children duly and regularly employed, and of allowing the master to exercise due surveillance over his charge:—the want of Books and necessary apparatus in general is found to be a continual impediment. The Elliptical method of teaching is frequently resorted to, and has several advantages, in connexion with the mutual instruction plan.

There are no schools established on the Normal system professedly—a system perfected by the incorporation and combination of all that is most valuable in every other.

In regard to discipline, the Master is always instructed to exercise all control and superintendance over his charge, both in and out of school. Emulation is encouraged by places in the class, and occasional prizes of Books, Stationery, &c., distributed at examinations. Lessons or tasks are for the most part provided for their employment at home. Corporal punishment for offences is still resorted to, but in many schools only in extreme cases. The opinion is fast gaining ground, that the most effective kind of punishment is that which is chiefly addressed to the moral sentiments.

The proportion in which the children acquire the different branches is, found to be as follows: about two-thirds of the pupils learn to write and cipher, about a third learn grammar, and not more than a tenth any of the higher branches. There is more attention paid than formerly to the sense of what is read.

The improvement of many schools is retarded for the want of the requisite books and stationery, the high prices of these putting them beyond the reach of the pupils, two or three of whom, may be sometimes found clubbing about one book.

GENERAL REMARKS.

With a view to remedy and supply the destitution and deficiencies existing, the Visitor would respectfully submit for the consideration of the Board—that a number of common schools corresponding with the wants of the inhabitants would be ensured by the division of the whole Island into School Districts, and that the provision for a partial imposition of assessment be continued in the law. That a maximum and minimum salary be provided for Teachers to be paid half-yearly, and with a reference not alone to the Branches they are capable of teaching, but also to the variety and utility of the branches they really do teach in School.

That in each of the County Towns at least, a superior school, say a Grammar School, be maintained, to serve in some measure as a Normal School, where candidates for schools may be familiarized with the mode of communicating instruction in the most dexterous and correct manner. That it should be the duty of the Board to regulate the school hours, and frame a code of discipline for the government of the country schools, to be placed in a conspicuous part of the School-room.

That it would be advisable to adopt the following suggestion of the Central Board of Education at Halifax from their Report of the last year. A plan similar to which was recommended by the Visitor some years ago.

"If in places where permanent Schools cannot be sustained, two or three well qualified Teachers were to be encouraged by reasonable aid from the School Grant to establish on a steady plan circulating schools, dividing the Teachers attendance by an arrangement previously settled on, among three or four of the settlements in the same County where Education is most needed, and such itinerating Schools may be necessary, giving to each, such portion of time as may be practicable and most convenient."

That several poor Settlements at present scarcely able to keep a School open throughout the whole year, might maintain schools during the Winter months, if encouraged to do so; that it would be advisable to grant public aid in certain cases to Schools taught for a half year only; and lastly, that an increase be made in the slender salaries of all District Schoolmasters.

Whatever be the defects yet existing in the system, these should not be held to depreciate or detract from the merits of the improvements already effected; none can fail in discerning the good effects of many of the provisions of the Law upon the education of the people—a law, which it is to be hoped, is only the prelude to a more comprehensive measure from the Legislature, than any yet obtained, in favour of general instruction.

Charlottetown, January 31st, 1844.

JOHN MACNEILL.

(a.) The School at this station has been conducted two years by the present Teacher, and hitherto with success; it is numerously attended, affording instruction to a few adults as well as to the juvenile part of the inhabitants of the two settlements, that unite in supporting it. Reading and Orthography is taught on an improved and judicious method, a few learn Grammar, and the higher rules of Arithmetic. The School-house is commodious, and the inhabitants are laudably contributing much of their means to the support of this seminary.

(b.) The only occasion on which this School was visited, was at a season when almost all the pupils were unable, from the prevalence of sickness, to attend; the few who were present were examined, and the result showed, that mere reading was the only branch in which any degree of proficiency was apparent. The examination, however, of so small a number, could afford no fair criterion of the general state of the School. It must be observed, that some dissatisfaction was expressed by the Trustees at the inefficient mode, in which one of the branches was taught; but as the Visitor had every reason to conclude, that all the branches were taught according to the best of the Teacher's ability, he does not deem himself called on to offer any further remark on the subject.

(b.) A regular, and it is to be hoped—a permanent School has at length been established in this populous District, and gives promise of great usefulness. The higher branches of English are taught with success, on a judicious method. In Latin, Geography, Mensuration, a few are learning and making progress. The School-house is neat and well finished and furnished.

(c.) This School having been minutely described in preceding Reports, it is only necessary to add, that it continues to be taught by the Teacher above named, and with that ability and success, which have attended his instructions in this District.

(c.) It may be necessary, in alluding to the state and character of this School, to adduce the testimony of the supporters thereof, to the benefits they profess to derive from its establishment—a testimony which is corroborated by the efficient state in which the School was found at the different visitations. The progress made in the ordinary branches of Education, and which are taught therein, was, upon the whole decidedly favorable; not a few who, on entering the School, were altogether unable to write and cast up Accounts, are now capable of doing so, while others who could not read at all, or at best but imperfectly have made very marked improvement.

(d.) Although in this School nothing beyond the inferior branches are learned, it is nevertheless a useful School, in a locality where from the paucity of the inhabitants, one of a superior character could not be maintained. The Teacher is an exemplary character, paying attention to the secular instruction, as well as to the morals of the Children committed to his care. The School-house is not sufficiently spacious, and its unfinished state renders it uncomfortable.

(e.) In the state of this School, a fair average improvement has taken place, the pupils generally commenced in their first stage, at the opening of this School. Frequent complaints have been preferred by the subscribers to this School, respecting the irregular attendance of the Master, and the brief duration of his daily hours of teaching, but as the Visitor is not authorized by law to fix or prescribe the School hours, he can only report the dissatisfaction, existing in this District in common with several others, and the necessity for an enactment, regulating the School hours at different seasons of the year. The School-house is not in a sufficiently finished condition.

(f.) The School established in this settlement has been opened above half a year. The Children with an exception or two, are yet learning the primary branches, the same cause of dissatisfaction exists here as in the School immediately preceding.

(g.) This School in consequence of a vacation occurring thereat, while the Visitor was on his tour, was examined but once since the present Teacher succeeded to his charge. The method the Teacher employed was judicious, and the progress upon the whole as great as could be looked for.

(h.) The Schools at these two stations are well taught, and notwithstanding many disadvantages, not the least of which are insufficient School-houses, the pupils continue to make creditable progress. In both schools are two or three Boys of a tender age, who display a remarkable talent for Arithmetic—it is to be hoped that their parents will afford them, all the opportunities and encouragement in their power, to prosecute the science for which they display so great an aptitude.

(k.) After having been a considerable time without a school, one was opened in this part of the Township in the course of last Summer, it is so far a promising school. All the ordinary elementary branches are taught—instruction in the important departments of Orthography, and Reading, are communicated in the most approved and successful manner. In the higher branches of English, no progress of consequence has been yet made. The improvement in Arithmetic and Writing is so far correct and pleasing.

(k.) On the occasion of the last visitation of this School, it was found that a minority of the subscribers had withdrawn their children, being dissatisfied with the Teacher's discharge of his duties. On an investigation taking place—it appeared that in the year previous, some grounds and causes for such complaints had existed, but since then the School has been conducted with greater regularity and success. The Teacher has not had the benefit of much experience—which may in a great measure account for the dissatisfaction, but he is fully capable of imparting instruction in the ordinary branches required. The settlers on this part of the Township have always made praiseworthy exertions to support a School, and the youth in general have received a fair share of education. The School is now numerously attended.

(l.) This is one of the few Schools of the 2d or higher class under the existing law; it has been conducted with considerable success, and the improvement is as great as could reasonably be expected under a Teacher of but one year's experience, surrounded too, as the School has been with many of the difficulties and embarrassments, too well known in remote Country Schools, the usual English elementary branches are taught, a careful foundation was laid in particular in learning reading and spelling correctly. The station where the school was taught last year, it is to be regretted, is now destitute. The teacher having opened School in another part of the Township.

(m.) The School of this District was found closed at the time of the visitation of the neighbouring schools, and has not yet been examined since the present Teacher succeeded to the charge.

(n.) The School at this station is numerously attended, and although not in a high state of improvement, proves of much benefit to this community, who never before enjoyed the advantages of a regular School. Many of the pupils have rapidly learned to read although not correctly yet. The School-house was incomplete when last visited, and not adequately furnished with desks.

(p.) The Teachers of the year preceding are still at these stations and continue discharging their duties faithfully. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic are principally taught, in the latter branch especially, several are well advanced, a class in each School had made considerable progress in English Grammar, but their uncertain attendance operates against their improvement. In the latter School, Gaelic reading is also taught with success.

(r.) This School has been conducted efficiently, and the Scholars shew more than a common degree of intelligence and avidity to learn; under the present Teacher the school does not present so high a state of improvement as it formerly did, this is owing to the withdrawal of the best scholars, those remaining are not yet so far advanced.

(s.) Frequent opportunities have been afforded of witnessing the benefits derived by a considerable number of the children of this Town from attending this School. It imparts instruction to about 45 children on an average annually in the ordinary branches of common school education, it is deserving of being sustained and encouraged by the Legislature and the public. It is the only school receiving aid as a District School at present open in Charlottetown.

(t.) The best criterion of the flourishing condition of this school, will be found in the fact of its extension and enlargement, both in the number of its pupils, and in the variety of the branches taught therein. From this increase, the services of an assistant or additional Teacher, were found to be necessary. The School numbered at the last examination fifty pupils, learning the ordinary rudimentary branches, and Grammar, Geography, practical Mathematics, are taught on the most approved and successful system. That the School may be conducted with the greater efficiency, and prove of additional benefit to the inhabitants of Georgetown and vicinity, by affording instruction to an additional number of scholars—it would in the opinion of the Visitor, be advisable to make Legislative provision for an additional Teacher in this seminary. It only remains to advert to the National School in Charlottetown—an institution which has not degenerated in character or utility, under the present Teacher. It is a school deserving of countenance and support from the public, affording cheap, and in several instances gratuitous instruction to Children in indigent circumstances. Along with the usual course of instruction, particular attention is paid to the morals and behaviour of the pupils.