

May 18, 1951.

For General H. A. Young,  
Commissioner N.W.T.  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Major General Young:

Re: Frank Abel, Age 2 years  
Treaty Indian

I just returned yesterday from a short holiday and learned the above infant had died May 14th. with diagnosis of acute gastro-enteritis due to arsenical poisoning. I have no doubt this diagnosis is correct but last night performed an autopsy and have sent out several organs to the Laboratory in Edmonton for examination and confirmation. An inquest will be held May 23rd. by which time I expect the results will be back.

This is a very unfortunate occurrence and something we have, as you know, been trying to guard against. I feel the only danger is in the Spring when the snow melts and the run-off, in certain areas, is highly contaminated with arsenic. While the inquest has not yet been held, from my own enquiries I believe this family was either using snow and ice melted down or scooping up run-off water from the surface of the ice despite being warned against it.

As Medical Health Officer I took the following measures before run-off occurred.

1. The town was placarded with warning signs.
2. Large advertisements were placed in both local newspapers.
3. The Indian Agent (Mr. Kirkby) was asked to personally tell all Indians living on Latham Island not to use snow water for any purposes as it was highly poisonous.

I believe the above measures were sufficient to protect the population against arsenic poisoning, which they were last year, and this is the first case we have had.

All danger is practically over at the present time as the snow has completely disappeared. In addition, since the above death, the Indians on Latham Island have been supplied with barrels filled by water from the town system.

In view of the above precautions and the fact that the hazard, in my opinion, is practically over I do not expect any further cases.

Faithfully yours,  
(sgd.) O. L. Stanton M.D.  
Medical Health Officer