

CURED

Canadian kids used to get sick and die from diseases you never have to worry about. Why? Because we beat them!

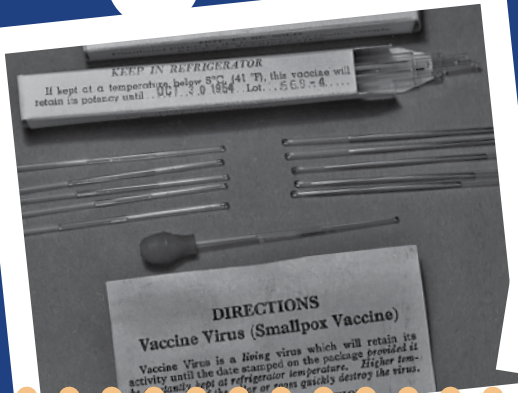
SMALLPOX

Europeans brought "the speckled monster" with them in the 1600s. The most obvious sign of smallpox was blisters that burst and left scars. Wave after wave killed millions of Indigenous people (and many settlers) throughout North America because their bodies had no defence against it. By 1765, people in New France had started exposing themselves to a sick person so they caught a milder version of smallpox that they were more likely able to fight off.

PREVENTION: Starting in the 1800s, vaccines slowed smallpox down. After some nasty outbreaks in the 1920s, cases of smallpox in Canada fell to zero in the 1940s.

THE UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO'S CONNAUGHT
LABORATORIES PRODUCED
AND IMPROVED THE SMALLPOX
VACCINE THAT WAS USED
AROUND THE WORLD.

The Legacy Project, Samoff, Pasteur



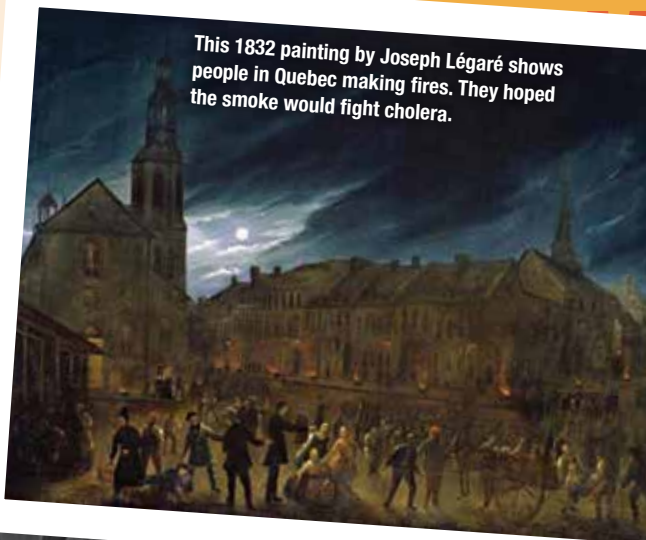
IN 1838 AND 1839, THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY
SAVED COUNTLESS LIVES WITH A HUGE PROGRAM TO VACCINATE
PEOPLE IN THE VAST TERRITORY IT CLAIMED CONTROL OVER,
RUPERT'S LAND, AGAINST SMALLPOX.

CHOLERA

There's no nice way to describe where cholera (KOL-er-ah) comes from: garbage and poop. In the early 1830s, cholera swept through crowded places where human waste got into the water. The government tried to keep it out by holding (quarantining) people from Ireland and England at Grosse Île, an island near Quebec City. In unhealthy conditions, thousands caught the disease and died there.

PREVENTION: Cities cleaned up the streets and improved drains so water and waste wouldn't mix. Cholera is pretty much unheard-of in Canada now.

A PERSON KNOWN AS A CARRIER CAN HAVE A DISEASE BUT NOT REALIZE IT. THAT MEANS THEY CAN EASILY SPREAD IT WITHOUT MEANING TO.



TUBERCULOSIS

In 1867, the year Canada became a country, this disease was its number one cause of death. TB, as it's often called, attacked the lungs and other organs. Patients who were white were often moved to a kind of hospital, known as a sanatorium, where they wouldn't infect anyone else. The government also set up TB hospitals just for Indigenous people. These were often old buildings with staff who were poorly trained and badly paid. "Indian hospitals" as they were called then, treated other conditions, too, keeping Indigenous people out of better hospitals.

CURE: By the 1970s, TB had largely disappeared from white communities. X-rays caught patients early so they could be given medicine before they became infectious.

A doctor treats an Inuit boy in northern Quebec for tuberculosis, 1946.

MEASLES

Your grandparents or even your parents might remember their school friends getting measles. It used to spread like crazy, leaving kids feeling they had the world's worst cold along with a nasty red rash. Although it was sometimes very serious and could cause lasting damage, it was usually only deadly to very young children.

PREVENTION: Since kids started getting vaccinated in the 1960s, cases of measles in Canada have dropped by 99%.

IN 1907, A RESEARCHER DISCOVERED THAT DISEASES SUCH AS TUBERCULOSIS AND MEASLES WERE KILLING BETWEEN ONE-QUARTER AND ONE-THIRD OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS.



A boy in Quebec gets his measles vaccination shot, 1959.



TORONTO'S DR. LEONE FARRELL CAME UP WITH SOMETHING CALLED THE ROCKING METHOD. IT WAS A BIG ADVANCE IN THE CREATION OF VACCINES FOR PERTUSSIS, CHOLERA AND POLIO.

DIPHTHERIA

This was the biggest killer of young children in Canada by 1913. Thick goo formed in the back of an infected kid's throat and gradually cut off the airway. Known as "the strangler," diphtheria (diff-THEER-ee-ya) killed about 2,000 Canadian kids a year. In 1914, Dr. John FitzGerald built a lab at the University of Toronto to produce vaccines. It would eventually become Connaught Laboratories.

PREVENTION: The 1926 diphtheria vaccine was the first just for kids. It cut Canadian cases of this awful disease from 9,000 in 1924 to just a few a year now.

WHOOPING COUGH

Kids who get this disease can cough so long and hard that they faint or vomit. (The official name is pertussis. The common name comes from the deep gasping sound the sick person makes.) In the early 1900s, hundreds of young Canadian children, especially babies, used to die from whooping cough every year. Those who survived could end up with damage to their lungs or brain.

CURE: Canadian scientists at Toronto's Connaught Laboratories helped develop and improve the pertussis vaccine, which drove down the numbers of infections and deaths. Now known as Sanofi Pasteur, the company sends the vaccine from Canada to help kids all over the world. Whooping cough is rare in Canada now.

POLIO

Few diseases brought more terror to Canadian families than polio (POE-lee-yo), “the crippler.” It first appeared here in 1910, but starting in the 1920s, rolled east across Canada from British Columbia and Alberta. It mainly hit kids under 10. Polio is caused by a virus that only affects people. At first it infects without doing much harm. But if it invades the nervous system it can damage nerves in the spinal cord that connect the brain and muscles, weakening victims or leaving them paralyzed — unable to move at all. School-age kids infected with polio had higher chances of the virus damaging their spinal cord. In an unfair twist, polio became more of a threat as communities and homes became cleaner and healthier. Polio struck every part of the country, right up to the Arctic.

PREVENTION: Canadian scientists at Connaught Laboratories once again worked on a vaccine. In 1955 the first polio vaccine was proven to prevent “the crippler.” By 1965 there were almost no polio cases in Canada. We were one of the first countries to completely wipe out the disease.



Kids in Toronto sit outside a door with a polio quarantine sign on it, 1947.

**WHEN POLIO HIT A FAMILY,
THEY HAD TO PUT A SIGN ON
THE DOOR TELLING PEOPLE
TO STAY AWAY.**



An important treatment for polio's nastiest effects was this iron lung. During Ontario's worst polio epidemic in 1937, 27 iron lungs were hurriedly built in the basement of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, saving many lives. During the 1953 epidemic, one Winnipeg hospital had 90 iron lungs running at once.

Mark Kalluak, an Inuk from what is now Nunavut, had to leave home when he was six for polio treatment. He was flown to hospital in Winnipeg, where he stayed for four long years. He had lasting damage to his arms and hands, but was still overjoyed to get home in 1952. “Oh, how truly wonderful it was!”

