



United Church Residential School Records

Information on Regional Archives Holdings and How to Access Them

Updated: November 2021

Commitments of The United Church of Canada to Indigenous Peoples

The United Church continues to develop and implement reconciliation calls. In addition to the guidance of the “Calls to the Church” (2018) by Indigenous Elders, the Church has been guided by and seeks to implement:

- The United Church apologies (1986 and 1998) for the impact of colonialism and Indian Residential Schools
- The Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Report and Calls to Action (2015)
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2016)

Statement on Records Held in the United Church of Canada Archives

The United Church of Canada has published a [Response to the Kamloops Residential School Graves Discovery](#) (June 4, 2021). It includes information on the national network of United Church archives and our collective role in reconciliation work.

How Are the Archives kept?

It is the mandate of the Pacific Mountain Regional Archives ("Regional Archives") to preserve records and make them accessible. The archives are kept in archival enclosures and in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment, to ensure their permanent preservation. They are secured in locked storage to keep personal information safe and to guard against theft.

How many records are there at the Regional Archives?

Residential school records

Over 5,000 documents in our holdings were identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as being relevant to residential schools. As of May 2015, we submitted digital copies of all known and identified documents to the TRC, along with fielded data to assist with retrieval, per TRC specifications. The digitized records now reside with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR).

We are committed to forwarding copies of any other relevant material to the NCTR if and as it emerges. We have also begun undertaking a similar discovery process regarding our records relating to Day Schools.

Since the TRC's work concluded, the Archives has entered a partnership with the Indian



THE ARCHIVES

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Residential School History & Dialogue Centre (IRSHDC) at UBC. We have provided digital copies of all photographs and will continue working with IRSHDC on further digitization projects and exhibits to promote the work of reconciliation.

Accessing Residential School Records

The United Church has maintained a policy of "open archives" for records relating to residential schools, even prior to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (2007) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008-2015).

We continue to provide access in several ways:

- In-person, offering a place of sanctuary and reflection in our Vancouver Downtown Eastside location
- Providing research services for those unable to visit in person
- Serving as a liaison with our national United Church Archives and partner organization, IRSHDC

The Regional Archives actively supports accessibility for all – in particular, Indigenous peoples and other cultural groups represented in the Archives.

Here are several specific ways for researchers to gain access to residential school holdings and related information:

- Email the Regional Archivist: bgalston@united-church.ca or phone 604-431-0434 / 1-800-934-0434, ext. 6358, to provide details of your research so the archivist can assist you.
- [Consult the NCTR archives](#) for the most comprehensive collections, church records, and federal government records related to residential schools.
- [The Children Remembered](#) is a website originally created in 2010 in preparation for TRC events, to make archival photographs and school histories available.
- Consult the [Indian Residential School History & Dialogue Centre](#) to gain access to digital objects from many partner organizations, including The United Church of Canada.
- Consult the national United Church Archives' [Reference Guide to Records Relating to Residential Schools](#) held in Toronto, or the Guide to Residential School Records at the Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives (Vancouver office) on this website.

Access to Personal Information

Our ability to provide access is subject to the requirements of B.C.'s *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* and other legislation. It is important that we follow the requirements already in place to safeguard every individual's information.

Remembering the children of residential schools and keeping them at the heart of our work, we assist survivors, former students, and family members searching for information about

themselves or their loved ones. The research and support in these matters is delicate and sensitive; we deal with requests on an individual basis, as best we can.

Decisions about providing access are not made solely by the archivist. In the United Church, our reconciliation work is guided by the wisdom of residential school survivors and the Indigenous Church. If you require access to personal information, please email the Archives so we can forward it to the parties who can review your request and ensure respectful protection of privacy and community-led decision-making.

Student Names, Missing Children or Burial Site Information

The United Church Archives has contributed research to the TRC's [Missing Children and Unmarked Burials report](#) and to the NCTR's [National Student Memorial Register](#).

Please contact the Archives if you have any questions about student names, missing children, or burial site information. We will do our best to find the information or connect you with those who can.