

Proactive Disclosure Framework

Honouring Truth, Protecting Privacy, Advancing Reconciliation

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) holds a sacred responsibility to care for the records, memories, and lived truths of the Indian residential school system. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), thousands of Survivors made the deliberate, courageous choice to protect their history by sharing their statements. They entrusted their voices to this archive with clear, explicit agreement on how their Truths would be preserved and accessed. Guided by their informed consent, the NCTR fulfills a sacred mandate to protect these lived experiences.

Today, the NCTR serves as a centralized steward, and cares for more than four million records. This includes first-hand statements, photographs, medical files, and school attendance sheets – bringing a historically fragmented past into a unified, definitive, and accessible collective memory.

Pillar 1: Indigenous Governance and Sacred Stewardship of Lived Truths

Spiritual and Cultural Governance

The NCTR does not own this history, we are its caretaker. Survivor voices, lived experiences, and Indigenous laws are at the heart of every decision we make, and our work is closely guided by the NCTR's Survivors Circle and Governing Circle.

Self-Determination

Thousands of survivors who shared their oral histories and statements with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) or with the NCTR remain in control of their own histories. They have the right to decide how their information is shared, how long it is available, and whether they remain anonymous. Survivors, or someone authorized to act for them, can review, and receive copies of their personal records **at no cost**.

Access That Respects Well-Being

We recognize that many Survivors and families have waited a long time to access their records, and Survivor requests are our highest priority. We carefully review records before sharing them with requestors. This is not to create barriers or delay access; it is a trauma-informed approach that helps protect the well-being of Survivors and respects the privacy of other Survivors and families whose information may also appear in the same records.

Pillar 2: Openness and Protecting Sacred Privacy

Open Access to Truth

The NCTR believes historical records should be as open and accessible as possible, within the bounds of applicable access and privacy laws, to help address the secrecy of the Indian Residential School system.

The NCTR and the University of Manitoba's Access and Privacy Offices work together to make these records available to Survivors, their families, communities, researchers, and the public through our proactive disclosure process. However, access is not entirely unrestricted. The commitment to transparency must be carefully balanced against the potential harm of public disclosure, ensuring that sensitive personal privacy, cultural protocols, and sacred statements are protected.

Care for Sacred Records

The records in our care are not only facts, but they are also the lived experiences of Survivors, and they are treated with the utmost care and respect. To ensure protection and prevent harm or re-traumatization, access to sensitive records follow community-led guidelines. These guidelines ensure that all research, learning, and education remain safe, respectful, and culturally grounded.

Pillar 3: Legislative and Transparent Authority

Navigating Colonial Law with Indigenous Values

The NCTR is required to follow laws such as *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) and *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA) in relation to its holdings. At the same time, we apply these laws through the principles and purpose of *The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Act* (NCTRA), ensuring our decisions reflect Indigenous values and our commitment to sharing the Truths.

Responsible Stewardship

Under Section 7(1) of the NCTRA, the Executive Director of the NCTR may disclose personal or health information within the records when it is necessary to fulfill the NCTR's mandate of truth-sharing. Under Sections 8, the Executive Director, working closely with the Governing Circle and Survivor Circle, may also proactively disclose or restrict information when appropriate. This balanced approach protects sensitive information from inappropriate disclosure while helping Survivors, families, and communities access the information they need.

Pillar 4: Community-Led Readiness and Healing

Community Healing

The NCTR endeavors to work with Survivors, families, and communities regarding NCTR record release to help with the work of Missing Children and Unmarked Burials so families may find their loved ones. This relationship building provides families and communities time to properly honour their loved ones, hold ceremonies and put mental health, cultural, and community supports in place prior to this information becoming public.

Pillar 5: Trauma-Informed Stewardship

Protecting Survivors and Their Truths

The NCTR prohibits unauthorized downloading, copying, and the transfer of records from its database to help prevent re-traumatization, misinformation, and the inappropriate use of records and Survivors' experiences.

All records and database services are provided to Survivors **at no cost**, and by doing so, the NCTR demonstrates its commitment to transparency, accountability, and Survivor-centered service while also helping to prevent Survivor data exploitation.

Pillar 6: The NCTR's Commitment to Survivors

The NCTR provides all records and database services to Survivors **free of charge**, defending against data exploitation and upholding financial transparency.

- **Direct Access**
Survivors can request information and access their Indian Residential School records directly through the NCTR portal.
<https://nctr.ca/archives-and-collections/how-to-access-records/>
- **Personal Requests**
Survivors can access records or request a copy of their personal statement by downloading and completing the NCTR Survivor Inquiry Form
https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2019-Survivor-Inquiry-Form_revised.pdf
- **Family and Intergenerational Requests**
Intergenerational Survivors accessing a family member's records or statement can complete the NCTR Third Party Inquiry Form. If the Survivor is still living, their explicit, documented consent is required to safeguard their privacy.
https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NCTR_Third_Party_Inquiry_Form.pdf
- **Proactive Disclosure Requests**
To request a copy of a record in the NCTR database that is not publicly available, you must submit a Proactive Disclosure Request. These are reviewed and processed based on the purpose and scope of the request. Receiving these requests enables us to better understand the needs of communities, educators, and researchers. Please forward these requests to NCTR Records. nctrrecords@umanitoba.ca

Contact the NCTR Archives Department

If you require support navigating these forms or have questions regarding your records, please contact us directly:

- Email: NCTRRecords@umanitoba.ca
- Phone: 204-474-6069
- Toll Free: 1-855-415-4534

A discussion on accessing records at the NCTR can be found here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6UvJyOYUDM&list=PLABPD71s5f6Q_IRbRAft-usLxJveM_4MQ&index=10