

Produced by

Know **History**



Research Plan Workbook

National Gathering on Unmarked Burials

Vancouver, January 16-18, 2023

Overview of the workbook

This workbook is designed to support communities as they develop research plans to guide their efforts in searching for unmarked burials and missing children.

This workbook is not intended to develop a comprehensive research plan. It was created as a companion to the workshop held at the National Gathering on Unmarked Burials in Vancouver, January 16-18, 2023.

This workbook should be used in collaboration with the companion booklet, **Researching the Missing Children**.



If you would like additional information or support designing your research project, please contact Know History at ryan@knowhistory.ca or call 613-700-8677.

Why Do You Need a Project Plan?

A large-scale research project is a journey. Like any trek through complicated terrain, the traveller is best served with a clear map.

To develop this map, or plan, you must first decide where you want to go. From there, you can decide where you will look for information, how you will collect it, and how you will use it once it has been gathered. Good planning will ensure you don't waste time or resources and that everyone on your team is working towards the same end goal.

On this journey you will discover truths, find new information, and gain a better understanding of the subject matter. But with all journeys, things may not go as planned. Take time throughout your project to re-evaluate your plan and decide if you need to change the approach. Similarly, this research deals with extremely difficult subject matter. Ensure you have health and wellness supports in place for your research team.



1

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?



2

WHAT INFORMATION IS ALREADY AVAILABLE?



3

WHERE CAN YOU LOOK FOR INFORMATION?



4

HOW WILL YOU MANAGE THE DATA?

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Researching your community's residential school history is a difficult undertaking. But with any journey, you must first decide where you want to go. Although things may come up that prevent you from getting there, determining your destination will help you pick the best route.

At the outset of any project, it is important to think about what goals you are hoping to achieve through your work. A research project can be very narrow, such as finding the history of a specific residential school Survivor, or it can be very broad, such as documenting the history of an entire school. Members of your community may want to collect and share information. A good way to keep your research focused, and to keep everyone on the same page, is to develop a "Project Statement."

A project statement is a short paragraph that describes:

- 1) Who you are
- 2) What information you are looking for
- 3) Why you are looking for this information.

Consider the questions below and develop a draft project statement. This can then be shared with other community members and refined. Once you have finalized your statement, use it as a guiding principle throughout your project.

Research Questions

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF YOUR RESEARCH?

- ▶ Are you researching one school or multiple schools?
- ▶ Is your research aimed at supporting ground-penetrating radar?
- ▶ Are you looking to understand where the students at this school came from?
- ▶ Are you interested in the names of teachers and other staff at schools?
- ▶ Is information about students' health, nutrition, and discipline also important, or are you mostly interested in information about children who died at the school?
- ▶ Are you interested in identifying institutions or companies that played a role in supporting the school?

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE INFORMATION YOU UNCOVER?

It is important to consider how you will use the documents you collect. This will help you determine how to organize your research and may impact agreements that you enter into with archives and libraries.

- ▶ Will the documentation be shared publicly?
- ▶ Will the information be used for legal proceedings?
- ▶ If you are collecting Survivor statements, how will they be used in the future?
- ▶ Do you hope to create an exhibit or book that will benefit from photographs?



Your Project Statement

WHEN WRITING YOUR PROJECT STATEMENT, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE:

- 1) Who is undertaking the work
- 2) What information you are collecting
- 3) How you intend to use this information in the future.

Example Project Statement

In 2021, Survivors of the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario, joined together to initiate a criminal investigation into missing children and unmarked burials at the Mohawk institute. To complete this work, they formed the Survivors' Secretariat. Their mandate is to "organize and support efforts to uncover, document and share the truth about what happened at the Mohawk Institute during its 136 years of operation."

In regard to archival research, they aim to "support the creation of a community archive by collecting all related records from governments, churches and other institutions that were known to have been involved in the operations of the Mohawk Institute. [They] will also support commemoration policies and related activities."

This is a good example of a project statement. In it, they explain who is undertaking the work and what they intend to do with the work. They also define what they are looking for.

For more information on the Survivors Secretariat please visit <https://www.survivorssecretariat.ca/>

WHERE CAN YOU LOOK FOR INFORMATION?

With the guidance of your community and a clear goal in sight, you can now begin charting your course. One of the most difficult parts about this work is that records are often in many locations and can be challenging to access. Knowing what stops you need to make on the way to your destination will help you collect all the information needed to achieve your goal. Don't be afraid to pick up some additional travellers along the way—experts like professors and researchers can help you locate the documents you need.

Check off any locations that you think may have information for your research. Feel free to add your own ideas.

WHERE CAN YOU LOOK FOR RECORDS?

- Church archives
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
- Library and Archives Canada
- Ancestry.ca
- Municipal or regional archives and museums (Yarmouth County Museum & Archives, Northern BC Archives & Special Collections)
- Provincial archives (BC Archives)
- National Air Photo Library
- Local historical societies
- Newspaper archives (Newspapers.ca, Peel's Prairie Provinces)
- Hospital records
- City archives (City of Vancouver Archives)
- National or provincial museums (Canadian War Museum, Royal Alberta Museum)
- _____
- _____

WHICH CHURCHES WERE INVOLVED WITH RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?

- Anglican Church
- Baptist Church
- Methodist Church
- Presbyterian Church
- United Church of Canada

Creating a Keyword List

Archives have thousands upon thousands of documents—and looking through them to find the information you need can be difficult. To narrow your search, create a list of keywords about your area of focus and plug them into the archive's search engine. Keywords can include names of schools, individual students, teachers, and administrators; dates; and any other specifics. For example, the term "Mohawk Institute" would work as a keyword for research about this residential school, while "Brantford," the location of the school, may bring up different relevant documents. You will want to adjust how specific your keywords are depending on the size and focus of the archive.



What should go into a keyword list?

- ▶ Name of the school and variations of that name
- ▶ Names of staff
- ▶ Associated service institutions (local children's aid, nearby hospitals)
- ▶ Association churches and religious organizations
- ▶ Businesses that may have been involved
- ▶ Nearby community organizations
- ▶ Names of provincial or federal agencies involved with the school's administration
- ▶ Names of properties or organizations that bordered the school grounds
- ▶ Names of specific events that took place at the school

Try jotting down some keywords that you think would help locate relevant documents for your research below.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

CAUTION

Not everything you are looking for will come up with a keyword search. It is important to work with the institute's archivists or outside historians who can help track down information that is not accessible through keyword searches.

HOW WILL YOU MANAGE THE DATA?

You have your destination, your route, and a list of necessary stops. Now you need a metaphorical bag to hold the information you will collect. Choosing the right bag is an important decision. If you intend to collect a lot of things during the project, you may need a large suitcase, but if you only need to gather a few things, a small carry-on will do. Your bag may need locks, or perhaps it is important that you can easily ship the bag to someone else.

As you begin to collect more and more data, it is important to think about ways that you can organize, manage, and eventually find the data again. It is likely you will uncover different types of data (e.g., maps, photos, documents, recordings) that need different types of storage. You need to decide the best way to keep your data secure and accessible for whatever you plan to do with your research once it is finished. We recommend storing your research in a digital database. The most important part of designing your database is ensuring it meets your needs. You want your database to be organized, easily accessible, and expandable.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- ▶ How many people will be collecting information?
- ▶ Where will they share it?
- ▶ How will you ensure that the data remains secure?
- ▶ What resources do you have to put towards the software (people, money, training)?
- ▶ What type of data will you be collecting?



LOW-COST OPTIONS

Excel and Google Sheets are common, inexpensive ways to organize data online. However, these programs are not designed for large research projects, and may limit your ability to effectively organize your information.



ONLINE DATABASE PROGRAMS

Airtable is an example of an online database that is designed to catalogue and store information. Though there are monthly costs, Airtable allows you to create identification tags for your documents and link files directly to the database, which means you can find them quickly.

\$\$\$

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTIONS

Customized solutions allow you to store your data exactly how you choose. This option allows the most flexibility to create a database that meets your community's needs. However, this is the most expensive option.

Conclusion

Like any traveller knows, sometimes you learn more on the journey than at the destination. This booklet is a jumping-off point to get you on the right path for your research. We encourage you to return to your community and discuss the ideas shared today. Ask for further input on the questions we outlined and see what other questions come up. There are a lot of twists and turns on this kind of journey; stay flexible, but keep your end goal as your guide.



If you would like additional information or support designing your research project, please contact Know History at ryan@knowhistory.ca or call 613-700-8677.



KnowHistory.ca | info@knowhistory.ca | 613-700-8677

Know History

Historical Services