

# National Gathering on Unmarked Burials:

## Northern Voices

### Summary Report

January - February 2024



**Office of the Independent  
Special Interlocutor**

for Missing Children and Unmarked  
Graves and Burial Sites associated  
with Indian Residential Schools

The information in this report may be upsetting for some because it contains content relating to the deaths and forced disappearances of children at former Indian Residential Schools and other institutions. If you require immediate support, please contact the following:

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society's 24/7 Crisis Support line:

1-800-721-0066

The 24-hour National Indian Residential School Crisis Line:

1-866-925-4419





Representing strength, family and healing, bears are the primary element in the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor's logo. The larger bear represents the parent, family, and community, while the smaller bear symbolizes the children who were stolen and never returned.

The Northern Lights in the night sky are the Spirits of our ancestors dancing. The dancing guides the children to reunite with their ancestors.

The stars depict the connection between the children taken from their communities and the parents left behind, who would stare at the same stars longing to be reunited.

The flowers in the larger bear signify life and the resilience of Indigenous People.

The changing colours in the dotted path illustrate the on-going search for truth, justice and healing.

The three pairs of moccasins honour and acknowledge all First Nations, Inuit and Métis children.

At the first National Gathering on Unmarked Burials in Treaty 6 territory, Regional Chief Gerald Antoine observed that on the back of the larger bear, there is a clear outline of a child's face looking up at the sky. Although this was not intentionally part of the design, it has shown us yet another way that the children's Spirits are speaking to us all.



*“For the child taken,  
For the parent left behind.”*

TRC Interim Report, 2012



## Contents

Message from the Independent Special Interlocutor	5
Overview and Purpose of the National Gathering	7
Introduction to the Summary Report	9
Commitments & Protocols	10
Northern Voices	14
Echoing Messages from Previous Gatherings	18
Gathering Wisdom: Learning from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) about the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act	25
Gathering Wisdom: Starblanket Cree First Nation	28
Gathering Wisdom: Health and Wellness Practices	29
Gathering Wisdom: Accessing Support from Canada	32
Gathering Wisdom: Nanilavut – “Let’s Find Them”	34
Gathering Wisdom: Know History	36
Conclusions and Next Steps	37
Acknowledgments	39
Resources	40
Supports	41

## Message from the Independent Special Interlocutor



Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor, offers Remarks

It is my ongoing honour to be the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Residential Schools. As the Independent Special Interlocutor, I continue to prioritize hearing from Survivors, their families, and Indigenous communities searching for the children that were never returned home.

From January 30 – February 1, 2024, Survivors, Indigenous community members, and leadership gathered in Iqaluit, in Inuit Nunangat – *“the place where Inuit live”* – to hold the sixth National Gathering on Missing Children and Unmarked Burials. It was important for this Gathering to be held in the Eastern Arctic, to hear the voices of, and to learn from, the Inuit of Nunavut and other Indigenous Peoples across the region.

The experience of colonialism was different in Nunavut. It is important to consider not only the Residential Schools, but the Northern Mission Schools, Day Schools, and Federal Hostels, and the many other institutions that Inuit, Northern First Nations and Métis children were taken to, including hospitals and tuberculosis (TB) sanatoria.

My Mandate is to identify existing legal and structural barriers and recommend a new federal framework to *“identify, protect, and preserve unmarked burial sites”*. This description, however, does not adequately portray the significance of the Sacred work that I have the privilege to support as Survivors and communities lead the way to find the missing children and unmarked burials. I continue to learn from Survivors, Indigenous families, and communities, and it is apparent that our first duty is to the Spirits of the children who were never returned home. This is our Sacred responsibility.

This work to find and recover the children, was started by Survivors. Despite the harms that they experienced, Survivors have led us with courage, determination, and strength. For far too long, their truths were not heard by Canada, but because of their persistence and bravery, Survivors have raised the country’s awareness of the atrocities that were perpetrated against them, their families, and their communities. This has brought us to a place where Canada, as a country, can no longer ignore the truth.

This sixth National Gathering provided a very important opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the Sacred work of searching for the missing children and unmarked burials in a way that listens to the experiences and truths of Survivors, and that is focused on the unique perspectives of Northern Indigenous people. Our time together in Iqaluit was an opportunity to consider the similarities and differences that participants have experienced, and are experiencing, as they continue their search and recovery efforts.

This Gathering was a chance to explore diverse approaches, discuss common challenges, and continue to amplify the voices that Canada has yet to fully hear and listen to. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to come to the North to hear the array of perspectives from the territory. The contributions received will shape and inform the recommendations contained in my Final Report. I extend my deepest appreciation to all the presenters and participants at this Northern Gathering for the contributions that they have made, and are making, to this Sacred work.



## Overview and Purpose of the National Gathering

Since the start of the Independent Special Interlocutor's [Mandate](#), National Gatherings have been held across the country. While some Gatherings have had a specific thematic focus (such as [Indigenous data sovereignty](#), [addressing trauma](#), or [upholding Indigenous laws](#)), other Gatherings have engaged in a more general way: meeting with Survivors and communities that are leading search and recovery efforts and connecting their knowledge, expertise, and truths with one another.

In late January 2024, Survivors, Elders, youth, elected leadership, technical experts, Knowledge Keepers, family, and community members gathered in Iqaluit to share their experiences and deepen their support for one another as they search for the missing children and unmarked burials.

Over 150 participants attended the Iqaluit Gathering in person with more than 1,400 viewers joining by livestream on the first day of programming and 1,550 viewers on the final day.

The Northern Gathering was an opportunity to:

- Come together as Indigenous people to share common histories and experiences, and to learn about distinct cultures, traditions, and practices;
- Create a safe and supportive space to exchange knowledge, learnings, protocols, techniques, and strategies to find all the missing children and unmarked burials;
- Mourn, heal, and grow together, supporting and connecting people and communities from across Turtle Island; and
- Provide and receive input to recommendations that will be included in the Final Report of the Independent Special Interlocutor, to be delivered at the end of her Mandate.

This Gathering focused on listening to Northern Perspectives. Participants heard echoes of some of the messages that have been shared at previous Gatherings: about the importance of justice and accountability, the need for adequate resources and supports to engage in this Sacred work, the impact of trauma and intergenerational trauma, and the incredible power and resilience of Indigenous Peoples.



Inuk Survivors Navalik (Nanoolavik) Tologanak and Lillian Elias

Participants also listened to distinct perspectives from the North, including important insights about the unique experience of colonization in the North, the impact of remoteness on the availability of supports and resources, the parallels between the Inuit experience of forced transfers to the South during the TB epidemic, the distinct legacy of sexual violence that was inflicted on the Inuit, and a particular focus on the babies born at Residential Schools and other institutions, who were disappeared.

As at previous Gatherings, it is the wisdom, strength, and resilience of Survivors and intergenerational Survivors that galvanized participants. Survivors have carried the burden of knowing what happened to the children at the Residential Schools, Federal Hostels, and other genocidal institutions. They have been speaking the truths of the unmarked burials and carrying the burden of Canada's denial and impunity for lifetimes. We must heed their steadfast calls to follow the truth, wherever it leads us, so that the truths will be known, and all the children can be found.

The words offered by Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) at the Opening Ceremony provided participants with renewed purpose.



*There is a point where we have to look people in the eye and tell them that their conduct is unacceptable. And that some things are non-negotiable. And that starts with these types of issues. There is an obligation for this country to do whatever it can, as quickly as it can, to find the lost loved ones- make the connections from those children in unmarked graves with their communities, with their families.*

- Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)





# Introduction to the Summary Report

This Summary Report reflects the key messages heard at the sixth National Gathering. Wherever possible, the Report uses the words of presenters and participants to capture the truths and insights that were shared. Consistent with the theme, Northern Perspectives, voices of Survivors from Nunavut and other Northern regions, were represented at the Gathering.

Important messages captured in this Report have been expressed at previous National Gatherings. Presenters and participants shared their experiences of conducting searches and highlighted the need for care in collecting and preserving data and records. As has been discussed at prior Gatherings, this Report describes some of the resources that are available to support this work as well as some of the tools that have been developed in other jurisdictions.

As at each previous National Gathering, the clear outcry for justice and accountability of the perpetrators of horrific wrongdoing against the missing children, their families, and communities was heard loud and clear, again and again by all those attending the Gathering.

This Gathering explored the truths of the forced transfers of Indigenous children, with many presenters and participants sharing their families' experience of having children taken from them to Residential Schools and other institutions, who were never returned home. The accounts shared by these families highlight the need to follow and share the truths of all the missing Indigenous children, regardless of where they were taken.

This Report also shares the reflections of presenters about the importance of holding Canada to account for its role in this wrongdoing. Participants heard about the urgent need for adequate and appropriate mental health and financial resources. Participants understood that Indigenous people must build on the support that has been promised by government, and the support that exists among Settlers to confront the truth of Canada's colonial genocide, and, following the lead of Indigenous communities, turn empathy into action.

The Northern Gathering was enriched by a wide and diverse array of Survivor and intergenerational Survivor voices. The Gathering was also supported by Indigenous ceremonies, songs, and protocols. While there is no way to adequately capture all elements of the participants' time together, the healing nature of the Gathering must also be acknowledged in these pages.



# Commitments & Protocols

## Welcomes

At the Opening Ceremony, Sylvia Cloutier and Naomi Tatty provided words of welcome with kindness, hospitality, and generosity. Sylvia reminded all those gathered of their Sacred purpose: the children who were never returned home. When speaking of the Empty Chair ceremony, Sylvia said it was,

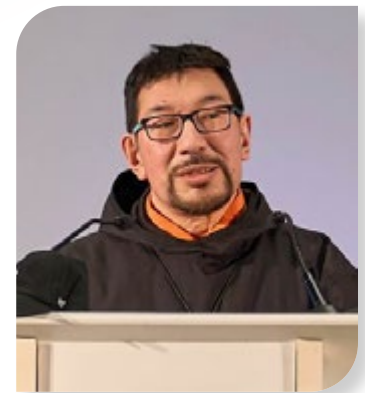
*To remind us that the children are present. To invite them to be present and to witness all the hard work that is being done to look for them. We are helping the missing children and their Spirits journey home. The children deserve to be loved and honoured and recognized. They should always be remembered.*

Levi Barnabus, Vice President of Qikiqtani Inuit Association, had a special welcome to the Survivors who had gathered: *“this is your Gathering, [know] that you are not alone anymore, as you have each other... We have each other”*.

Shelton Nipisar, an Inuk intergenerational Survivor and Drum Dancer was joined by Leanna Wilson to share songs and teachings. Shelton shared gratitude for his Aunties, who taught him how to Drum Dance, and invited Gathering participants to learn about the Drum, and the names of the dances that he demonstrated: the Raven, the Polar Bear and the Caribou.



Co-chairs, Sylvia Cloutier, Kuujjuaq, NU and Naomi Tatty, Iqauluit, NU



Levi Barnabus, Vice President of Qikiqtani Inuit Association



Shelton Nipisar, Inuk intergenerational Survivor



Inukshuk High School Drum Dancers and Sacred Items at Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony ended with a cultural performance by the Inuksuk High School Drum

Dancers, who warmed the hearts and Spirits of the participants with songs sung in the language of their ancestors. It was powerful to see that Inuit culture remains strong and continues to be revitalized, and transferred to the next generation, despite what Canada and the churches tried to destroy.



*“We light this Qulliq as a protocol and a welcome, but also as an act of respect for the children”.*

- Bernice Clarke,  
Inuk Knowledge Keeper

Bernice Clarke and Alethea Akulliqsi Kootoo Clarke

## *Lighting the Qulliq*

Inuk Knowledge Keeper, Bernice Clarke, joined with her daughter, Alethea Akulliqsi Kootoo Clarke, to light the Qulliq for the Gathering and shared a prayer for the children who were taken and never brought back home. Bernice shared that, despite her interest and curiosity as a child, her own mother was unable to teach her how to light the Qulliq. She learned from her Elder, Meeka Angnakkak from Pangnirtung, who has recently passed on. By sharing this teaching with the Gathering, Bernice invited participants to see a powerful expression of Indigenous resilience and resistance first hand. Transferring the knowledge of how and why Inuit light the Qulliq to her own daughter, Alethea, and later to others, she engaged the Gathering in the important healing work of cultural preservation.

Traditionally used to bring light and warmth to families on long arctic nights, the warmth from the Qulliq could melt snow, boil tea, and strengthen the ice of igloos. The lighting of the Qulliq during the Opening Ceremony connected everyone to this Inuit ceremonial practice and created a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all who were gathered.

Bernice shared that the Qulliq is made in the shape of the womb, reminding us of the beauty and source of life, and of new birth.



## Igloo

An igloo was built by community members near the site of the Sacred Fire. The traditional knowledge and protocols of igloo building have been passed down through generations of Inuit and represent its rich culture and history.



Anishinaabe Elder Darrell Boissoneau, Garden River First Nation, ON

## The Empty Chair

The placing of the Empty Chair, Spirit Plate and Sacred Items is a Spiritual practice and follows Indigenous protocols. Anishinaabe Elder Darrell Boissoneau spoke of the Spirit Plate, stating that *“with our food offerings, we are giving back to the Spirits of our loved ones, to continue to invite the Spirits of the children throughout the work of the Special Interlocutor.”*

The Empty Chair and water cup are small, to suit the children’s hands and bodies, and the Spirit Plates are prepared with portions to feed a small child. As we care for the Spirits of the children in this way, we show them that they were, and are, loved and are not forgotten.



## *Medicines*

Elder Darrell shared his teaching about the use of the four Sacred Medicines: tobacco, sage (for purification, good energy and to remind us of our place and our teachings), sweetgrass (for purification and good energy) and cedar (to heal and overcome grief, despair, and troubles).

Elder Darrell spoke of the time when the use of these Medicines was outlawed and noted that using the Medicines at the Gathering was an act of collective resistance.



## *The Sacred Fire*

At the start of other National Gatherings, a Sacred Fire was lit and tended to by local Fire Keepers. For this National Gathering, and in keeping with Inuit tradition, a Qulliq was lit to open the Gathering.

In addition to the lighting of the Qulliq, a Sacred Fire was lit on the last day of this National Gathering, so that Medicines and the tissues holding the tears of participants could be offered to the Fire. The ashes from the previous five National Gatherings were added to this Sacred Fire in Iqaluit. Once the protocols were completed and participants had the opportunity to make their offerings, all ashes were collected and will be added to the Sacred Fire at the Closing Ceremony to mark the end of the mandate of the Independent Special Interlocutor.



# Northern Voices

## *A Distinct Experience with Colonialism*

At the Opening Ceremony, Aluki Kotierk, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, emphasized that any new legal framework to protect, honour, and respect the burial sites of the missing children “*must include a very specific and distinct Inuit lens*”.

One facet of this distinct Inuit lens was expressed by Jody Tulurialik, a young Inuk intergenerational Survivor. Jody said:

*I have had to fight the feeling of never being good enough. Never feeling worthy of sharing my voice... I felt like I had to stay put and small. Where do I get these feelings of self-doubt and fear? I feel isolated... I didn't know where I got these scars I was born with?*

*To be an Inuk individual means I will live my life grieving for loved ones and a life that was taken from me.*

Aluki spoke of an intense period of colonialism and dramatic change that had a profound impact on Inuit between 1940 and 1970:

*Our story with Indian Residential Schools is a different one, because the timelines are different... We are not expecting to locate mass unmarked graves in Nunavut. The Catholic Oblates have provided the names of four children known to have died in their care... Our experience is more recent. But there was much harm, and there is a lot of work to do.*

In her opening remarks, Independent Special Interlocutor, Kimberly Murray highlighted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) findings that the per capita impact of the Residential School system in the North was much higher than anywhere else in the country, resulting in severe and widespread intergenerational impacts. She provided recognition of the unique experiences in the North:

*In Volume 2 of its report, the TRC highlighted the many differences of the institutions that were in operation in the North compared to those in the South. First, it noted that the history of these colonial institutions known as “residential schools” is more recent in the North than in the rest of the country. The TRC found that the government of Canada did not just template the system from the South into the North. Instead, it created a different system. One of “day schools and hostels” and placed this system under the direction of Northern Affairs rather than Indian Affairs. However, we also know that the hostel system had many of the same problems of the Indian Residential Schools.*

The geography of the North also meant that children were taken great distances and separated from their parents, families, and communities for long periods of time – sometimes for years on end.



## ***Forced Transfers to Sanitoria***

In the early 1900s, and especially between 1940-1960, the Canadian State responded to a TB epidemic in the North by forcibly transferring thousands of Inuit from their homes and communities to treatment facilities hundreds of kilometers away. In these facilities, Inuit ranging from babies to grandparents were taken for medical treatment. Many succumbed to their illness and died. In some cases, the bodies of those who died were returned, but in many cases, they were buried in the South, often without any notification of the death to the family or providing any information about the burial.

Of the 4500 Inuit taken, approximately 1000 were never brought back home and are buried in cemeteries in unmarked burials, and some, in mass graves across the country, including in Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec.

Natan shared that 1 in 7 Inuit from Nunavut were in a sanatorium in the South and he spoke of the parallels between the forced transfer of Inuit to TB sanitoria and the missing children and unmarked burials associated with Residential Schools. He said:

*I offer this to everyone in the room because this journey in unmarked graves for residential schools may follow a very similar path. There are records. There are ways in which to find information. There are also very different conversations about what happens when you find remains? What happens when you uncover a grave with multiple people in it and you don't necessarily know who is who? How do you share that pain and that grief, and how do you get through that with others in other communities?*

Many of the Survivors and participants who spoke during the Gathering, shared their traumatic experiences of loss that included family members who were taken during the TB epidemic and were never returned home.

## ***Sexual Violence and Stolen Babies***

Sexual violence in Northern institutions was rampant. Aluki said that Inuit “are expecting to expose truth about babies born in these institutions, the role of sexual violence in the colonization of Inuit and the inadequacies of Canada’s political and legal responses to known cases of horrific abuse against Inuit children”. Aluki shared that:

*Inuit told us, and it is well-documented, that the Priests and teachers raped students in their care. The pregnant [girls] and staff would be hidden in the dorm until their babies were born.*

The unknown truth of what happened to these babies is another important fact that was spoken by several people at the Northern Gathering. For example, Lillian Elias, an Inuk Survivor shared her experience at an institution and the horrific truths of the babies that were killed in the furnaces.

When asked about the prospect of learning more about the truth of these stolen babies, forensic pathologist Dr. Rebekah Jacques cautioned participants that although we know from Survivor truths that there were babies born at the institutions, and that some were burned in the furnaces, it may be very difficult to obtain forensic evidence of these truths. Among the reasons for this are:

- the impact of extreme heat (such as that of a lit furnace) on DNA, particularly given the passage of time;
- the fact that pre-term or newborn skeletal remains are largely made of cartilage, which is much less likely to survive over time than bone. Even if there were ancestral remains from the babies born, it is unlikely that there will be anything left of their newborn bodies;
- it is unknown whether the Indigenous girls who delivered these babies would have known or fully understood that they had given birth to a child, or if they did know, what they were told about what happened to the baby; and
- it is unlikely that the existence (much less the death or theft) of these babies was documented.

Despite the challenges inherent in the search for these babies, the search for them must continue. Some girls were told that their babies were sent away to Belgium or France to be adopted. Their families want to be re-united, to find their lost ones. The families need and deserve access to documents from the Catholic Oblates and the government of Canada, likely created in the case of an international forced adoption, in order to help them find truth and healing.

Aluki spoke of the need to honour these little ones, *“We know other babies have gone missing or were buried in and around the Residential Schools in Nunavut. Their lives must be remembered and honoured.”*

### *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles*

- **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq:** Respecting others, relationships and caring for people
- **Tunnganarniq:** Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming, and inclusive
- **Pijitsirniq:** Serving and providing for family and/or community
- **Aajiqatigiinni:** Decision making through discussion and consensus
- **Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq:** Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort
- **Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtigiinni:** Working together for a common cause
- **Qanuqtuurniq:** Being innovative and resourceful
- **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:** Respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment

- Inuit nuatqatigiittiarniagut (Inuit Societal Values), Government of Nunavut



## Together We Can Find the Answers

### Navalik's Story

On the first day of the Gathering, participants heard from Survivors. One of the Survivors to share their story was Navalik (Nanoolavik) Tologanak.

Navalik told participants that she was born and lived on the land until the float planes came to take her away:

*I went to Residential School from Cambridge Bay. We were sent to Inuvik on those DC3 planes... and at that time there wasn't really a community of Cambridge Bay yet. Most of us Inuit in our age, were born out on the land. And those little float planes still found us. They still landed at our parents' and grandparents' camps, and they still took us – they still found us. We had to go. We were dragged right onto the plane. If you weren't, I guess there were threats to our parents. You could hear your Mum's or your Grandmothers' crying... your little brothers and sisters crying when they saw you going on that little float plane.*

Navalik spoke of her experience at both the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital in Edmonton, where she was taken for TB treatment when she was very young, and at the Residential School hostel in Inuvik. She said she lived with abuse and fear as a child in both these institutions.

She shared that her great-grandfather died at a TB sanatorium and that his body was never returned home. To this day, the family does not know where he is buried. They want to find him.

Her family has also been looking for the location of her great-grandmother's burial. Navalik knew that she had been taken to the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital and had died there. Her body was never brought back home.

On a trip to Alberta, Navalik located her great-grandmother's name on a commemorative plaque at the St. Albert Cemetery, but was not told where her body was buried in the cemetery. She and her family desperately want to know where, so that they can attend the site and visit her.

After speaking about her search for her great-grandmother on the Voices of Survivor's Panel, several people at the Gathering were able to help locate her burial location in the St. Albert Cemetery, answering her plea for information and starting the process of finding closure for her family.



Navalik (Nanoolavik) Tologanak, Cambridge Bay, NU

## Echoing Messages from Previous Gatherings

Many of the messages shared echoed and re-enforced those expressed at previous Gatherings across the country and throughout the Independent Special Interlocutor's Mandate. Participants have discussed the possibilities and limitations of search technology, the inaction of the Canadian State and the impunity of those who perpetuated genocide and abuse, the importance of addressing trauma and intergenerational trauma, and the power of identity and cultural sharing as a tool for healing.

### *Search Technology – Possibilities and Limitations*



Dr. Andrew Martindale

National Advisory Committee panelist, Dr. Andrew Martindale, discussed some of the different search methods that communities are using to look for their loved ones. Andrew emphasized that technology does not, and should not, replace the truths of Survivors. He cautioned that none of the technologies being used in the searches were made for the specific purpose of finding graves. He also indicated that while there may be many people and companies that know how to use the technology, few currently have the expertise in using the technology for the purpose of finding burials. Andrew explained that there are no national standards in this area and there is a need to develop some. The National Advisory Committee believes that the best way forward is for communities to be trained in the use of these technologies and to lead the

searches. It was noted that the data collected during the searches MUST remain in the control of the community. Andrew supports Survivors' calls for long term funding, and said that this Sacred work will take years, if not decades.

National Advisory Committee panelist, Dr. Rebekah Jacques, spoke about the role of forensic science in humanitarian work, including identifying the person who died so that families and communities can grieve, find some truths, and hold ceremonies. She spoke of several things that families and communities need to consider before commencing forensic work. These include:

1. creating protocols;
2. making decisions on if and how DNA will be collected from family members;
3. understanding that identification might never be possible, and determining in advance how the unidentified children will be honoured and commemorated; and
4. deciding if accountability will be pursued through the colonial legal system.

Rebekah also identified some myths and misconceptions about forensics that communities need to be made aware of. She said that it is unlikely that all human remains will be identified, and that any forensic work that families and communities decide to pursue will take time.

## *Impunity and Accountability*

At every Gathering, the Independent Special Interlocutor has heard and felt the anger among participants and presenters at the inaction of the Canadian State and the abject failure to adequately address the wrongs that have been perpetrated against Indigenous people at Residential Schools, and other associated institutions.

Aluki spoke of the legacy of impunity that exists in the North around the sexual and physical abuse perpetrated by priests:

*We know that a 1994 investigative report into the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School and Turquetil Hall residence conducted for the Government of the Northwest Territories describes 78 allegations of sexual abuse [that] have been made. RCMP investigations have not been completed however, at the time, approximately 40 allegations of physical and sexual abuse were reasonably substantiated...*

*We know that it has been more than 110 years since the construction of the first Roman Catholic missionary church in Nunavut. Yet only one priest has been held criminally responsible for sexual abuse to Inuit and only upon Inuit calls for justice.*

Aluki described how the State and the churches protected abusers by moving them to other communities, institutions, and even out of the country. In doing so, they enabled abusers and magnified these perpetrators' ability to profoundly harm children. She decried that this complicity and impunity created an environment in which pedophile activity was condoned and flourished.



Aluki Kotierk, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated

Natan made a powerful statement about Canadian impunity and the need for justice:

*We think, as Canadians, that we live in a rules-based society... We have federal legislation, provincial and territorial legislation... that would prevent anything like this from ever happening. And if anything like this ever does happen, we expect a rules-based order and response. We expect institutions to be held accountable. If we have found anything out as Inuit, through Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, through our treatment in the tuberculosis era, through us being taken to be a part of human zoos in North America and in Europe, from our Residential Schools experience, from forced relocations for sovereignty concerns, from anthropologist and other grave robbers taking our human remains... We know that the rules-based order is for some people, but not for us. It's been proven over a hundred years.*

Aluki called for an inquiry to investigate the inadequacies of Canada's political and legal responses to the abuse that was perpetrated against the Inuit in Nunavut. She said the inquiry should, at minimum:

- Reveal the truth regarding sexual abusers in positions of power, and the role of sexual violence in the colonization of Nunavut Inuit;
- Examine the extent to which these cases were, or were not, dealt with by their institutions, by the RCMP, the Public Prosecutions Service of Canada, and by the Ministers responsible and whether faith played a role in decisions to not deal with these cases;
- Determine the harm to Nunavut Inuit arising from their having been abused, silenced and ignored, the intergenerational harm caused, and to make recommendations on the healing needed; and
- Make recommendations to protect Indigenous people from abusers in positions of power.

The anger of Survivors, families, and communities, who have already waited too long for justice, was felt by all in attendance.



Gathering participants

## Overcoming Trauma with Resilience

The trauma inflicted by Residential Schools and other institutions has silenced the voices of many Survivors and their families. Métis intergenerational Survivor, Storm Cardinal, addressed the Gathering as a panelist on the Voices of Youth Panel. Storm spoke of the difficulty his father has in speaking about his experiences in the Residential School System. He reflected on the impact that this silence has had and how it has interfered with his ability to understand his father's experience, and ultimately in Storm knowing his own story. He recognizes that he may never learn his father's truths and said: *"My father was never one to show any pain... try to stay strong. I know it eats away at him... I wonder if I will even know his story."*



Storm Cardinal, Fort Chipewyan, AB

Inuk intergenerational Survivor, Richard (Pakak) Picco, talked about overcoming his own inability to share his lived experiences at an earlier Gathering, because the pain of the then-recent loss of his best friend to suicide was more than he could bare:

*It just doesn't stop here... It's hard up here with suicide and addictions, and I feel like a lot of it comes from intergenerational trauma or experiences within Residential Schools or Federal Day Schools. In the last twelve months I have lost three close friends and relatives- people I enjoyed hunting on the land with. And the one thing they all had in common is a family member who went to Residential School or Federal Day Schools... Here we are in 2023, 2024 and we are still losing our kids.*

Pakak spoke of the intergenerational harms he and his friends have experienced. He spoke of the high rate of suicide and substance use among his friends, including the grief and loss he has felt already in his life. Pakak said, *"I feel like the federal government and churches have won"* because of all the death and despair in the community. But he also said that it warms his heart to see Gatherings with Survivors, because he then knows that Canada did not win, *"as we are still here."*



Richard (Pakak) Picco, Iqaluit, NU and Jody Tulurialik, Taloyoak, NU

Jody Tulurialik shared her intergenerational trauma, and how she often does not feel worthy. She said *"I did not choose this life. To live with the after-effects of genocide"*. Jody told us that she wanted to see more collaboration between all the regions in Nunavut for healing programs, *"so that everything we dream of for our people will come true."*

Métis Survivor, Elsie Cardinal, was taken to the Holy Angels Indian Residential School for seven years, starting when she was six years old. She described how many of the memories of what happened to her there have been blocked in her mind. She is a Survivor of sexual abuse and struggled to speak about her experience. Gathering participants celebrated her victory over past substance use and her Survival of unspeakable sexual and physical abuses. Elsie's remarks were important for all participants to witness, as she represents many other Survivors who are still unable to fully speak of their experiences.

The ability of Survivors and intergenerational Survivors to overcome an almost inconceivable legacy of pain was expressed by participants and presenters at this Gathering.

In the context of the pain of colonialism, which was so evident in Voices of the Youth Panel and throughout the Gathering, to thrive must be seen as an act of resistance. As one youth described, *"my mere existence is colonialism's worst nightmare – the failure of the genocidal experiment"*.

Storm spoke of his struggles with feelings of doubt, anxiety, and substance use issues, and the painful cycle that he goes through. He encouraged all youth to speak for themselves and be honest about the intergenerational harms they are experiencing so that they can heal.

Meghan Metz spoke to the need to *"listen to your heart"*.

*It is in this discomfort that we learn more about ourselves and each other. We find new ways forward.*

*This shame and discomfort was never ours to carry.*

*We must give ourselves grace, remembering how to love; ourselves and each other. And listen to your inner voice. Strengthen your connection to it. Listen to your heart.*

- First Nation intergenerational Survivor Meghan Metz,  
Haisla Nation, BC





Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School (Lebret, SK), 1888. Grey Nuns of Montreal archives

The power and resistance in the face of pain and trauma was also discussed. Gathering participants learned the powerful truth of the families whose children were taken to Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School. Sherrie Bellegarde and Gerard Wolfe shared photos dating back to 1888 of an encampment that was established just beyond the institutional grounds. Many families whose children had been taken to the institution were compelled by their love for their little ones to live in this encampment just to be closer to their children. An incredible testament to the love and resistance of Indigenous Peoples.



## *Cultural Knowledge Transfer as an Act of Resistance*

Time and time again, Gathering participants bore witness to the incredible power of the transfer of cultural knowledge as an act of resistance, of healing, and of survival. In Megan's words, *"we cannot forget all that we have held onto despite those efforts to strip these things from us."*

The sixth National Gathering was interwoven with the power of cultural teachings, from the first part of the Opening Ceremony, when Bernice Clarke and her daughter, Alethea, lit the Qulliq, to the teachings about the Drum Dance that Shelton Nipisar learned from his Aunties and passed on to Gathering participants, to the artisans who came to share their incredible work treasures with everyone in attendance.





# Gathering Wisdom: Learning from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) about the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), and its The Path Forward Project, presented their wisdom on the Native American Graves and Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The Path Forward Project is an initiative of MKO to uncover the truth and support affected communities and families through several investigative processes. It provides guidance, assistance, and support to MKO communities, Survivors, and families involved in searching, identifying, commemorating, and repatriating deceased and missing children at former residential schools, hospitals, and sanatoria. As part of their work, they have been analysing the NAGPRA with the view of determining if similar legislation in Canada would be warranted.

The **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)** is federal legislation in the United States of America. It was enacted on November 16th, 1990. The NAGPRA addresses the rights of Native Americans and Native Hawaiians to cultural items including ancestral remains, funerary objects, Sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The NAGPRA prescribes processes for the return of Native American human remains and cultural items, and the protection of Native American burial sites. The NAGPRA requires federally funded institutions and agencies such as museums, universities, State agencies, and local governments to repatriate or transfer Native American human remains and other cultural items to the appropriate holders.

In practice, this means that these institutions are required to take the following steps:

- Consult with lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations on Native American human remains and other cultural items;
- Protect and plan for Native American human remains and other cultural items that may be removed from federal or Tribal lands;
- Identify and report all Native American human remains and other cultural items in inventories and summaries of holdings or collections; and
- Provide notice prior to repatriating or transferring human remains and other cultural items.



MKO NAGPRA Workshop

The MKO presenters invited participants to consider, “*What could a NAGPRA +++ legislation look like in Canada?*” A framework that incorporates TRC Call to Action 75 and Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? What would need to be adapted for the Canadian context?

Some important insights were shared that have emerged from the US experience with the NAGPRA. Some of these insights include:

- The statutory obligations are connected to the receipt of federal government funding;
- The creation of a legal duty to protect ancestral remains or cultural items enhanced the care being taken of those Sacred items, and the diligence with which these institutions are proceeding to return them to their rightful custodians;
- The NAGPRA is domestic legislation, so it has no extraterritorial effect. In other words, it does not have any impact on documents, ancestral remains or cultural items that are located outside of the jurisdiction of the legislation;
- NAGPRA only applies to federally recognized tribes;
- NAGPRA only applies to federally funded agencies; and
- NAGPRA only applies to federal lands.

The NAGPRA model has been impactful in the US and has strengthened the legal obligation to take positive action to protect and return ancestral remains and cultural items. However, as the applicability of a NAGPRA-style law to the Canadian context is contemplated, considerations should be given to how to strengthen such a law.

### **Key Terms: Ancestral Remains & Ancestral Belongings**

**Native American Remains:** Physical remains of a human body of a person of Native American ancestry.

**Funerary Objects:** Any Object that may be part of a burial or ceremony, which is reasonably believed to have been placed with or near individual human remains at the time of death or later.

**Associated Funerary Objects:** Objects that were made exclusively for burial purposes and are linked with an identified set of human remains in possession or control of a museum or federal agency or rejoined with an identified set of human remains.

**Sacred Objects:** Objects that have historical, traditional, or cultural importance.

**Call to Action 75 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls upon the federal government to:**

*“Work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This included the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.”*

**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**

Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with [I]ndigenous peoples concerned.



# Gathering Wisdom: Starblanket Cree First Nation

## *The Children are our Ancestors Now – We do this Work for Them.*

Participants had the opportunity to learn first-hand from Sherrie Bellegarde and Gerard Wolfe about the recent experience of the Starblanket Cree First Nation. Starblanket Cree First Nation is engaged in the Sacred work of searching the grounds of the Qu’Appelle Indian Residential School that operated on their territory for many years until 1998.

After listening to the truths shared by Survivors, in 2021 the community made the decision to begin a careful and deliberate search of the grounds of the

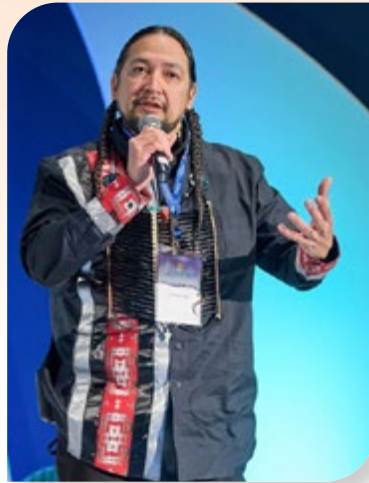
former institution using ground penetrating radar (GPR) technology. The Sacred work to search for the burial sites was done with diligence, compassion and appropriate ceremony and protocol.

After a long process of searching, researching, and analysing data, the community shared the initial results of their ongoing work in January 2023. The community confirmed that the GPR search had yielded a disturbing result of 2,000 anomalies located in the grounds around the former Residential School site. While decisions are still being made on next steps, the community did recently experience a confirmation of what the Survivors have long known when ancestral remains were excavated by a prairie animal – likely a gopher – when digging in a field on the grounds of the search site.

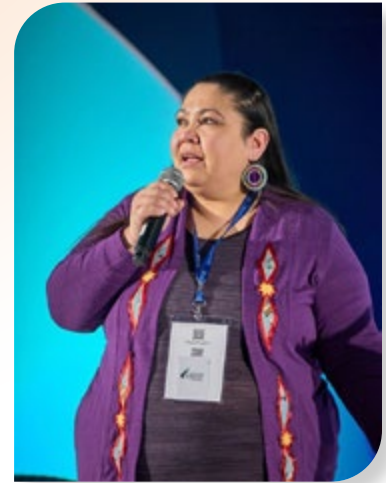
In addition to these ancestral remains, the research conducted by the community has found underground tunnels and rooms on the site, confirming what Survivors have previously described about the institution.

Sherrie and Gerard shared a video with participants of the community’s announcement of their findings. The words of File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Chief, Jeremy Fourhorns, captured the solemn truth of the disturbing findings they shared that day: *“Our old people have told us these stories for generations. We’ve known. We’ve always known... this is just physical proof.”*

The community has made the decision, in keeping with their teachings and customs, not to disturb the remains that they believe are buried on the grounds of the former Residential School site. Rather, the community will continue to work to determine the best way to protect the Sacred location and honour and show respect to the Spirits of the children – now ancestors – whose remains were treated so disrespectfully by a colonial system that cast them aside.



Gerard Wolfe, Muskowekwan First Nation, SK



Sherrie Bellegarde, Star Blanket Cree Nation, SK

## Gathering Wisdom: Health and Wellness Practices

Survivors, family members, and all community leaders understand the weight of the trauma that all Indigenous people carry. The Sacred work of searching for the missing children and their unmarked burials takes a toll on those who are engaged in this Sacred work. To sustain their efforts over the longer term, it is essential that Indigenous people safeguard their mental health and wellness.

*I urge you to take care of yourselves, because you will hear heartbreaking news here, and information. Take good care of yourself. Work hard at what you do. Because you matter in this world and in your endeavors to heal. We can cross that, when the time is right.*

- Aluki Kotierk, NTI

Participants had the opportunity to learn health and wellness techniques at one of the workshops offered at the Gathering where Jean and Roy Erasmus shared their skills. They reminded participants that *“our bodies will keep the score.”* When we carry too much pain, stress, or trauma, it causes us both mental and physical harm, and we can see that in the way we breathe, the sensation of physical pain, and the way our bodies feel. They said that our bodies will physically let us know when something is wrong. With some training, we can learn how to better understand these signs and respond in a way that helps us to take care of ourselves and others.

Jean and Roy shared the words of Dr. Gabor Maté, who has frequently spoken about how trauma impacts our bodies: *“Where there is tension, it needs attention!”* Jean emphasized that *“self-regulation is going to help you, your kids, your partner, your loved ones.”*

Workshop participants discussed stressors in our lives, such as addiction, jealousy, lateral violence, trauma and death or grief and observed that Indigenous communities experience a lot of these stressors.

When we encounter these stressors, it is important to have strategies to help navigate them in a way that enhances mental health and wellbeing. Workshop participants had an opportunity to develop their health and wellness skills by practicing techniques to manage stress and create health.



Jean Erasmus teaches wellness techniques

**1. Breathing Techniques** Breathing is fundamental - breathe into your belly, not your chest. In through your nose, out through the mouth, exhale slower than you inhaled.

**TRY: Box Breathing: 4-4-4-4**

- Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds - repeat 4 times.
- No shallow breathing

**2. Mindfulness** Finding focus helps to centre yourself, stop the spinning sensation.

**TRY: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Exercise** look around the room you are in and notice...

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you are grateful for

**3. Meditation**

**TRY: Guided Meditation**

- Different meditation tools are available online.
- Going outside, breathing in the fresh air, being in nature, taking it all in and being present.





**4. Laughter** For many people, laughter is medicine. We know that the act of deep laughter, is a great technique to release stress.

**TRY:** Start a deep belly laugh, even if at first you are not laughing at anything at all.

**5. Cool It!** Sometimes stressors actually make us feel physically heated. Bringing your physical temperature down can support you in getting yourself back into balance.

**TRY: Chill**

Get an ice pack and put it on your chest, your forehead, the back of your neck. When you start to feel the sting of the cold ice pack, move it to the next spot to help lower your overall temperature.

**6. H.A.L.T. - Check in with yourself, are you:**

**H** - hungry?

**A** - angry?

**L** - lonely?

**T** - tired?

**TRY:** Get ahead of stressors that are caused by problems that you can solve.

Have a snack. Drink water. Call a friend. Take a nap.

The workshop facilitators shared these techniques to help Gathering participants better manage the stress they experience as they engage in the Sacred work of searching for the missing children and unmarked burials.

# Gathering Wisdom: Accessing Support from Canada

The federal government has repeatedly expressed a commitment to provide resources necessary for communities to do the important work of conducting physical and archival searches for the children who were never returned home from Residential Schools.

Participants heard directly from two federal government representatives about some of the resources available to support this Sacred work.

## *Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund*

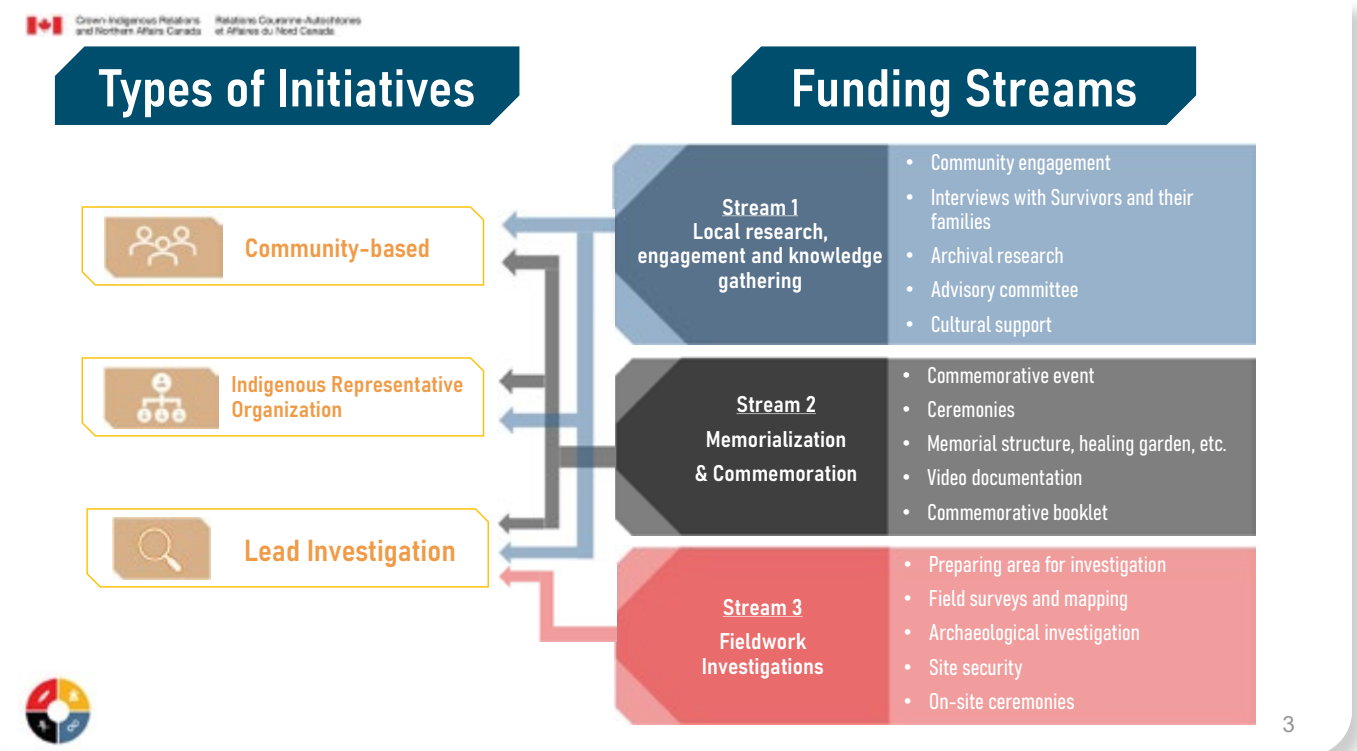
This funding initiative was created to support community-led, Survivor-centric and culturally appropriate initiatives seeking to locate, document, and memorialize burial sites associated with former Residential Schools, and honour families' wishes to bring children's remains home.

Patrick Ballay shared information on the initiatives that program funding is available:

**Stream 1:** Local Research, Engagement and Knowledge Gathering;

**Stream 2:** Memorialization & Commemoration; and

**Stream 3:** Fieldwork Investigations.



Slide from Patrick Ballay's presentation: *Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Funding*



To date, funding to Northern communities has been limited. Patrick reported that while 10% of the Residential School locations eligible for funding through this program are in Nunavut, only 0.002% of the funds allocated, so far, have been directed to searches in the Territory.

Funding through this initiative is open to all Indigenous communities, organizations and associations, and not limited to communities or organizations who are identified as the 'lead community' associated with a particular former Residential School location.

For more information about this program, or to get support in accessing these resources, communities can go to the program [website](#). Assistance is also available by email at the [General Inquiry](#) (which is monitored daily).

## ***Other Federal Resources***

In addition to the financial resources available through the funding streams that were described by Patrick, David Russell shared some tools that have been developed within Indigenous Services Canada that might assist communities.

### **Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Documents Advisory Committee**

This Committee is led by independent Chair, Cadmus Delorme from Cowessess First Nation and includes representatives from the federal government, Survivors, Indigenous communities, and technical experts.

The Committee is providing guidance on the process to identify Residential Schools and Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement documents, and will provide recommendations on options to further share documents with the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#).

### **Residential School Map**

In 2023, Indigenous Services Canada conducted an environmental scan on the status of former Residential School sites and buildings and launched an Indian Residential Schools Mapping Network to share research initiatives. The [interactive map](#) contains information that the federal government has collected about 174 sites that are associated with the 140 Residential Schools that are recognized under the [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#).



## Open Dataset of Aerial Maps

The federal government has also compiled an [open dataset](#) of historical aerial photography of Residential Schools sites. It contains [digital scans](#) of aerial photographs that were acquired from 1924 to 1998 over Residential School sites and surrounding areas across Canada, as well as basic information about each photograph and depicted site.

## Gathering Wisdom: Nanilavut – “Let’s Find Them”

One workshop offered Gathering participants the opportunity to learn more about an innovative program developed in Nunavut to support those trying to locate missing loved ones who were taken from the North during the TB epidemic from 1940 to 1960. The program is called *Nanilavut*, which means “*let’s find them*”.

Many families in Nunavut had loved ones who were taken to TB sanatoria and never returned home.

The Nanilavut initiative was launched in 2017 to support closure and healing for those who have been searching for their lost loved ones.

Workshop presenter, Joanasie Akumalik, shared the three-pronged approach of the program:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Acknowledgement</b></li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full acknowledgement and apology</li><li>• Commemoration events</li><li>• Public education tools</li><li>• Properly marked graves</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Family Support</b></li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nanilavut project managers</li><li>• Health support counsellors</li><li>• Travel to visit graves</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Health Awareness</b></li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuberculosis awareness education</li></ul> |
|--|--|--|

Workshop participants learned that families often find peace when they can locate the burial sites of their loved ones. When families visit the burial sites, and conduct ceremonies, they can finally release the Spirits of their loved ones to be with their ancestors.

Joanasie shared; the structure of the program, the process to apply, the documentation and consents required to permit the Nanilavut team to do the necessary searches on a family’s behalf, the research tools used, and the format (a formal letter) sent to families with the results of the search. Joanasie also noted that the program still faces challenges, research gaps, and a lack of support from the provincial and territorial governments that may hold important records that are needed to help a family’s search.

The Independent Special Interlocutor, in her closing comments at the Gathering, specifically called on Canada to support this program and create similar programs for First Nations and Métis people who were also taken to, and died at, TB sanatoria across the country.

## *Emerging Practices*

The Nanilavut – “*Let’s Find Them*” workshop highlighted important knowledge that could support similar initiatives searching to find the missing children and their unmarked burials, including:

- Unfortunately, locating graves has not been a priority for many decades;
- Community training is essential;
- Sufficient resources are essential to adequately respond to families in need;
- There are too many unmarked graves;
- Funeral homes are not always able to assist;
- Vital Statistics can be difficult to work with;
- There is a need for support from all levels of government; and
- Tracking down records can be very challenging.



*When we find these graves of the Inuit, we are letting the Spirit and soul of that person to go to heaven. We help release them from what has happened.*

– Joanasie Akumalik



# Gathering Wisdom: Know History

Ashley Henrickson from [Know History](#) facilitated a workshop and shared strategies on how to conduct archival research, including how to create research plans and access the numerous archives where known records exist.

These technical research skills can help with the Sacred work of recovering the missing children and their unmarked burials.

Ashley explained that historical records can help identify the names of children taken and those that died. They can assist in identifying all those that worked in the institutions and help trace the transfer of children between institutions. The workshop also cautioned that although the historical records are important, they can also be problematic and misleading given that they were created by government and church officials that may have been ignorant, or motivated to disguise or minimize the true horrors of what was occurring.



Know History presentation with slides



## Conclusions and Next Steps

At this sixth National Gathering, Survivors, Elders, Indigenous families, leadership, and community members came together in the North to share their knowledge, hear the truths of Survivors, engage in ceremony, and to learn and heal together, as they support the Sacred work of searching for the missing children and unmarked burials across Turtle Island.

Each Gathering brings a unique set of perspectives and knowledge, and some clear and overarching messages emerged at the Iqaluit Gathering. Some of these messages include:

- The experience of colonialism in the North is both distinct from the experience in other parts of the country and is also hauntingly familiar;
- Health and wellness training and supports, the power of cultural knowledge-sharing, and the impact of intergenerational connections to support healing and instill hope for future generations are important aspects of the Sacred work;
- Access to adequate supports and resources continues to be a challenge, particularly in the North, with its vast geography;
- Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, and Indigenous communities continue to demand an end to impunity for the genocidal harms that were done to their loved ones. The rampant sexual abuse and legacy of stolen babies in the North was a particular focus of this Gathering; and
- Important lessons about forced transfers from the Inuit experience during the TB epidemic can help inform our understanding and approach to the search for the unmarked burials and missing children taken from Residential Schools.



Indigenous Peoples have their own ceremonies, processes, and systems, and these systems are distinct among different communities and in different regions of the country. Communities must be supported to revitalize and implement their traditional ways to heal the trauma of the past. The continued need for this healing was evident at the sixth National Gathering, as participants bore witness to the pain and the strength of all those (young and old) who continue to carry the burden of colonial trauma. The resilience of the Survivors and intergenerational Survivors was incredibly impactful, and motivated many participants to return to their home communities, to apply the knowledge they gained, and to continue the challenging work of leading their communities and organizations through the Sacred work of recovering the children.

Natan shared that after the announcement of the unmarked graves in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc in 2021, he observed a shift – a different level of empathy and understanding of what has happened in Canada with regard to Indigenous Peoples and Residential Schools than ever before. He encouraged participants to draw strength from that and continue to push the country to do better. He said:

*It's up to us to keep that momentum going. And to exchange the empathy and the worry and the concern with clear direction on what we do about it.*

Natan also reminded us that “[t]his work is part of an overarching story in this country about disrespect and lack of justice in life and in death.”

In the face of this legacy of impunity and disrespect, the Independent Special Interlocutor will continue to hold the voices of Survivors – the living witnesses – at the heart of this Sacred work, and will consider the important Northern perspectives, insights, and experiences provided at the Gathering in preparing her Final Report that will be released at the end of the Mandate- a Report that will offer precisely the kind of clear direction that Natan spoke about.

Information about the final National Gathering, once available, can be found at [www.osi-bis.ca](http://www.osi-bis.ca).



Survivor supports Richard (Pakak) Picco as he shares his grief and loss



Youth and Leadership

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to Outcrop Group whose partnership and support were so important to the success of this Gathering.

Thank you to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for their ongoing work and for their presence at this Gathering, facilitating Sharing Circles and collecting statements from Survivors.

Thank you to Indigenous Services Canada who provided important health and wellness supports.

Thank you to Gathering Co-Chairs Sylvia Cloutier and Naomi Tatty for guiding everyone throughout our time together in Iqaluit with kindness and respect.

Thank you to the Elders, Survivors, and youth community members who generously shared their knowledge and experiences and provided guidance to ensuring that Indigenous protocols were followed throughout. The Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor expresses a special acknowledgment of the support provided by Cultural Advisor, Bernice Clarke.

Thank you to all the participants, speakers, facilitators, and volunteers who made this Gathering a success and to the staff of the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, who make these Gatherings possible.

Importantly, thank you to all those leading the searches for the missing children so that their Spirits can be brought home.



# Resources

## **National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation**

<https://nctr.ca/>

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) is a place of learning and dialogue where the truths of the Indian Residential School experience are honoured and safeguarded for future generations. The Centre provides Survivors, their families, educators, researchers, and the public the ability to access Indian Residential School history, experiences, and impacts, share it with others, dive deeper into the mysteries that still exist, and help foster healing and reconciliation to ensure this history is never forgotten or repeated.

## **Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)**

### ***Residential schools missing children - community support funding***

[\(rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca\)](https://rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/)

The Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund addresses the ongoing legacy of residential schools is an urgent priority for the Government of Canada. This priority includes supporting Indigenous communities and families as they seek to research, locate, and document burial sites associated with former residential schools. As well as memorialize deaths of children and return children's remains home.

## **Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program**

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581971225188/1581971250953>

The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program was established as part of the 2006 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. It provides cultural and emotional support, and mental health.

## **Know History**

<https://www.knowhistory.ca/>

Know History researches, documents, and shares stories that need to be told. They are experts at locating and accessing historical records in archives and institutions across the country, and work closely with Survivors and their communities to gather evidence that help identify missing children and shed light on the Indian Residential School experience. In addition to naming students, archival research can support communities' efforts to set the historical record straight.

## **The Nanilavut Initiative - Nunatsiavut Government**

<https://nunatsiavut.com/department/language-culture-tourism/nanilavut/>

Nanilavut means "Let's find them," in Inuktitut. This program helps Inuit families find information on loved ones sent away during the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1940s to the 1960s. Some of whom never returned.



# Supports

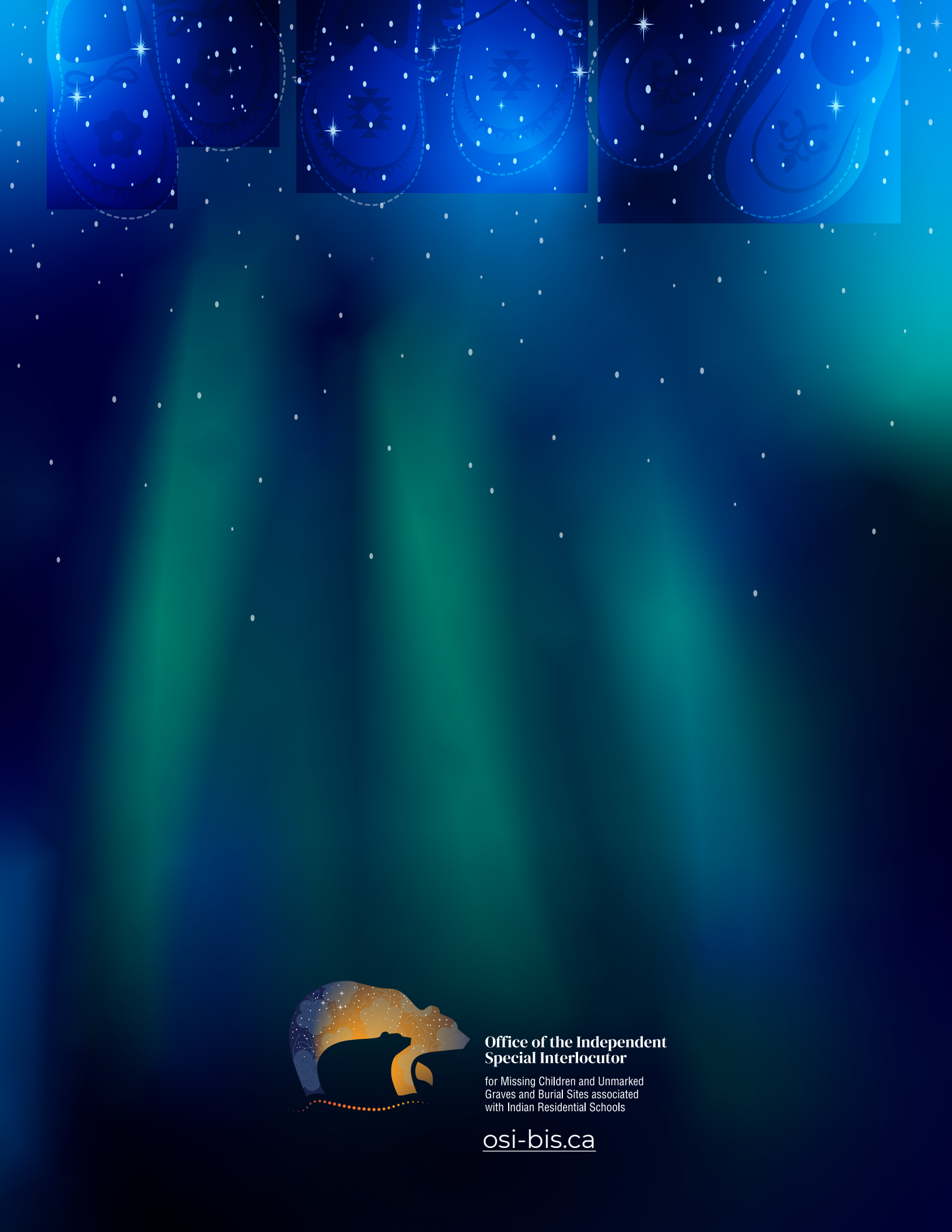
## **The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line**

The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line provides 24-hour crisis support to former Indian Residential School students and their families toll-free at 1-866-925-4419.

The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program was established as part of the 2006 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. It provides cultural and emotional support, and mental health counselling services to Survivors of Indian Residential Schools and the families of former students.

## **Hope for Wellness**

First Nations, Inuit and Métis seeking immediate emotional support can contact the Hope for Wellness Help Line toll-free at 1-855-242-3310, or by online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca).



**Office of the Independent  
Special Interlocutor**

for Missing Children and Unmarked  
Graves and Burial Sites associated  
with Indian Residential Schools

[osi-bis.ca](http://osi-bis.ca)