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## Indigenous Peoples and the Huron Dioceses Archives

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# Indigenous Peoples and the Huron Dioceses Archives

By: Courteney Morris

Head and Heart Fellowship 2022

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## Abstract

How might we decolonize the archives while identifying Métis identity and historical communities in Ontario? The question of decolonization was the guiding force for the research project. After meeting with local Huron Dioceses archivist, Dez Nacario, we established ideas for how to work towards decolonization. The vision is to create an advisory council consisting of local Indigenous people to help guide the decolonization of the Huron Dioceses Litigation Fonds, currently referred to as the Mohawk Institute Fonds. Before creating an advisory council, it was necessary to identify communities that appear in the litigation fonds to be able to contact relevant individuals and organizations. There was also the question of how the litigation fonds should be organized because other organizations have previously mishandled them. Thus, standard archival practices cannot be followed.

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*Before starting the research, I was provided with a finding aid for the litigation fonds.*

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Before starting the research, I was provided with a finding aid for the litigation fonds. The first step was to review the research aid and identify which boxes most likely contain documents with specific community, nation, or residential school names. Once I had determined which boxes to review, I visited the archives and read over the documents in boxes 13, 15, 17 and 20. Whenever documents would mention a community, nation, or school, it would be recorded in a document which later would be cross-referenced with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and known communities.

As a result, three lists were created to assist in reaching out to the appropriate communities and to create a more transparent list of residential schools. However, the second part of my research question regarding Métis identity was more brutal to uncover. This document contains a poem that reflects how my head and heart were affected by the research experience when a document related to Métis identity was found.

## Decolonization is already happening

Canadian residential schools were open from 1880 until 1996. During that time, many Indigenous children were taken from their homes and abused in various ways. In 2007 the most prominent Canadian class-action settlement began to be implemented. Part of the agreement was establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The commission's goal is reconciliation for former students, their families, and their communities, and their work culminated in 94 Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2021).

Call to Action #70 says:

"We call upon the federal government to provide funding to the Canadian Association of Archivists to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of archival policies and best practices to:

- i. Determine the level of compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Joint-Orontlicher Principles, as related to Aboriginal peoples' inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why, with regard to human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools.
- ii. Produce a report with recommendations for full implementation of these international mechanisms as a reconciliation framework for Canadian archives" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

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### *Call to Action #70 says:*

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As Canada has been making progress toward this Call to Action, the federal government conducted a national review of archival policies and practices in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. A report was produced with recommendations for implementing a reconciliation framework for the archives (The steering committee on Canada's archives, 2022)

Many local First Nation community members and committee members from the TRC task force are already decolonizing archival research. Below is a list of community members and committee members who might be interested in joining the advisory council and helping to decolonize the Huron Dioceses litigation fonds.

- Kelly Riley (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Director of Treaties, Lands & Environment)
- Victoria Deleary (Oneida Nation of the Thames, Bear Clan, and Treaty Research Coordinator for Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)
- Cody Groat (Six Nations of the Grand River, Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Western University)
- Barry Hill (Mohawk from Six Nations of the Grand River, Historian and Author)
- Donald Lynch (Six Nations of the Grand River, Chair of the Six Nations Public Library Board)

- Leesha Cowan (Scottish Métis, Disposition Management Archivist with the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan)
- Robin Wallace (Métis Nation of Ontario, Reference Archivist and Librarian with the Provincial Archives of Alberta)

## Residential Schools

The question of how the Huron Dioceses litigation fonds can be decolonized does not come with a simple answer. It is pertinent to recognize that creating access to archival documents is a step towards decolonization. To do so, one must identify what people might look for when going through the archives. The thought processes behind creating the following three sections assume that community members might be interested in finding more information on a specific residential school, nation, or community affected by the dioceses.

The residential school list was created by reading through four boxes of documents that are part of the litigation fond. (Boxes 13, 15, 17, and 20) These boxes were chosen based on the descriptions from the "Diocese of Huron Litigation Fonds. Finding Aid for Anti-Racist, Anti-Heterosexist, and Anti-Colonial Scholars". The list was then cross-referenced with the Indian Residential School Class Action Settlement (2007).

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*It is pertinent to recognize that creating access to archival documents is a step towards decolonization.*

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- Gordon's school
  - Gordon's, Gordon's Reserve, Punnichy, Saskatchewan
- Lac la Ronge
  - Prince Albert (Onion Lake Church of England, St. Alban's, All Saints, St. Barnabas, Lac La Ronge), Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
- *Blackfoot*
  - *No Reference Online to the location of the school*
- Prince Albert
  - Prince Albert (Onion Lake Church of England, St. Alban's, All Saints, St. Barnabas, Lac La Ronge), Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
- Wabasca
  - St. John's (Wabasca Anglican/Church of England), Wabasca, Alberta
- Shingwauk
  - Shingwauk (Wawanosh Home), Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

- Albert Bay
  - *No Reference Online to the location of the school*
- Moose Factory
  - Bishop Horden Hall (Moose Fort, Moose Factory), Moose Island, Ontario
- Blood
  - St. Paul's (Blood, Anglican/Church of England), Cardston, Alberta
- Chapleau
  - Chapleau (St. John's), Chapleau, Ontario
- Peigan
  - St. Cyprian's (Queen Victoria's Jubilee Home), Brocket, Peigan Reserve, Alberta
- Fort George
  - Fort George (St. Philip's), Fort George, Québec
  - Fort George (St. Joseph's Mission, Résidence Couture, Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus), Fort George, Québec
  - Fort George Hostels (September 1, 1975, to June 30, 1978), Fort George, Québec
- Elkhorn
  - Elkhorn (Washakada), Elkhorn, Manitoba
- Whitefish Lake
  - Whitefish Lake (St. Andrew's), Whitefish Lake, Alberta
- Sioux Lookout
  - Pelican Lake (Pelican Falls), Sioux Lookout, Ontario
- Aklavik
  - All Saints (Aklavik Anglican), Aklavik, NWT
- Carcross
  - Carcross (Chooutla), Carcross, Yukon
- Hay River
  - Hay River (St. Peter's), Hay River, NWT

## Nations

The Constitution of Canada (1982) recognizes three distinct Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Within each of these three categories, there are many distinct nations in Canada. The following First Nations were recognized by the Anglican church and were identified in the litigation fonds.

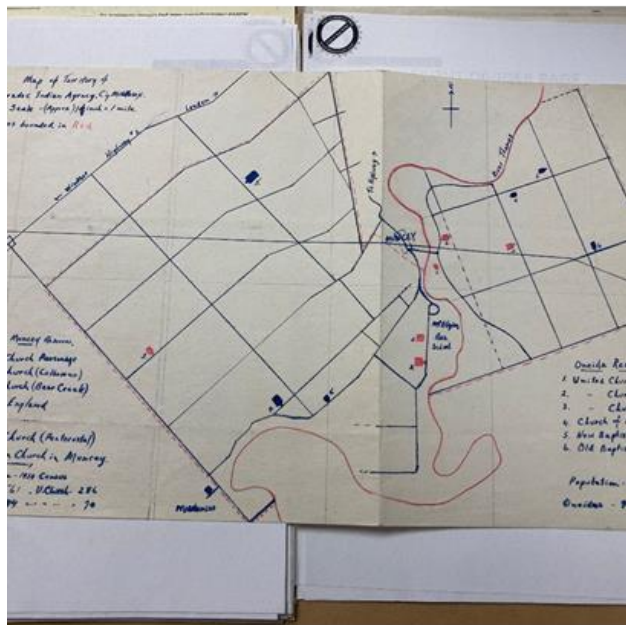
- Mohawk
- Oneida
- Onondaga
- Tuscarora
- Cayuga
- Seneca
- Munsee (also referred to as Delaware)
- Anishinaabe (referred to in records as Chippewa)
- Sioux
- Potawatomi
- Mississauga

## Communities

The following First Nation communities appeared in the litigation fonds, mainly in relation to reserve communities where missions took place to create an Anglican congregation. Many documents that refer to specific communities discuss these missions' alleged successes and failures. Two maps depicting boundaries for several different communities within the Huron Dioceses were also found in the litigation fonds. These maps can be found at the end of this section.

- Haudenosaunee (Six Nations of the Grand River, includes the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Tuscarora, Cayuga and Seneca Nations.)
  - Ohsweken (Community of Six Nations)
  - Kanyengeh (Community of Six Nations)
- Saugeen Reserve
- Neyaashii nigmiing (formerly, Cape Croker Reserve, also known as Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nations, Pt. Croker is also referred to in the archives)
- Sioux Reserve (The archives do not mention which one)
- Bkejwanong (Walpole Island)

- Wiiwkwedong (Kettle Point Reserve) and Aazhoodena (Stoney Point Reserve) (Also known as Chippewas of Kettle Point and Stoney Point First Nations)
- Lenni Lenape (Muncey Reserve, Munsee-Delaware First Nation Reserve)
- Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit (Moraviantown Reserve – Delaware Nation)
- Aamjiwnaang (formerly Chippewas of Sarnia, also appears as Sarnia Reserve in the archives)



## My Research Experience

Although most of the litigation funds focus on First Nations, finding a reference to Métis students and their challenges at school relates to my identity and calls for further reflection. The following poem was written shortly after finding a list of names created by a residential school explaining that mostly Métis students had the intellectual ability to pursue a high school education. The following is a piece of history I would like to pass on to my children to recognize and appreciate their privileges.

A list of names

A list of names that are capable

Who says they are the only capable ones

Potential

Have you missed the potential

Do you disregard others

Christ said to love one another

Do you love those who are not on the list

Do you wish well for those who don't follow your ways?

Why a list

Why not be inclusive

You say we must assimilate

You say we must change

Yet Christ judge not lest thee be judged

Who among you are perfect let him cast the first stone

You preach imperfect

You insist I must change for you

Yet you do not follow your own teachings

Instead, you make a list

Because you see me as half, I have made your list

I see myself as whole

I am raised up because of half

Why can't you accept my whole



This list will haunt me  
You're still alive  
You still feel like your list was correct  
You place judgment on me  
I want freedom from your list  
We deserve more  
We are more than your list  
We will rise above  
We will lecture  
We will preach  
Our language will be reborn  
Our teaching will last against the test of time  
We will rise above  
We will decolonize  
We will share our findings  
We will share your list  
We will bring our stories into the light  
We will create space for voice unheard

## Conclusion

Archival research is time-consuming and very enlightening. Documents include communications, arguments, newspaper clippings, maps and more to help recreate a vision of the past today. However, the Huron Dioceses Litigation Fonds are supposed to focus mainly on southwestern Ontario, plenty of documents record events throughout Canada. There is a need to continue reading the documents in more archival boxes to understand the whole story held within the litigation fonds honestly. New questions also arise that can be researched in the future, such as where we can find more information on Métis experiences and how children were treated in these schools.

With the ongoing research in the Huron Diocese litigation fonds, there is also a need for a safe space where Indigenous community members can privately feel their emotions. I was caught off guard by my emotions when I found the list of Métis students, even though I had been warned that the content of the documents might cause an emotional reaction. I suggest a designated room close to the archives be available for researchers to decompress and smudge. There is a multifaith prayer room one floor above the archives that would be well suited for smudging with appropriate Huron College approval. Also, an

excellent resource to have available to all people reading through the litigation funds would be a list of support systems available through Western University. One such resource would be the Indigenous Student Centre or Western's mental health support. Decolonizing work should be led by Indigenous community members, which means community members should be provided with culturally relevant support in accessing the archives and collaborating with the Diocese in more meaningful ways.

## Acknowledgements

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Head and Heart Research Fellowship committee for selecting me as an Indigenous researcher for the summer of 2022. This experience has been very enlightening. My mentor, Ph.D. candidate Cortney Dakin (Awasis), has taken the time out of her busy schedule to review my work and direct me through my research. There has also been the outstanding dedication of Tammy Johnson and Danica Pawlick-Potts, who have taken the time to teach me about Indigenous research methodologies. The support they offered through weekly circle meetings will not be forgotten. Archivist Dez Nacario has been transparent and supportive throughout the research process. Finally, I must also recognize the love and sacrifice my spouse Marlon Morris has made throughout the summer to support my research efforts and care for our lovely children. Thank you all.

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