



INSTITUTE OF PRAIRIE AND INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGY

Contact: ipiafoa@ualberta.ca

Community Resources Guide for Unmarked Graves Research

This document has been created to provide a list of resources for Indigenous communities who are beginning the process of searching for children who never came home from Indian Residential Schools. It is a living document and will be updated as new information becomes available.

Content Shortcuts:

[Where to Start](#)

[Recommended Workflow](#)

[Resources](#)

[Funding](#)

[How The IPIA Can Help](#)

[Contacts](#)

[Supports](#)

Where to Start:

It can be really overwhelming with all the information that is being released through media, government, and other organizations. The following are a few suggestions of where to focus your efforts when you are starting this process, based on our experience. It is intended to support, not dictate, the path forward, as the process will be determined by the community and will differ depending on your needs.

If you are looking to start this process here are a few things we recommend:

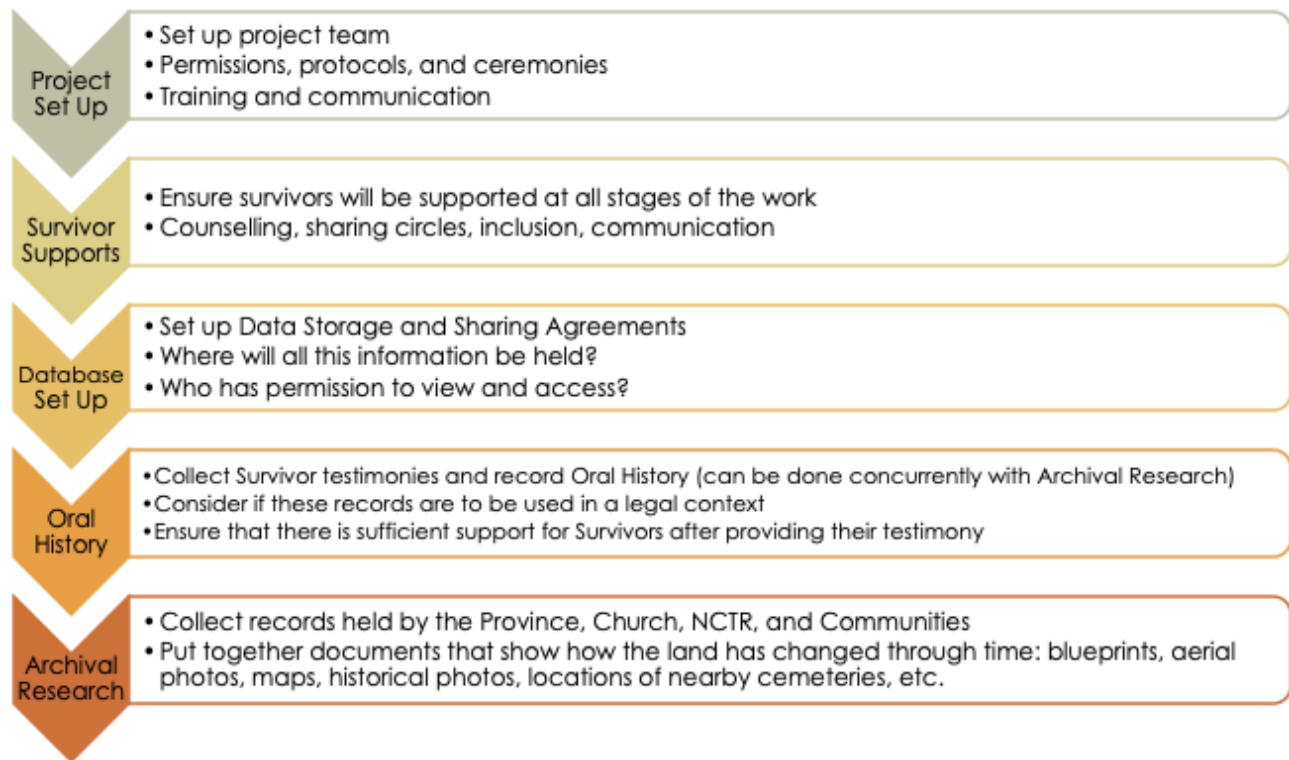
1. **Decide** who is going to lead the project and be the lead contact. Often having a small committee or task force take the lead can be helpful, with representatives from relevant areas (Health, Lands, Culture, etc.). We recommend having team members that would know how to order aerial photos, use GIS, look through archival materials, work with survivors, and support mental health, in addition to those who are leading the project.

2. **Set up internal communication** channels for Survivors, Elders, Chief and Council, Treaty Administration (if applicable), the broader membership, and the Team that will lead the project. Establish how you will share information, especially for those with limited access to computers or the internet.
3. **Set up external communication** channels with those who might be involved at different stages of the work. This can include the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, The Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology, the Canadian Archaeological Association, Geophysics for Truth, or other Nations whose children attended the Residential School you are focusing your search on. Also consider how any information may be released to the media, and set up protocols for this.
4. **Gather preliminary information** from the community and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Most important would be to find the “**School Narrative**” for any particular residential school. This document gives a general overview of the school, when it was in operation, and lists important related documents. Identifying existing materials that might already be on file in the community from previous work will also be important, so work is not duplicated.

A few things to consider as you plan:

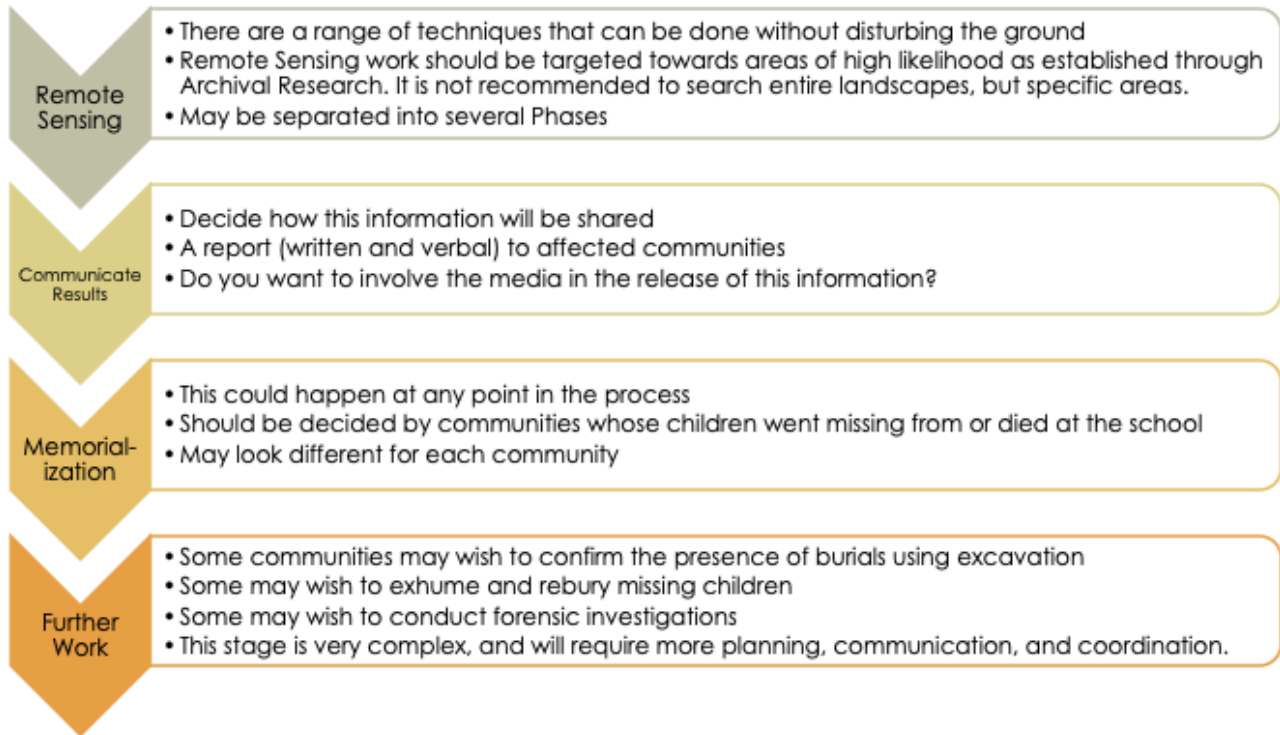
1. **Are there other Nations that may be taking the lead at a particular school?**
Generally, if a school is located on, or near, a specific community, that community may very well be leading the work. Establishing a collaborative relationship will help bring everyone closer to the common goal.
2. **What are the immediate needs of the community?** What supports can you put in place to help the community through all stages of this work? Are you prepared to respond to changing community needs?
3. **What are the long-term goals of the community in this work?** This does not need to be decided right away, but it should be brought up periodically. Is the end-goal simply to locate these graves? Is it commemoration? Is it reburial? Is it justice through the courts? Establishing the end-goal will help determine what kind of techniques, data, training, and funding is required at different stages of work.
4. **This work will take years. Try not to rush.** Most of the work that has been in the news (such as Muskowekwan or Tk'emlups te Secwepemc) are the results of years of collaboration and research. This work is important and urgent, but will take time. Rushed work may cause undue harm to survivors. Please plan with healing in mind, always.

A Recommended Workflow is represented below:



Once communities have reached this point (Archival Research), they are now well-equipped to plan for Remote Sensing work, including Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) to locate unmarked graves. Please note, that when preparing for a GPR Survey, the following materials should be gathered prior to any work:

1. Anything that shows the land, both when the school was in operation and after it was no longer in use. **Maps, building plans, and aerial photos** are most useful; historical photos of the grounds and buildings are also helpful. Location of cemeteries is particularly useful
2. Anything that indicates burial records in the communities around the times the schools were in operation, or indicates where children might have been buried. This can include **records of where cemeteries may have been** through time, or other information about **burial records**.
3. Any information that can be provided **from survivors and community members** about locations to search.



Resources to Support Your Work:

General Overview / Pathways:

- The Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA) has released a number of helpful guidance documents for communities who are starting to do work around unmarked graves. The link to the website is [here](#). Many of these resources are linked below.
- A general overview of what the work around unmarked graves could look like can be found in the [Pathways Document](#) that has been created to help communities start to plan the work involved. An accompanying powerpoint can be found here: [Pathways Map](#).
- A video guide discussing how to go about designing a research project dedicated to locating unmarked graves is found [here](#).

Archival Research:

- The National Center for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) has a large archive of documents related to residential schools. There are public documents available to search [here](#) and a public list of children who are known to have died or gone missing [here](#). Communities can contact the NCTR directly at NCTRrecords@umanitoba.ca to access documents that are not generally available to the public.

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- The NCTR has a death registry that is typically only available to families of children who attended the school. However, they have ways to share this information with communities through a reciprocal data agreement. To begin this process, please email NCTRrecords@umanitoba.ca.
- While the NCTR holds many of the national records, additional information related to children who attended residential schools may be found in [Library and Archives Canada](#).
- Provincial, regional, local, and Church archives may also hold information related to residential schools. A list of provincial and territorial archives can be found [here](#).
- A guide to ordering aerial photos can be found [here](#).

Oral History:

- A resource for Indigenous communities who wish to conduct oral history research to support their efforts to identify the unmarked burials of Indigenous children who attended Indian Residential Schools has been developed by Ave Dersch, find it [here](#).

Remote Sensing:

- There are many remote sensing techniques that can be used to identify unmarked graves, and there is no single one that fits every situation or context. A short summary of available techniques is found [here](#).
- The CAA has also released a series of documents regarding remote sensing, including an [FAQ](#) and a [Pathways Document](#) to help communities understand the technology and how it can be applied to grave contexts.
- They have also released a Webinar on [“Best Practices in Remote Sensing and Grave Detection”](#) for those wanting to conduct the work within the community, or researchers who are new to applying these techniques to a grave context.

Geophysical Survey (e.g., Ground-Penetrating Radar, Magnetometry):

- The CAA has released an introduction to Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) [here](#).
- An elaboration of how to collect field data with GPR is found [here](#).
- There are other Geophysical techniques available, including Magnetometry, which is described [here](#).
- Further detail can be found within the following video by Andrew Martindale, [“Quantifying Uncertainty in Ground-Penetrating Radar”](#).

Forensics:

- The Canadian Association for Physical Anthropology (CAPA) has released a [pathways document](#) for communities interested in pursuing identification and repatriation.

Federal Funding:

This website has a good guideline for the process to access funding and what other federal supports there are;

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1622742779529/1628608766235#s2>

How to Access Federal Funding (from the above website):

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada recognizes that these initiatives must be flexible and responsive to the broad range of community needs, realities and priorities.

Please contact the department for eligible expenditures and send a completed [Residential Schools Missing Children – Community Support Funding form](#) to aadnc.enfants_disparus-missing_children.aandc@canada.ca

Provincial Funding:

- BC: Funding Available, [Link](#)
- Alberta: Funding Available, [Link](#)
- Saskatchewan: Funding is available through FSIN, contact them here: info@fsin.com
- Manitoba: Declared funding available. No information available yet. General Contact mgi@gov.mb.ca
- Ontario: Declared funding available. No information available yet. General Contact GrantsOntarioCS@Ontario.ca
- Nova Scotia: None declared.
- Yukon: Declared funding available. No information available yet. General Contact inquiry.desk@gov.yk.ca
- Northwest Territories: Declared funding available. No information available yet. General Contact <https://www.gov.nt.ca/en/contact-gnwt>
- Nunavut: Declared funding available. No information available yet. General Contact <https://www.gov.nu.ca/contact-us>

NCTR Funding:

- Also has some funding to support communities with memorialization activities <https://nctr.ca/memorial/na-mi-quai-ni-mak/na-mi-quai-ni-mak-community-support-fund/>

How The IPIA Can Help:

- The Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology is committed to helping and supporting communities searching for children who never came home from Indian Residential Schools. However, we are limited by our capacity and capabilities in terms of how we are able to support different community needs.
- If your community is located in, or near to, Alberta, we may be able to help conduct Geophysical or Remote-Sensing surveys of areas that may contain unmarked burials. If

your community is looking to partner with the IPIA to survey these areas, please email ipiafoa@ualberta.ca. Please note that we are looking at Spring 2022 for the start of any new GPR projects. Remote areas will require additional planning and extended time frames.

- If your community is putting together an application for funding or grants that requires cost estimation for any geophysical or survey work, we are happy to help guide you through the budgeting process.
- We are available for engagement, consultation, and oversight if a community decides to either hire a private contractor to conduct remote-sensing work, or if they decide to conduct the work themselves in order to ensure best practices are being followed.
- We are working towards setting up a workshop or similar educational resources to help communities build capacity to conduct the work themselves. As of now, this is not yet available.
- We have limited capacity to support archival research for communities, but we are able to suggest certain individuals. The Canadian Historical Association is also a great resource to further support communities in the archival work related to residential schools (contact information below).

Important Contacts:

- For Funding related to Residential Schools; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: aadnc.enfants_disparus-missing_children.aandc@canada.ca
- For Archival Support and Information; NCTR: nctr@umanitoba.ca
- For Archival Research Support; Canadian Historical Association: cha-shc@cha-shc.ca
- For Technical Guidelines/Consultation and Best Practices; Canadian Archaeology Association: unmarkedgraves@canadianarchaeology.com
- For GPR Guidance; Geophysics for Truth: braun@queensu.ca
- For Guidance on Forensic investigation; Canadian Society of Forensic Science: csfs@bellnet.ca
- For Remote-Sensing (drone-based) information in Alberta; SAIT: rick.duchscher@sait.ca
- For 3D scanning and Memorialization in Alberta; U of Calgary: pcdawson@ucalgary.ca

Supports for Survivors and Communities:

Help is available 24/7 for survivors and their families through the Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419. Mental health support for Indigenous peoples across the land we call Canada is available through the Hope for Wellness chatline at 1-800-721-0066 or using the chat box at <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>. The Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society provides information about these and other supports that are available: <https://www.irsss.ca>