



January 23, 2013

Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Re: Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) concerning the Ontario Superior Court of Justice case brought by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools (TRC) that alleges the federal government is not fulfilling its obligations pursuant to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

Established in 1975, the Association of Canadian Archivists is a national not-for-profit organization with a paid membership of over 600, ACA represent archivists and archives in every province and territory of Canada. With headquarters in Ottawa, the ACA's mandate is to provide the archival profession leadership and to facilitate an understanding and appreciation of Canada's archival heritage.

The ACA has numerous members who have been intimately involved with the Indian Residential Schools process as archivists for the federal government or for religious orders. In fact, many Canadian archivists have been touched by the TRC on the process, either directly through making accessible archival records or indirectly through fielding reference questions from clients involved in the settlement.

As archivists we greatly understand the costs and difficulties of fulfilling the terms of the Settlement Agreement on Indian Residential Schools. Section 11 of Schedule N of the agreement stipulates that "to ensure the efficacy of the truth and reconciliation process, Canada and the churches will provide all relevant documents in their possession or control to and for the use of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission..." Archival research of such magnitude is both time consuming and cost intensive and we recognize it is entirely possible that the framers of the agreement did not fully understand the scope of what they were committing to do. Nevertheless, by not providing surrogates of relevant documents from all government departments in a timely fashion, we are concerned that the federal government is in breach of the agreement.

Additionally, we are disturbed by your government's November 2012 request that the TRC bear the costs of digitization of these archival records. While this is allowable under Schedule N of the agreement, such a request should have been made at the outset of the commission in order to ensure that the TRC could factor these costs into its budget submission to the Minister of Indian Residential Schools Resolutions Canada. Such a demand this late in the TRC mandate makes it impossible for the Commission to fulfill its mission concerning federal records relating to Indian Residential Schools.



Association
of Canadian
Archivists

email aca@archivists.ca www.archivists.ca

When the government of Canada signed the Settlement Agreement on Indian Residential Schools, it committed to the completion of the responsibilities of Schedule N. If your government abrogates its responsibility concerning federal archival records, the reconciliation process and, thus, the healing process will not be complete.

As archivists, we strongly urge you to work with the TRC to come to suitable agreement on this matter. We hope that the survivors of Indian Residential Schools and the people of Canada to come to a true and meaningful reconciliation over this shameful aspect of Canadian history.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions on this matter.

Best regards,

Original signed by Loryl MacDonald

Loryl MacDonald
President
Association of Canadian Archivists

cc. Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada