



## Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Research Opportunities

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established under the terms of the 2007 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. The TRC is mandated to:

- produce a report including recommendations to the government of Canada concerning the residential school system and experience including: the history, purpose, operation and supervision of the residential school system, the effect and consequences of the residential school system (including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and the impact on human dignity) and the ongoing legacy of the residential schools;
- guide a process of reconciliation involving former First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, their families and communities, religious entities, former school employees, government, and non-Aboriginal Canadians generally;
- promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the history and legacy of the Indian residential school system;
- employ interdisciplinary, social sciences, historical, oral traditional and archival methodologies in undertaking its research;
- recognize the significance of Aboriginal oral and legal traditions in its activities.

Under the direction of Commissioners, the TRC Research Unit has designed a comprehensive research agenda that addresses both the truth-telling and reconciliation-fostering components of the Commission's mandate. The research agenda incorporates input from various consultations undertaken with residential school survivor groups, multi-party representatives, national and international academics, experts and practitioners.

Research will be carried out by Commission staff, research contracts with various subject experts, community-based and institutional research partnerships, and through a series of conferences, symposiums and workshops organized by or in cooperation with the Commission. The new body of research generated may be published by the TRC in a variety of formats, including in scholarly journals, occasional papers and conference reports.

## Call for Proposals and Expressions of Interest

Scholars from all disciplines are invited to submit proposals for the research projects listed below. You may also contact us with expressions of interest on other relevant projects you are prepared to undertake. All proposals, expressions of interest or enquiries should be sent to the Commission's Director of Research, Dr. John S. Milloy ([john.milloy@trca.ca](mailto:john.milloy@trca.ca)).

### Deadline for submissions: August 15, 2010

The Research Unit will issue a second call for proposals and expressions of interest at a later date as additional projects are developed.

Please note, while many of the research projects described below involve an examination of the experiences of northern and Inuit residential school students, specific northern and Inuit projects have not been included pending consultation with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Northern and Inuit Directors.

Funding for approved proposals will be provided through contracts for services to cover the ordinary costs of research, including salaries for research assistants, in line with standard scholarly research funding levels (for example, those of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). Your proposal should include a budget and timeline. The Commission reserves the right to limit funding awards based on its financial capacity. All projects produced under contract with the TRC are the property of the Commission.

Your proposal should demonstrate clearly how it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Makes a new contribution to existing body of knowledge on research related to the history and legacy of the residential school system as it relates to First Nations, Inuit or Métis peoples; and/or truth and reconciliation processes.
- Meets accepted ethical standards and protocols for conducting research concerning Aboriginal peoples.
- Incorporates collaborative funding and/or community-based research partnerships.
- Utilizes Aboriginal research methodologies.
- Explores emerging theory and pedagogy related to collective historical memory, public commemoration and reconciliation.
- Makes policy recommendations on residential school-related issues.

## TRC RESEARCH PROJECTS

The TRC Research Unit's research projects fall into two broad categories: those that will fill significant gaps in the understanding of the history of the residential schools; and those that examine both the legacy of the schools and ways of moving beyond that legacy.

### 1) GAP RESEARCH PROJECTS

These projects address gaps in knowledge of the structure, operation, and history of the residential school system. While these projects are in the main historical and document-based, in almost every case they require a cross-disciplinary approach that may include an oral history component.

#### Project Descriptions:

##### Missing Children and Unmarked Burials

The following suite of research projects is intended to address the recommendations of the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials Working Group and forms an integral part of the Commission's mandate and overall research strategy.

- **Missing Children and Unmarked Burials File Review:** This project would consist of a qualitative review of all relevant files and policies related to deaths and disappearances in the schools from both primary and secondary sources. The data produced through this project will inform all other projects related to children who died or went missing while attending an Indian residential school.
- **Cemeteries Project:** The overall objective of this project is to conduct specific archival and governmental source research to identify burial sites and cemeteries in association with the schools in all regions of the country. Researchers would record the location of identified burial sites in consultation with local First Nations communities and develop protocols for community-based commemoration initiatives relating to residential school cemeteries.
- **Health Standards and Services:** This project is expected to review the nature of health services provided to the students, the regulations governing those services, and the general levels of compliance with health standards in the management of student health and care. It would also research the policies relating to the deaths of children, reporting procedures, if any, and the burial of deceased children.

- **Total residential school enrolment (statistical project):** This project would arrive at enrolment numbers and death rates for the residential school system over the course of its history.

### Other Gap Research Projects

- **School funding levels:** This project would review government and church funding of the residential school system, and place that funding in the wider context of state and charity funding of similar institutions in Canada and the United States.
- **Residential School Staff Project:** This project would document the collective history and living memory of former residential school staff including teaching and administrative staff, locally engaged Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, and Department of Indian Affairs employees responsible for the management of the overall residential school system
- **Métis Participation:** This project would document the residential school experience (direct and indirect) of Métis people
- **The Role of the RCMP:** This project would document the involvement of the Mounted Police in the residential schools system. It would examine both the period when the schools were in operation and in the years that followed, when survivors began to tell their experiences of abuse at the hands of school staff.
- **Who Knew What When:** This project would involve review of Hansard and parliamentary records to determine the level of parliamentary knowledge of the residential school system.
- **Provincial Involvement:** This project would detail the role of the provinces in the residential school system. It would examine a number of ways in which provincial governments intersected with the system including school inspection, registration of births and deaths, hospital records and fire marshal inspections.
- **Getting to Sorry:** This project would document and evaluate the course of events which led to church apologies, the Departmental apology by Minister Jane Stewart, the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and Canada's apology delivered in the House of Commons.
- **Resistance:** This research project would examine the strategies and significance of resistance to the residential school system.

## 2) LEGACY RESEARCH

New research will be generated through in-house projects, external project partnerships, conferences, and academic publications. This work will address 1) ongoing post-school trauma and 2) reconciliation or ways of moving forward.

### Stream 1) Post-school trauma

These projects involve research into ongoing post-school trauma relative to the contemporary truth of the residential school system. Research in this area will examine the system's legacy in the lives of survivors, inter-generational families, and communities. Linkages between gender issues, societal attitudes and high rates of violence against Aboriginal women will be examined.

#### Project Descriptions:

- **Linkages:** This is a set of projects that will assess the nature and extent of a post-school common experience that brought former students and their families and communities into contact with other state regulatory institutions such as courts, hospitals child welfare agencies, juvenile homes, and prisons.
- **Gender research project:** This project will examine the interconnections between the residential school system, violence within the Aboriginal community, and sexism against women in communities.

### Stream 2) Moving forward

Projects in this research stream will examine ways of moving forward by exploring avenues of reconciliation with an emphasis on:

- Aboriginal approaches to healing and reconciliation (constitutional reconciliation of the educational system and language revitalization);
- lessons learned from the TRC's own truth and reconciliation process (for example, the use of dialogue circles); a conceptual framework outlining the relationship between truth, justice and reconciliation;
- international comparative research regarding the institutionalization of children within the context of various United Nations conventions; and
- the role of public education in reframing the residential school history through public history and commemoration initiatives; and arts-based approaches to reconciliation.

## Project Descriptions

**Aboriginal Approaches to History, Justice and Reconciliation:** This research would engaged with Aboriginal communities to research the impacts of the residential school system on Aboriginal traditional governance and legal systems and explore how these systems have persisted and adapted over time.

**Reconciling Education:** The purpose of this project will be to understand the abuse of state power that created the residential school system and to make recommendations for a constitutional reconciliation between the contemporary educational systems in Canada and Aboriginal peoples. The project would examine the relationship between residential school and existing educational systems in Canada with a focus on the role of Aboriginal knowledge systems.

**Language Revitalization as Reconciliation:** This project will examine the potential of language maintenance and revitalization as acts of reconciliation and restoration.

**Truth and Reconciliation Dialogues: Residential school History and Legacies:** Working with data generated by the Commission processes, this project will document the role of Commission practices in facilitating reconciliation.

**Residential Schools through an International:** This project will set the residential school history and legacy within the international context of human rights law, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, and the UN conventions on genocide and the rights of the child.

**Residential Schools through a Constitutional Lens:** This project would be a legal and socio-political analysis of constitutional law and Aboriginal law in the context of reconciliation,

**Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and Indigenous Peoples:** This project would focus on comparative studies in national and international contexts on the following themes: the impact of truth and reconciliation commissions on indigenous populations; the capacity of truth and reconciliation commissions to deal with historic wrongs committed on indigenous peoples, including compulsory boarding schools and other assimilationist systems; and the significance of self-determination in the design of any process that has the goal of addressing wrongs committed against Indigenous peoples.

**Teachings about Truth, Justice and Reconciliation from the Residential School History and Legacy:** This project would investigate the relationship between truth, justice and reconciliation in an historical context of unequal treatment based on identity and culture.

**IRS History: The Role of Canadian Public History and Commemoration in Reconciliation:**

This project would examine public history and commemoration of the residential school experience. In doing so, it would explore the effectiveness of these initiatives in influencing public understanding (or misunderstanding) of the past as it relates to the present and future.

**Arts-based approaches to truth and reconciliation:** This project would analyze and make recommendations on the contribution of the arts to breaking the silence surrounding the residential school history and legacy, the facilitation of healing and the stimulation of discussion about the residential school experience.