

HONOURING THE CHILDREN WHO NEVER CAME HOME:

Truth, Education and Reconciliation

Interim report of the Standing Senate
Committee on Indigenous Peoples

The Honourable Brian Francis, Chair
The Honourable David M. Arnot, Deputy Chair



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The report cover shows a memorial for Indigenous children who never came home from residential schools with children's shoes and toys placed around the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is dedicated to the Indigenous Survivors and the families and communities whose children were forcibly taken to Indian Residential Schools and other institutions. May they find healing, accountability and justice, and may they be supported in their sacred work to bring honour, respect and dignity to the children.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Honourable Brian Francis, *Chair*

The Honourable David M. Arnot, *Deputy Chair*

The Honourable Senators

Michèle Audette

Mary Coyle

Margo Greenwood

Nancy J. Hartling

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Dennis Glen Patterson

Donald Neil Plett

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Ex-officio members of the committee:

The Honourable Marc Gold, P.C. and/or The Honourable Patti LaBoucane-Benson

The Honourable Donald Neil Plett and/or The Honourable Yonah Martin

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ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, March 3, 2022:

The Honourable Senator Francis moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples;

That the documents received, evidence heard and business accomplished by the committee since the beginning of the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2023, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Gérald Lafrenière

Interim Clerk of the Senate

Content Warning

This report contains information about violence related to the Indian residential school system which may be distressing to some readers.

The Government of Canada operates a National Indian Residential School Crisis Line for mental health and emotional support services for former residential school students who are experiencing distress. Contact the Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419 if you or someone you know is triggered while reading the content in this report.

There is also the Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 (toll-free) or the online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://www.hopeforwellness.ca).

Support services are safe, confidential, respectful and non-judgmental.

Introduction

On 21 March 2023, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples (the committee) held a meeting to examine the important and sacred work of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) and the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools (the Special Interlocutor). These two organizations are involved in education and research related to the effects of residential schools, missing children, unmarked graves and burial sites.

Specifically, the committee heard testimony from Elder Barbara Cameron, Residential School Survivor and member of the Survivors Circle, NCTR;¹ Stephanie Scott, Executive Director of the NCTR; Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor; and, Donald Worme, K.C., Independent Legal Counsel of the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor. The committee wishes to thank these witnesses who are honouring, amplifying, and uncovering the truth about the residential school experience from Elders, Survivors and their families.

¹ The [Survivors Circle](#) of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) serves to “[e]nsure that Survivors’ voices and perspectives remain central to NCTR programs and policies; and [p]rovide guidance and advice to the NCTR, the Governing Circle, the University of Manitoba and partners on anything important to the broader Survivor community.”

This report begins with an overview of the history of residential schools in Canada and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The report then discusses issues identified by witnesses which hinder Indigenous families from locating and bringing their children home, including access to records, measures to access and examine burial grounds, legal protections for burial grounds and unmarked graves and supporting the educational work of the NCTR. Based on this evidence, the report makes six recommendations that are focused on supporting Survivors, families and communities to find their missing children and finally bring them home.

Residential Schools and the Work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Between the late 1800s and the 1990s, the federal government, together with several Christian churches, operated a system of residential schools for Indigenous children. The Special Interlocutor stressed that using the official title of “Indian” residential schools “emphasizes the explicitly racist intent of this System”² and differentiates these institutions from private boarding schools. Over 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children attended residential schools and were, in many cases, forced to leave their families. While at the schools, some children were unable to speak to their peers or family members and were forbidden to speak their languages or practice their cultures. Many Indigenous children spent long periods of time away from their home communities where they received little to no education, suffered from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and experienced poor health care, chronic hunger and malnutrition.

In 2006, in response to litigation by First Nations and Inuit Survivors of residential schools, the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* (the IRSSA) was reached between Survivors of residential schools, representatives of the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit, church entities and the Government of Canada.³ Part of the

² Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples (APPA), *Brief*, Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, 16 March 2023.

³ *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*, 2006; for greater details on Indian residential school records, summaries of court decisions related to compensation under the IRSSA, and a timeline, see: [Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at the University of British Columbia](#) and the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#).

agreement included the establishment of the TRC. Métis people were not included in the IRSSA and therefore did not participate in the TRC.

After years of hearing from Survivors and their families and collecting records and related artefacts, the TRC published its Final Reports on residential schools in 2015. The IRSSA mandated the TRC to establish a permanent archive for statements, documents and other materials it would collect from residential school Survivors. This led to the establishment of the NCTR at the University of Manitoba.

Indigenous peoples have raised the “existence of missing children and unmarked burials for decades.”⁴ This was affirmed in the preliminary examination of deceased residential school students included in a 2015 TRC Report entitled, *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*.⁵ In its report, the TRC summarized some of its initial findings about the circumstances of some the student’s deaths it documented. The TRC noted that the high death rates of children who attended residential school was due to the failure to establish and enforce adequate health and safety standards and adequately fund the schools.⁶ The TRC observed that for most of the residential school era, children who died while at the schools were not returned to their home communities.⁷

The TRC found that:

- about one-third of student deaths were not recorded by government or school administrators;
- government or school administrators did not record a cause of death for half of the students who died; and
- children at residential schools died at a far higher rate than non-Indigenous children.

⁴ Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, *Progress Update Report*, 10 November 2022.

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, 2015 and Scott Hamilton, *Where are the Children Buried?*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, 2015.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 1.

These observations make it difficult to find children who went missing from the schools and the location of their graves.

In 2015, the TRC presented 94 Calls to Action, including five specifically related to missing children, unmarked graves and burial grounds, included as Appendix A to this report. The TRC's Calls to Action relate to:

- access to records on the deaths of children from coroner's offices;
- funding from the Government of Canada for the National Residential School Student Death Register;
- the establishment of a registry of residential school cemeteries; and
- the identification and protection of cemeteries.

The TRC Calls to Action ask that the families of children who died at residential school be informed of the burial location of their children and that the children be commemorated.

Special Interlocutor

In May 2021, the identification of potential unmarked burials by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc at the Kamloops Indian Residential School was devastating, but not surprising to Indigenous communities across Turtle Island and generated national and international attention. In response, the Government of Canada appointed Kimberly Murray as the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools in June 2022.⁸ Canada also developed a specific program known as the Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund to provide funding to Indigenous communities to conduct research and knowledge gathering; memorialize and commemorate burial sites, unmarked graves and Survivors; and the investigation, identification and repatriation of remains.⁹

The Special Interlocutor's mandate is derived in part from the TRC Calls to Action as well as the needs expressed by Indigenous communities since the conclusion of the

⁸ Justice Canada, *Independent Special Interlocutor to work with Indigenous communities on protection of unmarked graves and burial sites near former residential schools*, News Release, 8 June 2022.

⁹ Government of Canada, *Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund*.

TRC's work. The Special Interlocutor published an interim report in June 2023 and will publish a final report in 2024.

The Special Interlocutor's mandate is to:

- identify issues of concern from Indigenous peoples related to the identification, preservation, and protection of unmarked graves and burial sites, including the potential repatriation of remains;
- examine laws in place across jurisdictions that could be employed to protect unmarked graves and burial sites; and
- make recommendations to improve existing laws and to develop a new federal legal framework to identify, protect, and preserve unmarked burial sites.¹⁰

The Special Interlocutor outlined the plans to fulfill her mandate through trauma-informed work by holding gatherings with Survivors, Indigenous experts and communities to gather information about Indigenous community needs. She also wishes to better understand the legal, financial and other barriers impeding access to burial sites as well as the records required to locate these burial sites. The Special Interlocutor highlighted important partnerships developed by the office such as the [Unmarked Burials Associated with Former Residential Schools Map](#) developed with Canadian Geographic.¹¹

In 2023, the Government of Canada and the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), an organization based in the Hague, signed a Technical Arrangement. The ICMP has expertise working in various countries around the world to search and find persons that are missing due to armed conflict, human rights abuses, violence, natural and human-made disasters.¹² Under the arrangement, the ICMP will consult Indigenous communities regarding the options different people may wish to pursue to potentially identify and repatriate missing children, including DNA testing, to help establish a national strategy.¹³

¹⁰ Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, [Progress Update Report](#), 10 November 2022.

¹¹ Canadian Geographic, [Unmarked Burials Associated with Former Residential Schools Map](#).

¹² The Government of Canada and International Commission on Missing Persons, [Technical Arrangement](#), February 2023.

¹³ Ibid.

According to Kimberly Murray, prior to the announcement of the contract, the Government of Canada did not consult Indigenous-led organizations and advisory bodies that have significant experience working with Survivors and missing children.¹⁴ The Special Interlocutor expressed concern that the ICMP does not have the cultural competency and experience to conduct public engagement sessions with Indigenous communities in Canada.¹⁵ Further, she described her concern about Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs' oversight of the ICMP's work and the Indigenous ownership, control and access to data and information, among other matters.¹⁶

Access to Records

Many children who died while attending the schools were likely far from home. Their families may not have been notified about their death or where they were buried. Indigenous peoples need to find and examine records to piece together the location of unmarked burial grounds or cemeteries where their children may be buried.¹⁷ Records could include death certificates or records related to illness and/or transfers to other institutions.

The NCTR is the steward of Survivors' testimonies and maintains the Survivor statements, documents and photographs collected by the TRC from Survivors and their families. It also has a mandate to continue the research of the TRC and contribute to reconciliation by promoting education and understanding of residential schools and their impacts on Indigenous peoples. The NCTR gathers all records associated with residential schools so they can help Survivors research children who are missing, and provides public access to these records to provide education about the legacy and impacts of residential schools.

¹⁴ These include the National Indigenous Organizations or Indigenous-led organizations and advisory committees (such as the NCTR and the National Advisory Committee on Residential Schools, Missing Children and Unmarked Burials).

¹⁵ APPA, *Evidence*, Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, 21 March 2023.

¹⁶ APPA, *Brief*, Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, 16 March 2023.

¹⁷ The Special Interlocutor noted that "there are likely unmarked burials associated with every former Indian Residential School Site across Canada... there may be many associated sites where unmarked burials may exist as children were often sent to other institutions...including hospitals (psychiatric, Indian and sanatoria), church cemeteries, reformatory and industrial schools." Kimberly Murray, *Brief*, 16 March 2023.

The committee heard about important partnerships for sharing records and documents about residential schools with the NCTR. Stephanie Scott, Executive Director of the NCTR, highlighted work that is underway to locate and preserve sources about residential schools. For example, she commended the National Film Board of Canada, which will identify and catalogue records to share with the NCTR. Of significance, it will also digitally preserve “all 7,000-plus Survivors’ statements gathered during the TRC so that they are available for decades to come.”¹⁸

The NCTR provided the committee with a list of governments and organizations across Canada that have committed to transfer residential school records to the NCTR. However, it remains unclear when the records will be transferred. Outstanding records are held by different governments’ coroners and vital statistics agencies and churches. The federal government also has records that could provide important sources of information for families looking for missing children.

The NCTR provided the committee with a list of governments and organizations that have commitments to transfer residential school records to the NCTR, included as Appendix B to this report. These records consist of coroner’s reports and death certificates from several provinces and territories, including from the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, along with records held by Catholic church entities. The committee recognizes the heavy emotional toll on Indigenous Survivors, families and communities looking for a missing child. The committee understands that struggling to access records makes this task even more daunting and potentially traumatic.

The NCTR and the Government of Canada have established a National Residential School Document Advisory Committee to identify and share all records with the NCTR. Sources of information to locate missing children and unmarked graves include information related to the disposition of lands after a residential school was closed and records related to the IRSSA. Other important government sources of information include records related to day schools and records associated with the IRSSA such as the Independent Assessment Process, among others.¹⁹

¹⁸ APPA, *Evidence*, Stephanie Scott, Executive Director, NCTR, 21 March 2023.

¹⁹ Under the IRSSA, two forms of financial compensation were provided to former students of residential schools: the Common Experience Payment and the Independent Assessment Process. The Independent Assessment Process was for students who experienced abuse and wrongful acts that resulted in psychological consequences. To access compensation, individuals submitted a claim and disclosed the nature of the abuse that could include such records as

The committee recognizes that while the Government of Canada has withheld certain records related to residential schools, work is underway to prepare to transfer an estimated 10 to 15 million remaining records to the NCTR.²⁰ The committee believes this work is urgent and should be expedited. For this reason, the committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That Library and Archives Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada expedite the transfer of all records related to residential schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and provide the committee with a progress report by December 2023 and that the Government of Canada take all necessary action to ensure that provincial and territorial governments and all organizations and entities that have withheld records from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation promptly release them.

Further, the committee believes families have waited long enough, and calls upon church entities and governments to immediately release outstanding records related to residential schools. The committee agrees this task is urgent and intends to convene a meeting in the fall of 2023 to hold different institutions to account for the delays in sharing records:

testimonies, and/or medical reports, among many others. Copies of these records are held by the Government of Canada. In a Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Canada (Attorney General) v. Fontaine*, 2017 SCC 47, the Court held that the collection of these records was intended to be confidential and private; these accounts will be retained for a 15-year period during which time Survivors can opt to have their records preserved, otherwise all records will be destroyed.

²⁰ APPA, *Evidence*, Donald Worme, K.C., Independent Legal Counsel, Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, and Stephanie Scott, 21 March 2023.

Recommendation 2

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples will hold a hearing with entities and organizations that have withheld records from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in the Fall of 2023.

Measures to Access and Examine Burial Grounds

We actually do need more laws because we need to tell non-Indigenous Canadians what they have to do, what their legal responsibilities are and we need to hold them accountable for their actions.

Kimberly Murray

The committee wishes to recognize the importance of the Residential Schools Missing Children – Community Support Fund by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. Among other important tasks, Indigenous communities can apply for funding to:

- hold ceremonies and commemoration events;
- access mental health supports and Elders' services; and
- cover expenses related to archaeology, forensic investigation and ground penetrating radar.

By early 2023, funding had been extended to nearly 100 Indigenous communities. Of concern is that funding is only available for initiatives related to 145 residential schools listed in the IRSSA and the *Newfoundland and Labrador Residential School Settlement Agreement*.²¹

²¹ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [*Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund: Program Guidelines*](#).

However, funding for this work will end in 2025, despite the Special Interlocutors' observation that investigating and protecting burial sites may take up to two decades to complete.²² The committee believes this funding provides critical support for Indigenous communities to investigate and protect burial sites, among other matters, and should be extended into the future. Further, the committee heard about the limitations of program funding. Survivors told the TRC and the Special Interlocutor that Indigenous children's graves may be located in many places not currently covered by the existing program terms and conditions such as hospitals or sanatoria, among others. Survivors should be engaged to determine other locations that should be covered by this funding. Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation 3

That Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada extend funding for the Residential Schools Missing Children – Community Support Fund until 2033 and ensure that this funding is flexible to cover all locations where burial sites associated with former residential schools may be located.

Few Indigenous organizations have the expertise to support Indigenous communities to locate, document and memorialize burial sites. Of note, there is a lack of skilled individuals to analyze data related to searches which is delaying the work of locating burial sites. Specialized skills and training are required to analyze data generated by radar. Canada does not have the expertise to keep up with the demand from Indigenous communities.

Donald Worme, K.C., Independent Legal Counsel for the Special Interlocutor stated that there are other institutions that can conduct this work. For example, the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) has been assisting Mayan communities in Guatemala to identify, exhume, and repatriate over 7,000 individuals.²³ He recommended that the Indigenous organizations such as the FAFG should be provided with the same level of support as the International Commission on Missing Persons. In his view, the FAFG would be better placed to “lend their

²² APPA, *Evidence*, Kimberly Murray, 21 March 2023.

²³ APPA, *Evidence*, Donald Worme, 21 March 2023.

expertise and knowledge to our communities...We have young people who can be trained...They can do it with cultural proximity and cultural competence ... it has to be Indigenous led.”²⁴ Such an approach would also ensure Indigenous laws and culture guide this work.

Legal Protections for Burial Grounds and Unmarked Graves

The committee heard that gaps in federal, provincial, territorial and municipal laws may impede the establishment of legal protections for burial sites. Part of the problem of locating burial sites is that multiple laws from various jurisdictions may apply. In each province and territory, for example, there may be several types of laws in operation including provincial laws and municipal by-laws related to funerals, burials and cremations, coroner’s enabling legislation, as well as *Criminal Code* provisions.²⁵ Complicating matters further, some of the cemeteries and burial grounds are on privately held lands. As Kimberly Murray explains, Indigenous families need accessible mechanisms to help address these barriers:

We need access to land. This is what keeps me awake many nights, thinking about how some things could escalate. We have landowners that aren’t allowing survivors onto properties, even to do ceremony, let alone to search the grounds. My office has had to write letters and have meetings with landowners to try to convince them that this is the right thing to do.

Kimberly Murray

The Special Interlocutor explained that her office is examining the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990* (NAGPRA) in the United States to determine whether elements could be implemented in Canada. NAGPRA was developed in the 1980s to respond to the fact that American museums held the remains of thousands of Indigenous peoples. The law provides for the protection of

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ APPA, [Evidence](#), Kimberly Murray, 21 March 2023.

Indigenous remains and burial grounds located on federal and tribal lands, including ownership/control and repatriation of human remains and objects excavated or discovered on these lands by Indigenous descendants or communities. Federal agencies and museums must establish inventories of human remains and notify Indigenous families and a committee monitors compliance.²⁶ Under the legislation, civil penalties can be issued and there are subpoena powers to compel witnesses, records and documents.

The Special Interlocutor explained that some believe NAGPRA does not go far enough with respect to enforcement penalties.²⁷ The Special Interlocutor is to make recommendations regarding a new federal legal framework respecting Indigenous burial sites since there is no existing federal legislation.

Kimberly Murray explained that she met with the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Justice and identified ways they can support the work of locating and repatriating Indigenous children. She has requested information from the provinces and territories regarding supports to Indigenous communities, available legal protections and the implementation of the TRC's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice.²⁸ She requested the establishment of a mechanism for her office to communicate directly with the respective provinces and territories, referring to the Family Information Liaison Units as an example of the federal government supporting the provinces. Family Information Liaison Units were established as a "one-stop information service" to help Indigenous families access all available information from government agencies about the loss of their loved ones. These Units coordinate information gathering from a wide range of federal, provincial and territorial government agencies.²⁹

Given that the Special Interlocutor will conclude her work in 2024, the committee is of the view that the office requires federal support to facilitate relationship-building, sharing of knowledge and expertise between the Special Interlocutor, all levels of government and Indigenous peoples. Therefore, the committee recommends:

²⁶ United States Government, *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, 1990.

²⁷ APPA, *Evidence*, Kimberly Murray, 21 March 2023.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Justice Canada, *Family Information Liaison Units*.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada facilitate the creation of a one-window entry into the provinces and territories to connect the Office of the Special Interlocutor and Indigenous families with regional information gathering expertise to recover children missing from residential schools.

Education for Reconciliation

The committee wishes to commend the NCTR for its important work in collecting records and helping Survivors and their families access them to find burial sites. Elder Barbara Cameron and Stephanie Scott, Executive Director set out the accomplishments of the NCTR which provides public education about residential schools to hundreds of organizations and thousands of students. For example, the NCTR program, Imagine a Canada, brings together youth from kindergarten to grade 12 to explain their opinions about reconciliation. The NCTR also worked with Survivors and communities to create a National Student Memorial Register and a memorial banner to commemorate the children who were lost. The NCTR has shared this banner with youth at past events.

However, despite these public education initiatives, the committee heard about ongoing denialism about residential schools and that some individuals deny the negative effects on generations of Indigenous peoples. Of real concern to the committee is the small group of vocal individuals who try to undermine Survivors' accounts of the hardships and abuse they experienced during residential schools.

Elder Barbara Cameron explained:

The more that residential schools are in the headlines, the more backlash we seem to be facing. There are people out there who continue to deny this truth, who don't want to admit that the schools inflicted these harms on Indigenous peoples and that the schools were purposely designed to do that. These deniers look at the accomplishments of individual [S]urvivors and, instead of acknowledging the strength and resilience of those individuals, they say, "Look at all the good the residential school did for you."

What they don't see is the intergenerational loss of our source of being, the loss of our connection to all Creation, our loss of our languages, our cultures, our identity amongst our families and our communities. These deniers ignore the established facts about residential school history, including the documented reality that most children who died in the schools were never returned to their families. Instead, the deniers called the search for unmarked burials "fake news" ... These residential school deniers are not representative of most Canadians. We know this. Denialism is a fringe movement, but it includes individuals with power and influence to be quoted in the media and abroad.³⁰

Denialism serves to distract people from the horrific consequences of residential schools, and the realities of missing children, burials and unmarked graves. The committee is of the view that education and advocacy can effectively combat denialism. The NCTR's work is critical, given that it is guided by Survivors, provides important services to Survivors and preserves the historical record of colonialism's effects on Indigenous peoples.

The committee recognizes the federal government's recent funding announcements to support the NCTR's critical work. In November 2022, the federal government announced funding of \$28.5 million over five years for the NCTR's work.³¹ Further, Budget 2022 proposed to provide \$60 million to support a new building and the

³⁰ APPA, *Evidence*, Elder Barbara Cameron, NCTR, 21 March 2023.

³¹ NCTR, *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation welcomes funding for Centre's new permanent home and long term work*, News Release, 9 November 2022

operations of the NCTR.³² However, Stephanie Scott told the committee that the NCTR relies on a limited amount of project funding to meet a significant demand for public education services to Canadians.³³ The committee believes that the NCTR should have long-term, stable funding to continue its important public education work and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada provide adequate, predictable, stable and long-term funding to ensure the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation can fulfil its mandate.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada take every action necessary to combat the rise of residential school denialism.

Bringing the Children Home

This report has highlighted the barriers and challenges faced by Survivors, families and communities trying to learn about what happened to their children. The committee commends the work of the Special Interlocutor and anxiously awaits the report and recommendations to develop a new federal legal framework to identify, protect, and preserve unmarked burial sites. This critical and sacred work must continue to enable Survivors, families and communities to finally bring their children home. In the words of Elder Barbara Cameron:

We did not allow the residential school system to destroy us, and we will heal, and we will restore our languages, cultures and traditions. We are not what happened to us.

³² Government of Canada, *A Plan to Grow Our Economy and Make Life More Affordable*, Budget 2022, p. 170.

³³ APPA, *Evidence*, Stephanie Scott, 21 March 2023.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That Library and Archives Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada expedite the transfer of all records related to residential schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and provide the committee with a progress report by December 2023 and that the Government of Canada take all necessary action to ensure that provincial and territorial governments and all organizations and entities that have withheld records from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation promptly release them.

Recommendation 2

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples will hold a hearing with entities and organizations that have withheld records from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in the Fall of 2023.

Recommendation 3

That Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada extend funding for the Residential Schools Missing Children – Community Support Fund until 2033 and ensure that this funding is flexible to cover all locations where burial sites associated with former residential schools may be located.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada facilitate the creation of a one-window entry into the provinces and territories to connect the Office of the Special Interlocutor and Indigenous families with regional information gathering expertise to recover children missing from residential schools.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada provide adequate, predictable, stable and long-term funding to ensure the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation can fulfil its mandate.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada take every action necessary to combat the rise of residential school denialism.

Appendix A – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action Related to Missing Children and Burial Information

71. We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

72. We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

73. We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children.

74. We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.

75. We call 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 is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.

76. We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles: i. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies. ii. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies. iii. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.

Appendix B – List of Outstanding Records by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

The following table summarizes a list of outstanding records produced by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. As the research of the Centre progresses, more organizations and records may be identified. For detailed information, please see the brief submitted by the NCTR.

Institution	Outstanding Records
Library and Archives Canada	Day school records (not identified in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)) and moving images and sound (required to fulfil obligations under the IRSSA).
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	A Document Advisory Committee has been created and work is underway to determine the volume of records across federal departments. Outstanding Records include items related to the IRSSA: Independent Assessment Process non-claim records (in accordance with a court order); and Common Experience Payment records which document the residential school experience.
Governments of the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan	Outstanding records from these governments include vital statistics, coroners' reports and death certificates (from Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and Quebec). Additional records are held at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
The following Oblate entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Boniface Historical Society; 	Outstanding records related to the history of the administration and

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin–Le Pas; • OMI Lacombe Canada Records held by the Royal BC Museum and Archives; • OMI Lacombe Canada Records held by the Provincial Archives of Alberta; • Deschâtelets-NDC Archives; • Oblate’s General House Archive in Rome 	<p>operations of residential schools are required to fulfil obligations under the IRSSA. The NCTR has only received a small number of records.</p>
<p>Sisters of Charity</p>	<p>Records related to the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School.</p>
<p>Sisters of St. Ann held by the Royal BC Museum and Archives</p>	

Appendix C – List of Witnesses and Briefs

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Barbara Cameron, Elder and Survivor of Residential School, Survivors Circle, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Stephanie Scott, Executive Director, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools

Donald Worme, K.C., Independent Legal Counsel, Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools

Wendelyn Johnson, Executive Director, Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools

Briefs are available online: APPA, [Briefs and Other Documents](#)

Stephanie Scott, Executive Director, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Kimberly Murray, The Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools



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