

**Pepeeekisis Cree Nation  
Community Hub**



# Reconciliation Through Metadata

## Naming the Unnamed in Residential School Photos

**2026 CRKN  
Virtual Conference**

**Sadie Anderson**  
Indigenous Archivist  
University of Saskatchewan

**Jessica Ye**  
Metadata Librarian  
University of Saskatchewan

# Land Acknowledgement

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We would like to thank you for inviting us from the Treaty Six Territory, home of the nehiyaw (Cree), Nakota, Dakota, Saulteaux, Nakawē and homeland of the Métis Nation. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

# Overview

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Lebret (Qu'Appelle) Indian Industrial Residential School

Project Background

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Acknowledgements

# Lebret (Qu'Appelle) Indian Industrial Residential School

- Lebret opened in 1884 operated by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns until 1973 when it was turned over to be operated by First Nations.
- One of the last residential schools to close in Canada (operated 1884-1998)
- The school affected the Star Blanket Cree Nation, Peepeekisis Cree Nation, Okanese First Nation, Little Black Bear First Nation, and Métis people in and around Lebret, Treaty 4
- Ground penetrating radar began in 2021

# Project Background

- The University Archives and Special Collections (UASC) has four restricted photo albums dating between 1906 and 1963 that pertain to the students and staff at the Lebret Indian Residential School. The albums were donated to Special Collections by a non-Indigenous USask faculty member, but the provenance and custodial history of the albums is unclear. They were digitized for preservation and became restricted from public access pending community consultation after they were moved to the University Archives in 2021.
- After her hiring in 2024, Sadie Anderson found her grandfather in four different photos within these albums, all of which neither she nor her mother had seen before. Jessica Ye was brought onto the project due to its metadata / digital component.
- By sharing these photos with Indigenous communities whose children attended this school, we centered the resilience and agency of the survivors. Instead of being subject to colonialist narratives, these communities have the power to tell their own stories and re-contextualize these photos.

# Objectives

1. To share photos from the Lebret Indian Industrial Residential School with the community
2. To name unnamed people, correct incorrect names and information, and share and collect memories of loved ones
3. To decide what happens to the physical photos and digitized files, including where they should be housed and if/how they should be repatriated/repatriated
4. To decide how future updates on this project will be communicated and how the data collected will be shared

## Guiding Principles

Community Based Research Practices  
Indigenous Research Methodologies  
OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession)

OCAS (Ownership, Control, Access, Stewardship)

CARE Principles

Traditional First Nation Knowledge protocols  
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

Steering Committee on Canada's Archives  
Reconciliation Framework

# Event Structure

The event was hosted at Peepeekisis Cree Nation Community Hub on September 19, 2025. Cultural helpers from Star Blanket and an Indigenous Social Worker from Ocean Man were present as mental health supports.

1. As participants entered, they were given consent forms and honoraria.
2. Pipe ceremony and prayer was held to start the event. Breakfast and lunch was served under blessed food protocols.
3. Copies of the photographs were printed and sorted into binders by category. Binders with photos of clergy and staff were clearly labelled and kept at a table separate from the other binders. All other binders circulated freely at the tables.
4. Original photo albums were available for viewing at a separate table.
5. Sticky notes and pencils were provided for taking down names alongside Transcription Approval Forms for recording memories. Research team members sat with participants to help record data.

# Budgeting

## Within Budget

- (46%) Honoraria + Tobacco + Cloth
- (27%) Catering
- (24%) Research team travel + accommodations
- (3%) Misc

## Out of Budget

- Travel reimbursements for participants
- Data analysis (eg. Student research assistants)
- Knowledge mobilization (eg. Conferences, publications, etc.)

Total budget was \$10,000 sourced from the Metadata Librarian's Recruitment & Retention Fund. Application for the SSHRC Explore Grant was rejected. Actual spending ended up lower than projected because not all research team members and Elders were able to attend.

# Findings

1. Participants want us to return and share with more community members.
2. Survivors want their stories to be remembered and are willing to share information once trust has been established.
3. Stewardship requires both physical and digital considerations for access and preservation.
4. There is urgency to this work, survivors want to ensure their legacies are remembered and knowledge is passed to the next generation.

# Future Plans & Improvements

- Distributing briefing note to community based on preliminary data analysis via Elders Circle and Chief and Council (complete)
- Signing a stewardship agreement with guidance of Chief and Council after the election cycle
- Working with community members for updated ethics and consent forms
- Moving towards more stable funding and resourcing
- Knowledge mobilization / dissemination
  - Forthcoming publications:
    - Anderson, S. & Ye, J. (In Revision). Pushing towards a decolonized archival praxis, centering community and self-care in digital metadata (re)description. In J.A. Lee, G. Brilmyer, J. Gabiola, and S. Littletree (Eds.), *The Relationships of Description: Experiencing the Power & Politics of Language*. Routledge.
    - Anderson, S. & Ye, J. (In Double Blind Peer Review). Unpacking Relationality: Reflection on Community-engaged Decolonial Archival Practices. *Journal of Critical Library & Information Studies*.
- Continued self-reflection and active practice of radical empathy

# Acknowledgements

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## Community Engagement Team

Tim Hutchinson, Lindsay Stokalko, Alycia Bockus-Vanin, Cassius Goulet, Myles Shingoose, Dallas Pelly, Jenelle McArthur

## kēhtē-ayak and Cultural Helpers

Cliff Davis, Gail Starr, Edith Starr, Patricia Dieter, Beverley Poitras, Lawrence Pinay

## Participants' Nations

Star Blanket Cree Nation, Peepeekisis Cree Nation, Okanese First Nation, Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation



Kinanâskomitin  
Thank you

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