

to their own history and to Canada's national memory. In March 2011, the TRC hosted an international forum in Vancouver, "Sharing Truth: Creating a National Research Centre on Residential Schools," to study how records and other materials from truth and reconciliation commissions around the world have been archived.¹⁷⁰ Several speakers talked about their vision for the NCTR. Georges Erasmus, former co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and then president of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, said,

Those who become the keepers of the archives become stewards of human stories and relationships, of what has been an endowment to what will be. Because no legacy is enriched by counterfeit; a nation is ill served by a history which is not genuine. This is a high calling indeed and it must be said that too often the promise and the potential of this stewardship has gone unrealized.... If the stories of our people are not accessible to the general public, it will be as if their experiences never occurred. And if their voices are rendered as museum pieces, it will be as if their experience is frozen in time. What we need are open, dynamic, interactive spaces and participatory forms of narrative, knowledge, and research. This would be a fitting way to step into the twenty-first century and into a new kind of relationship.... The National Research Centre ought to be a treasure valued by all sorts of people.¹⁷¹

The Commission subsequently issued an open invitation for organizations to submit proposals for the NCTR, based on specific criteria. In June 2013, the TRC announced that the University of Manitoba would house the new centre.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation will play a key educational role in ensuring that historic harms, and Treaty, constitutional, and human rights violations, against Aboriginal peoples are not repeated. As a highly visible site of conscience, it will serve as an intervention in the country's public memory and national history. The centre is independent from government. It is guided by a Governing Circle, the majority of whose members must be Aboriginal and which includes Survivor representatives. Among its various responsibilities, this governing body will make decisions and provide advice on ceremonies and protocols, and establish a Survivors' Circle.¹⁷²

The centre will house TRC records, including Survivors' oral history statements, artworks, expressions of reconciliation, and other materials gathered by the Commission, as well as government and church documents. It is intended to be a welcoming and safe place for Survivors, their families, and communities to have access to their own history. The centre has committed to creating a culturally rooted and healing environment where all Canadians can honour, learn from, and commemorate the history and legacy of the residential schools.

Once the centre is fully operational, it will be well positioned to take a leadership role in forging new directions in residential school- and Indigenous rights-based research, establishing new standards and benchmarks for archival and museum policy, management, and operations, based on Indigenous and Western principles and best practices.