

duration, and affiliation of each cemetery; its legal description; current land ownership and condition; and its location coordinates.

The complex and sensitive work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries must be undertaken according to a set of guiding principles that are based on community priorities and knowledge. Any physical investigation of the cemeteries must involve close consultation with interested communities, with identification of community-driven objectives, suitable methodologies, and attention to spiritual and emotional sensitivities.

The generally sparse written documentation must be combined with locally held knowledge. Often, this information will be unwritten, and held by Survivors, the families of Survivors, staff, or local residents. This locally held information can be used to verify, correct, and amplify archival information. This work might involve local initiatives to physically document a cemetery's extent and location, and also to identify individual graves within or around the cemetery area. When undertaking physical inspection and documentation of the cemeteries, the most cost-effective strategy involves collection and consolidation of both documentary and locally held knowledge prior to initiating fieldwork. This will improve efficiency of the physical search, and aid selection of the most effective field methodologies. It also enables researchers to determine community wishes regarding the most appropriate approaches to site investigation. This includes preferred protocols regarding prayers and ceremonial observance prior to a site visit.

## Call to Action

- 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.

The Commission believes that assisting families to learn the fate of children who died in residential schools; locating unmarked graves; and maintaining, protecting, and commemorating residential school cemeteries are vital to healing and reconciliation. Archives and government departments and agencies have a crucial role to play in this process. Equally important, archival records can help Survivors, their families, and communities to reconstruct their family and community histories. Yet, accessing such holdings is not without problems.