

Staff Report- The United Church of Canada Archives

When writing annual reports, I often feel the need to situate myself in time. I am writing this in October 2025, and am right in the middle of ending our long-term off-site storage agreement and moving into our new (secondary) home at Transcona Memorial United Church (TMUC). I am so excited and relieved that this project is nearly complete, and there will be some spoilers for 2025 in the New Home section of this report.

New (Secondary) Home

In 2024, as part of our on-going search for a new and improved off-site storage location, I began tentative conversations with a Community of Faith in Winnipeg to see if they would be a good fit. Ultimately, it was not a match.

In August 2024, an Archives leasing request “call out” was sent to Communities of Faith in Winnipeg. This call out included a checklist of what the Archives was looking for in its potential new space. TMUC was interested in partnering with the Archives and responded to the call out, and their potential space fit our needs very well. By the end of the year, I had toured TMUC and conversations and consultations were taking place slowly, but steadily.

From today’s vantage point, I can tell you that TMUC has been a dream to work with. In particular, Harvey Hochkievich, a member of the congregation at TMUC, has served as our project manager, and has helped make everything run so smoothly. We’ve met with engineers to ensure the floor loads are adequate; have created architectural drawings to sketch out where the shelving should go; have purchased and set-up shelving in one of our rooms; are beginning construction shortly on our second room; and we signed a long-term rental lease with the option (and intention) of renewal. We hope not to move again for as long as possible.

As far as our old off-site storage company, they have been, predictably, difficult to deal with. However, beginning in September 2025, we officially began the disentanglement process. We paid a substantial “hostage fee” to regain control of the 668 banker’s boxes that were stored off-site. In October, per the company’s orders, our boxes have been divided into four batches to be picked up separately on the first four Fridays of October. I’ve hired a moving company to pick up and temporarily store our records. So far two of the four pick ups are completed, and the final delivery to TMUC and unpacking of all seventeen pallets of records should happen in the last week of October. It has been a long time coming, and I’m so relieved that it is nearly done, and our records will be fully in our control and accessible again.

Reference and Outreach

In 2024, I received 286 archival requests for reference assistance, records management help, or discussions about donations and transfers of records to the Archives. In addition, 36 in-person researchers visited the Archives. In total, there was 1,322 points of contact with researchers.

In March 2024, UW suffered a cyber attack where a significant amount of data was stolen. There is no evidence to suggest that the United Church Archives’ digital records were impacted.

However, my UW email address was impacted, and for several weeks in March and April, my email address was non-functional. No emails were received during this time period.

I presented to a number of different groups and classes, including two first year Indigenous history classes and a third year Metis history class at the UW; a graduate level class at the U of M on archives management; the Wednesday AM Group in Carmen; gatherings of both Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and Pensioners/ Retired Ministry Personnel; and more.

Reconciliation

For two days, I worked with heritage professionals hired by Sioux Valley Dakota Nation (SVDN) and gave them a “crash course” on archives to aid them in setting up one for SVDN.

The Research Project Director of the Manitoba Indigenous Tuberculosis History Project, invited me to attend their conference Owing History: Indigenous Histories and Records Access, which I did in April 2024.

Thousands of children died at residential schools, Indian hospitals, sanatoriums, and other institutions, and their burial sites were often left—or through neglect have become—unmarked. Across Canada, Indigenous Communities and family members are increasingly pursuing long-denied access to burial and other related records in order to find the unmarked burial location of their children. At our Archives, in order to enable this research, I supervised the scanning of 68 registers connected to Indigenous communities in October 2024 by a contracted scanner. This work was part of the United Church of Canada’s Bringing the Children Home initiative. Providing access to these registers, especially burial registers, to Community, while also protecting personal privacy continues to be extremely challenging. General Council Archives, Indigenous Ministries and Justice, and the legal department are taking the lead on navigating this complex access situation.

Summer Student

From mid-May to mid-August, the Archives hosted a Summer Student. My grant application was successful, and we received \$7,895.43 from the Government of Canada Young Canada Works in Heritage Organizations granting program. My summer student worked hard to migrate all of our digitized images and metadata to SharePoint from a defunct digital asset management system.

Additionally, I served as a judge for Young Canada Works, and reviewed and rated other grant applications.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Acland
Keeper of the Archives