



MITHP STATEMENT ON:

Indigenous Records at a Time of Wildfires

September 2, 2023

Our thoughts are with those who have had to leave their communities due to extreme weather events, including those who remain out of their homes in Yellowknife.

This summer's fire season has been on our minds as advocates of Indigenous archival research and of the preservation of records related to Indigenous history. Access to records and loss of records due to climate events are two of our key concerns.

The evacuation of Yellowknife impacts Survivors' and communities' access to their records, including records about removals for healthcare and education that are extremely valuable in piecing together family and community histories.

Fires and floods pose risk of the loss of rare and irreplaceable records of Indigenous and Canadian history. The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is a robust repository for historical records, however many other records are far more precarious, stored in places that are at risk from environmental events such as small archives and church basements.

The safe keeping and access of Indigenous records is the responsibility of the federal and provincial governments, churches, and other entities which held decision-making authority.

The Manitoba Indigenous Tuberculosis History Project has long advocated for Indigenous access to records, however this summer our concern is much more pressing and tangible. Events such as the evacuation of Yellowknife are an important reminder of how vulnerable precarious Indigenous archives and records can be.