

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES TO GENERAL SYNOD 2023

For Information

Covid-19 and Working from Home

Covid-19 pandemic, how we navigated the restrictions and how we recovered from them, has really defined this quadrennium. The restrictions forced us to work from home March 2020-June 2021, but having full access to the desktop computer through vpn made it possible to continue the work, so even though the building was closed the Archives was still in business. Working from home allowed a lot of time to spend checking, cleaning up, and changing archival descriptions and to catch up on some data entry that never seems high priority. Requests could be answered if the records were already digital. For the records that were not, a pattern of going into the office once a week enabled me to answer most requests that required physical archival material. The researchers were patient, although there were some requests that could not be accommodated because of the restrictions.

Archives Flood

On July 25, 2022, the General Synod Archives vault experienced substantial flooding originating from an HVAC system on the floor above. Leaks from the HVAC system has been an issue from the time we moved in, but this flood was a major disaster. 120 bankers' boxes and three larger boxes of wet archival material went out to be dried. Document recovery required new folders, labels, and boxes before they could be put back on the shelf. Fortunately, none of the irreplaceable material was damaged.

Records Descriptions and Acquisitions

- 134 boxes of files were described, Diocesan newspapers indexed, COGS minutes indexed.
- Several managers at Church House left during the period 2019-2022, so the Archives acquired the records of the Circulation Manager of the Anglican Journal, the Primate's Office, the General Secretary, and the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop.
- We also acquired 31 deposits of records from related organizations and people of national significance. Collections of note include:
 - Anglican Deacons in Canada (2017-2020) – Digital files
 - H.H. Marsh family - including 2 Daily Journals of E.M. Wilgress at Hay River, 1900-1911.
 - Potentials, A Canadian Ecumenical Centre for the Development of Ministry and Congregations (1995-2010)
 - Polish National Catholic Church collection – publications and research files
 - H. Sherman Shepherd - Shingle Point Diary, 1929-1934
 - Leslie Garrett family - Photos & correspondence re: Trout Lake and personal papers, 1914-1982
 - Prudence Hockin – Letters from Pangnirtung while Matron of the hospital, 1931-1934

Diocese of the Arctic Archives

- One major deposit of 29 boxes of diocesan synod records was prepared by the General Synod Archivist in the fall of 2019. Pandemic conditions prevented their arrival until February 2023.
- Four small accessions of records were received and described – two from All Saints, Aklavik, NWT.

Diocese of Keewatin Archives

- 2019 - U of T Archival Studies practicum student – Diocese of Keewatin Synod records were inventoried and arranged by series. Some data entry was done before the COVID-19 lock down.

- 2019 - Canada Youth Employment grant – a university student scanned and described 4850 photos, scanned but did not describe 54 subject photo files, plus assisted in the preparation of displays.
- 2021 - Canada Youth Employment grant - a contract archivist cleaned and repaired, then scanned and described 578 glass slides. These photographs were primarily from the time of Bishop Dewdney, Second Bishop of Keewatin (1921-1938).
- The records of four parishes were described in the database.

Truth and Reconciliation

In response to the TRC Calls to Action the General Synod Archives took several actions in past quadrennium.

Decolonizing our Descriptions – Working from home enabled substantial time to work on making our descriptions more sensitive to Indigenous people by using more sensitive terms, the right place names, and the right people names. I had several opportunities to share about the work being done on Decolonizing our Descriptions - a presentation to COGS and an article for the Anglican Journal, which picked up by the Archival community and shared around. Also, I heard it was used in a church history course at Huron College and got good response.

I also presented the work being done in the General Synod Archives to decolonize our descriptions at an online conference entitled, Decolonizing with Humility and Empathy on Oct 27th, organized by the Centre for Excellence on Empathy, Equity & diversity (CEEED) which aims to engage in social justice and Civic engagement in community organizations. This was a great opportunity to engage with the wider community.

Residential Schools Cemeteries and Burial Records Project - I appreciated the opportunity to hire an archives research assistant, Trent Voth, to work on the residential schools' cemeteries and burial records for students who died at the Anglican Residential Schools. He created an excel database to capture all the information we have on IRS cemeteries and the students that died there. The information on the students came from the review of our records and the burial registers that we have available here in the Arctic and Keewatin collections. I plan to share with the dioceses, so they can incorporate the work they have been doing on residential school burials, and to work on how to get this information to the Indigenous communities.

Jubilee Commission Historical Project - Under the direction of Diane Meredith, Trent Voth and Jim Boyles have been using the General Synod Archival collections to assist with the historical research for the Jubilee Commission.

Records of Indigenous communities - I have responded to several requests for residential school and community records from Indigenous communities. The records are scanned and sent to the community once a formal Band Council Resolution or letter is received to ensure that the Band will be taking responsibility for the records.

Anglican Diocesan Archivists

- We were due to have our biennial Archivists meeting in 2020 when the lockdown was enforced. Rather than cancel, we went ahead with our 2020 meeting, but held it on Zoom. This was a great way to connect with the archivists across the country and to discuss archival situations and issues.
- We also continue to support each other via the Anglican Archivists Network google group.

Canadian Church Historical Society

- Tri-History Conference 2019 – As General Synod Archivist and the Secretary-Treasurer of the CCHS, I participated in the Tri-History Conference by being on the Planning Committee, preparing an Archives Display, presenting in the Archives Session. I enjoyed the networking opportunities, the historical papers, and interaction with colleagues with the same interests.
- Meetings for the Canadian Church Historical Society could not be held in person because of the Covid-19 restrictions, but we proceeded with the Executive Committee meetings and the Annual General Meetings on Zoom. We held two Annual General Meetings and one membership meeting over Zoom with very good attendance from across the country.
- The Canadian Church Historical Society decided to dissolve the corporation and to make the CCHS a General Synod Committee, which gives the CCHS a more stable future and enables General Synod to legitimately support the CCHS. The Council of General Synod approved this in November 2021.

Looking Ahead

- The National Office has upgraded the computer software to Office 365 which allows us to use OneDrive and SharePoint. This will help facilitate the move to electronic records management and the archiving of electronic records.