hay čxʷ qə for visiting the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre. We wish you wellness wherever your journey takes you, once you leave us today.

Self-Guided Tour Manual

The artwork featured in this manual is by Kenzie Littlelight.
We encourage you to explore the space and its many offerings. If you have any questions related to Residential School records, you are more than welcome to connect with our Reference Team at: irshdc.reference@ubc.ca.

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Introduction

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Timeline

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Map

Use the map to see the geographic scope of Residential Schools included in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and some events from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We are sure to note that not all Residential Schools are included in this map. For example, Convent Schools, Day Schools, Residential Schools located in the Maritimes, and schools that closed in the late 1800s - early 1900s are not included because they fell outside the scope of inclusion as outlined in IRSSA. Thus the reason for exclusion varies based on the type of school, the years it operated to, whether it including a boarding element, and its location. One specific rationale cited within IRSSA was whether or not the school received Federal funding.

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Nodes

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The Building

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Exterior view of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre.

2 Interviews

Video on screen opposite interactive wall. The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at UBC is guided by Indigenous leaders, many of whom are Survivors or Intergenerational Survivors, and each of whom has a deeply personal connection and commitment to truth-telling and dialogue around the legacy of Residential Schools in Canada.

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Chief’s Copper represents dignity and honour to the Coast Salish Peoples. While you cannot see the copper itself, we are reminded of its presence by the green staining on the concrete surrounding the building. The green color comes from oxidized rain runoff.

Charred Cedar Plank Siding
The IRSHDC is wrapped in charred cedar which keeps us warm and dry during the chilly winter months. More resilient once charred, the cedar plank siding on the building’s exterior also reflects the strength of Residential School Survivors and Indigenous communities who continue to be impacted by the ongoing effects of Residential Schools.

Floor-to-Ceiling Windows
Elders were adamant that the work of the IRSHDC should be fully transparent and visually accessible to those within and outside of the building. This directly counters the oppressive architectural design of most Residential Schools which intentionally had few windows that let in little natural light. Our windows with natural light showcase the nature outside as a relief to the emotional space inside; they counter the experience of feeling confined in Residential Schools.

Interactive Wall
The first element of our gallery is our interactive wall. The wall provides access to the IRSHDC’s collections through the timeline, map, browse and nodes features. It provides multiple perspectives on the Residential School system to encourage continued engagement and learning.

Please explore the interactive touchscreen wall to find records, learn about Residential Schools and listen to voices from across the country as individuals share their stories. You will find an access panel on the right and left sides of each screen that allows you to access the three unique layers of the interactive wall. There is an iPad stand to the left of the wall providing further information in the wall and its different interfaces.

Turn this page to find a summary of the interfaces.
Before continuing with the tour, we want to prepare our guests for the contents of our gallery space. The gallery houses Residential School records such as images and documents, which may elicit many different emotions to those engaging with them. Should you feel strong emotions during the tour, we strongly recommend taking a step back and allowing yourself a break. Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors are welcome to visit our Elders’ Lounge located at the end of the main hallway on the right, there you can take a break, relax, and staff will gladly get you a water, tea, and snack. If you require additional support, we encourage you to reach out to our partners at the Indian Residential School Survivors Society through their 24 hour crisis line at: 1-800-721-0066. All visitors are encouraged to step outside into the green space or sit at the couch right outside the gallery entrance if you need to step away.

The Gallery

With this preparation in mind, we invite you to walk down the stairs, or take the elevator located at the end of the main hall on your left, towards our gallery space. Please note that wheelchair accessible washrooms are located on the entry level of the building to the left of the main doors and down the hallway on your left. As you travel down the stairs you will notice a woven cedar wall on the left-hand side. This is one of our favorite elements of the building as it represents the weaving practices for which this region is well known.

Once you reach the bottom landing, take a look out of the door located on the right hand side. There you will find a glass waterfall feature which symbolizes the tears of Survivors who suffered traumatic experiences in Residential Schools. Sometimes the water runs rapidly and other times it is just a trickle, representing the ebbs and flows of the healing process.

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