

The Advocate's Archive

Walter Rudnicki and the Fight for Indigenous Rights in Canada, 1955–2010

AMANDA LINDEN

ABSTRACT This article explores the significant contribution that Walter Rudnicki (1925–2010) made to the pursuit of social justice for Indigenous people in Canada through his use of archival records. Rudnicki took on the role of archivist by acquiring, organizing, disseminating, and keeping records that document government–Indigenous relations. Totalling 90.25 metres in extent, the Walter Rudnicki Fonds at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections is an impressive private collection amassed in order to make injustice visible. As a federal public servant working to develop innovative policies with Indigenous people between the 1950s and 1970s, Rudnicki had bitter personal experience with the ways that the Government of Canada's practices regarding document creation and access to records thwarted Indigenous aims. Thereafter, he stressed that accessing and archiving records must play an indispensable role in protecting Indigenous peoples' interests. He spent the rest of his life creating and employing an archive that would be used in advocacy for Indigenous rights.

RÉSUMÉ Cet article explore la contribution importante de Walter Rudnicki (1925–2010) dans la recherche de justice sociale pour les peuples autochtones au Canada par son utilisation de documents d'archives. Rudnicki s'est attribué le rôle d'archiviste en faisant l'acquisition, le classement, la diffusion et la sauvegarde de documents d'archives qui décrivent les relations entre le gouvernement et les autochtones. D'une étendue de 90,25 mètres, le fonds Walter Rudnicki, conservé aux Archives et collections spéciales de la University of Manitoba, est une impressionnante collection privée amassée dans le but de rendre l'injustice visible. En tant que fonctionnaire fédéral qui travaillait au développement de politiques innovatrices avec les populations autochtones entre les années 1950 et les années 1970, Rudnicki a connu des expériences personnelles amères avec les façons dont les pratiques du Gouvernement du Canada en matière de création et d'accès aux documents ont contrecarré les visées des populations autochtones. Ensuite, il a insisté sur le fait que l'accès et l'archivage de documents doit jouer un rôle indispensable dans la protection des intérêts des populations autochtones. Il a passé le reste de sa vie à créer et à utiliser des archives qui serviraient à la défense des droits autochtones.

In 2011, dozens of people gathered along the South Saskatchewan River for a special ceremony paying tribute to individuals who played significant roles in the pursuit of Métis rights in Canada. A monument was erected to honour “Métis Heroes” and “Friends of the Métis,” plaque headings under which names would be added for years to come.¹ The two names selected for the inaugural ceremony were Gabriel Dumont and Walter Rudnicki. The former was a celebrated leader who fought for Métis recognition in the late 19th century, and the latter a well-known supporter of Métis causes. As a civil servant, private consultant, and advocate, Rudnicki took up the role of archivist by collecting and disseminating information that illustrated the history of government–Indigenous relations. He produced an immense personal archival collection that foregrounds the voices of Métis, First Nations, and Inuit communities, groups, and organizations. This article explores Rudnicki’s role in the Indigenous rights movement in Canada through his acquisition and use of both archival and contemporary records. For five decades, Rudnicki located, copied, and created records that ranged from reports to surveys to political cartoons; leaked and received leaked documents; and collected and contextualized grey literature. The approximately 90 metres of records in the Walter Rudnicki Fonds at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections (UMA) is the result.²

With increased frequency, archivists all over the world are exploring the intersections of social justice and archives. Canadian archival scholars Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz conducted an early study of the power of records and archives.³ By conceiving of archives as socially constructed institutions, the authors dispel the common myth of archives and the archival profession as neutral, innocent, and objective.⁴ Instead, they assert archives as places of action. Archivists play a key role in determining what is remembered and what is forgotten through their ongoing work of accession, appraisal, description, preservation, access, and use. As one of the archivists most famously associated with the subject of

1 Rod Andrews, “Métis Honour Ukrainian Civil Servant,” *Saskatchewan Valley News*, 4 August 2011, accessed 12 April 2016, <http://www.saskvalleynews.com/2011/08/metishonourukrainian>.

2 University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections [hereafter UMA], Walter Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 [hereafter Rudnicki Fonds], accessed 12 April 2016, <http://nanna.lib.umanitoba.ca/atom/index.php/walter-rudnicki-fonds%3brad>.

3 Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (March 2002): 1–19.

4 *Ibid.*, 9.

records, society, power, and memory, Verne Harris identifies four imperatives that “give expression to the idea of ‘archives for justice.’”⁵ The first is for archivists to answer the “call to justice” by adopting an activist approach to archival functions such as collection development and community outreach. The second is to push against existing power structures through inclusion and participation. The third is to agitate against the use of archives as instruments of the “elite” by working against pervasive power relations. The fourth is a combination of all imperatives, tailored to the unique professional and personal circumstances of each archivist. This article examines Rudnicki’s own “call to justice” through his career as both government insider and outsider. Though he lacked professional archival education, Rudnicki was driven by imperatives similar to those listed by Harris as he amassed a working archive dedicated to exposing power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. This was accomplished by welcoming as many voices as possible.

Difficult archival concepts such as “exclusion,” “privilege,” and “marginalization”⁶ are challenged by housing government documents next to those of Indigenous groups, making visible organized, often grassroots critiques of outdated government policy. Rudnicki was not a detached collector, and the information he placed together did not support a neutral archival collection.

Many archival scholars look for examples of “archives [that] are assembled specifically to impact social justice.”⁷ Wendy Duff, Andrew Flinn, Karen Emily Suurtamm, and David Wallace discuss the value of locating “real world instances that review and examine how records-archives become instrumental in relationship to social justice endeavours.”⁸ Like Cook and Schwartz, Duff et al. dismiss the association of archives and archivists with neutrality and passivity. The best way to expunge this notion is to share examples of archival collections and institutions that connect current and historical events. From Chile’s “Los Archivos

5 Verne Harris, “Archives, Politics, and Justice” in Margaret Procter, Michael Cook, and Caroline Williams, eds., *Political Pressure and the Archival Record* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 177.

6 *Ibid.*, 178.

7 David Wallace, “Understanding and Assessing the Social Impact of Archives” (paper presented at the conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Winnipeg, June 2013), 8.

8 Wendy Duff, Andrew Flinn, Karen Emily Suurtamm, and David Wallace, “Social Justice Impact of Archives: A Preliminary Investigation,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (December 2013): 320.

del Cardenal”⁹ to Japanese-American World War II internment and reparations, central to each example are links between archival resources and recent efforts for social change. Such links are crucial to building awareness of modern-day roles of archives: “The implicit danger here is avoiding and voiding linkages between historical and contemporary struggles, thereby helping to sustain the mythology of a disinterested, neutral, and honest brokering profession. These dynamics confound social justice objectives.”¹⁰ Examining Rudnicki’s record-keeping reveals ways in which his archives serves ongoing rights issues by foregrounding their connections to the past. Examples of records and rights in action are found throughout his collection, making it serviceable in ways identified by these four authors.

The Rudnicki Fonds contains records that support the rights of Indigenous people in areas such as Inuit community relocations, Métis and non-status Indian housing policy development, Métis land claims, and residential school redress. The fonds exemplifies Tom Nesmith’s observation that “knowledge of social injustices of many kinds and means of attempting to resolve them, in regard to Indigenous people for example, have also drawn heavily on archives and prompted the creation of archives.”¹¹ Rudnicki’s efforts created a body of records that highlight relationships between archives and colonization, legal rights, access to information, inclusivity, community engagement, activism, and reconciliation. Indeed, Rudnicki acquired and used records as *instruments of change*, intended to advance Indigenous rights. They were not mere “byproducts” of his work, but essential objectives. He sought records that empowered Indigenous activists, groups, and communities. The records of individuals, organizations, and government departments in the Rudnicki Fonds provide significant insight into Canadian Indigenous policy since 1867 and Indigenous activism since the 1960s.

9 Ibid. This award-winning 2011 Chilean television drama series depicts actual cases of torture and disappearance during the Pinochet dictatorship.

10 Ibid., 320.

11 Tom Nesmith, “Toward the Archival Stage in the History of Knowledge,” *Archivaria* 80 (Fall 2015): 136.

Public Service and Government Records

A brief overview of Rudnicki's professional background can help us understand the value he placed on recordkeeping. Born on 25 September 1925 in Rosser, Manitoba, he completed a BA in 1950 at the University of Manitoba and an MA in Social Work and Community Organization in 1952 at the University of British Columbia. Rudnicki was then employed as a social worker in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In December 1955, he entered the federal public service as chief of the newly established Welfare Section of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, where he was responsible for developing social programming in the Arctic.

Rudnicki describes arriving in the North, a place where social workers were not yet "under the influence of such concepts as community development, social animation, citizen participation in the decision-making – or notions of being 'change agents' both in the communities and in the bureaucracies in which they worked."¹² These concepts were critical by the mid-1950s as social and economic pressures from the south affected the "basic fabric of Inuit culture."¹³ In the welfare division, Rudnicki assumed a role that was supportive of Inuit communities and challenged his colleagues to do the same by moving away from the traditional roles of "colonial administrator" and "great white father."¹⁴

Rudnicki developed a reputation as a "troublemaker" in the department for his opposition to old-fashioned bureaucratic processes that, in his view, increased human suffering. He documented Inuit life and, whenever possible, informed the public of these realities. One high-profile example was his relationship with author and activist Farley Mowat. In 1952, Mowat published *People of the Deer*, which directs attention to the government's role in events that caused starvation among the Ihalmiut and surrounding communities. Mowat's 1959 book, *The Desperate People*, elaborates on his previous work using records supplied by Rudnicki, created during his work alongside the Ihalmiut. Rudnicki drew them from the "dank depths of department files," and Mowat never revealed his

12 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 27, folder 8, Walter Rudnicki, "Risk and Influence in a Bureaucracy," speech ca. 1978, 1–2.

13 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 81, folder 1, Walter Rudnicki, "Field Trip to Eskimo Point," March 1958, 2.

14 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 27, folder 17, Walter Rudnicki, "Arctic Speech," ca. 1956, 4.

source. Mowat did joke about it in correspondence, writing to Rudnicki, “Do tell your wife I’m not trying to get her husband canned, even if he does deserve it.”¹⁵ When he left the welfare division in 1963, Rudnicki continued his commitment to challenge administrative systems by moving government policies and practices in new directions, documenting each step of the way.

From May 1963 to June 1969, Rudnicki held positions in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Privy Council Office (PCO). In the former, Rudnicki was responsible for conceiving and launching a nationwide community development program designed to improve social service operations on reserves and to support grassroots “self-help” efforts and self-administration. At the PCO, Rudnicki assisted in the extensive redesign of First Nations federal policy, which, despite his opposition, resulted in the June 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, also known as the “White Paper,” released by Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s Liberal government. In response, Rudnicki assisted with the successful public presentation of the “Red Paper,” the rebuttal written by the Indian Association of Alberta and endorsed by the National Indian Brotherhood, which strongly defended treaty obligations, self-determination, rights to lands and resources, and the provision of education and health care.¹⁶

While First Nations organizations rallied against assimilationist policy, Métis leaders mobilized to advance their rights as a distinct Aboriginal people. Métis peoples were not considered Indians under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act*, 1867, and their exclusion from federal services benefiting First Nations resulted in what was reported as “worse poverty than most ‘official’ Indians although they usually had as much claim in blood and way of life to the benefits which flow to the status Indians.”¹⁷ Slum-like settlements left Métis communities vulnerable to

15 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 371, folder 8, Farley Mowat to Walter Rudnicki, 15 October 1958, 1. Rudnicki felt that Mowat’s books brought credibility to his own work, forcing the department to “take his claims more seriously.” See P.G. Nixon, “Bureaucracy and Innovation,” *Canadian Public Administration* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 295.

16 Rudnicki encouraged participants to “put on a show” in presenting the Red Paper to the prime minister and Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien in order to garner widespread media coverage. On 4 June 1970, approximately 500 chiefs and band members arrived at the Railway Committee Room in the parliament buildings in a demonstration that included regalia, drumming, and a Cree welcome song. See CBC Radio, “Ideas with Paul Kennedy,” “Red Paper/White Paper,” Episode One, 19 April 2010, accessed 10 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1473005172>; Episode Two, 19 April 2010, accessed 10 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1473017298>.

17 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 6, folder 10, Douglas Fisher, “Why Was Rudnicki Fired?” *Toronto Sun*, 14 November 1973, 9.

illness, exposure, and house fires. The issue gained traction within government in the early 1970s when Rudnicki moved to the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as chief policy adviser.

In September 1973, CMHC president William Teron was instructed by Urban Affairs Minister Ron Basford to act on the proposals regarding Métis and non-status Indian housing, which had been submitted the previous year by Rudnicki's policy planning division. The decision to make this a high priority reflected the increased politicization of a Métis organization called the Native Council of Canada (NCC). Established in 1968, the NCC represented approximately 500,000 Métis and non-status Indians. Paramount among their concerns was the development of a federal program to secure 40,000 newly built homes. Over the next month, representatives of the policy program division met with an executive group composed of NCC members and presidents of provincial Métis associations to review funding for the Emergency Housing Program, a five- to eight-year \$2 million allocation that was designed to deliver basic repairs to existing Métis housing. On 5 October, Rudnicki and CMHC staff met members of the NCC. Copies of the policy paper "Draft Cabinet Document on Housing for Métis and Non-Status Indians" were circulated among attendees. This document was in its sixth revision and likely facing more.¹⁸ The first draft was shared with the NCC executive group on 19 September, while subsequent drafts were created based on NCC recommendations as well as those made by the CMHC Steering Committee and the minister.

Following the 5 October meeting, NCC members expressed their pleasure with the direction of the program. NCC President Tony Belcourt contacted Teron by telephone to express his satisfaction, and both agreed that the minister should be informed of the progress. Belcourt could not have known that his gesture would bring an end to Rudnicki's employment with CMHC. At no point in this process were special secrecy regulations established for policy development. The message displeased the minister because he considered "Housing for Métis and Non-Status Indians" to be a confidential cabinet document. Rudnicki was asked to resign. Following his refusal, Teron handed him a letter of termination.¹⁹

18 The document is described as the product of a "joint venture," but there was still a "long way to go" before anything was finalized by the minister and the Cabinet. See *Rudnicki v. Central Mortgage and Housing Corp.*, [1976] OJ No 751 (SC HCJ) at para 123.

19 "William Teron vs. Walter Rudnicki: Portrait of a Bureaucracy," in James Lorimer and Evelyn Ross, eds., *The Second City Book: Studies of Urban and Suburban Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977), 168.

In distributing the housing document, Rudnicki believed he was carrying out the corporation's express instructions. As he wrote in a letter to Teron, "Our conversation with the Native Council was open and frank – a style which, in our experience indicates, is the only acceptable and effective one in dealing with native people ... what information was to be kept secret?"²⁰ The corporation's refusal to reinstate Rudnicki compelled him to sue for wrongful dismissal. The trial, which began on 5 July 1976, represented one of the earliest court tests of government confidentiality in Canada. The court examined the government classification system, specifically content designated "confidential" and what processes determine the designation. The court heard that in many departments, classification was informal and highly subjective. Witness testimony indicated that "in government circles you often put 'confidential' on something because that was the easiest way to get things read."²¹ With regard to showing a "confidential" document during a public consultation, one member of the PCO commented, "Hell, we all have done that a thousand times. Obviously there's something else."²² The "something else" referred to is a larger motive behind Rudnicki's dismissal.

The NCC publicly objected to the "confidential" designation of the "Housing for Métis and Non-Status Indians" draft document because it undermined the agreed-upon consultation process. From the NCC perspective, the content of this document symbolized an improved working relationship with the federal government. Drafting the document opened up processes of government records creation to the input of Métis and non-status Indians in ways that would directly benefit their community health, safety, and well-being. Belcourt argued that the discussions following Rudnicki's dismissal should not focus on government confidentiality but rather on the consultative process:

The issue is an important one raising the whole question of government secrecy as opposed to the democratic rights of the people to know what government is doing and in this case, it hinges around what actually took place during the consultative processes that CMHC and the Minister

20 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 5, folder 1, Walter Rudnicki to William Teron, 12 October 1973.

21 *Rudnicki v. Central Mortgage and Housing Corp.* at para 168.

22 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 6, folder 10, John Gray, "He Shook Ottawa's Closed Shop – and Got Fired," *Toronto Star*, 29 November 1973.

had ordered Rudnicki to carry out with us. The flat assertion ... that we were shown a Cabinet document is offensive and extremely damaging to our cause. It also accuses Mr. Rudnicki of an action that he never took.²³

That government officials turned the act of consultation into a leaked-document controversy marred the significance of what was really at work: long-overdue negotiations between the Government of Canada and Métis leadership. After nine days of proceedings, Justice John O'Driscoll ruled in Rudnicki's favour.²⁴

A Federal Blacklist and Early Access to Information Laws

Although exonerated, Rudnicki found it difficult to secure another government position. In the summer of 1976, Progressive Conservative MP Frank Oberle informed Rudnicki that government security forces considered him a "revolutionary" with left-wing beliefs. Unbeknownst to Rudnicki, a secret letter from the solicitor general's office, which had been circulated in the summer of 1971 to foreign governments and Canadian federal ministers, stated that he and 20 other government employees were suspected of engaging in "extra-parliamentary opposition." This "blacklist" charged that "advocates of a New Left in Canada" were working to "organize and radicalize the 'underclasses' of society and mold them into a revolutionary force capable of overthrowing the present socio-political system."²⁵ The letter prompted Rudnicki to write to Prime Minister Trudeau to deny that he was a security risk and to ask that his name be cleared.²⁶

Little came from this appeal, prompting Rudnicki to pursue other methods of corrective action. He set out to gather as many documents as possible in an effort to obtain an accurate record of the government files that named him, and to find out why they named him. This information was essential to clearing his

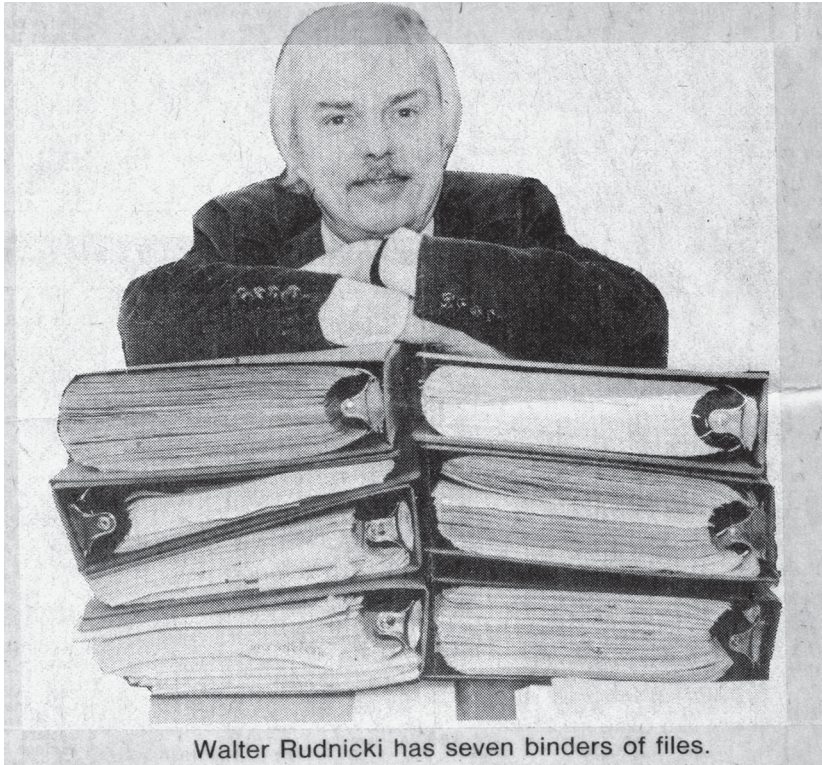
23 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 3, folder 3, A.E. Belcourt to the *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 January 1974.

24 *Rudnicki v. Central Mortgage and Housing Corp.* at para 178.

25 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 6, folder 6, Solicitor-General Jean-Pierre Goyer to Minister without Portfolio Robert Andras, 15 June 1971, 1.

26 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 16, folder 1, Walter Rudnicki to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, 7 February 1977.

name. Rudnicki also felt there was ground for renewed legal action now that allegations against him went beyond leaking a “confidential cabinet document.” Whereas his wrongful dismissal trial challenged the validity of government classification systems, Rudnicki’s current circumstances meant that blacklists could be subject to judicial review.



Walter Rudnicki posing with documents assembled in preparation for legal action against the Government of Canada for naming him in a secret federal “blacklist,” which was distributed to foreign governments and Canadian federal ministers, 1979. Credit: University of Manitoba Archives, Walter Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38.1), box 20, folder 1, John Kernaghan “Horror Story May Be Near End: ‘Security Risk’ Fights to Clear Name,” Hamilton Spectator, December 1979. Courtesy of University of Manitoba Special Archives and Collections.

Rudnicki's inquiry into his security files was timely. Following decades of often-informal controls over disclosure of government-held information, legislating access in Canada was up for debate.²⁷ Rudnicki considered his cause essential to the demonstration of government accountability. After two years of fruitless effort to gain access to this information, he realized that renewed legal action would be too lengthy and too costly. In 1981, he abandoned his plan to sue.

Although Rudnicki's case never saw the courtroom, his circumstances retained national interest. In his archives are media reports that explore the larger meanings behind his dismissal. These records address major socio-political processes under scrutiny in the late 1970s, including federal consultations with Indigenous organizations; participatory democracy; the conduct of high-ranking government officials; the state of government secrecy and information policy; and the creation and use of federal blacklists. His plight reached the pages of *Archivaria* in John Smart's 1983 call to action for archivists to support freedom of information legislation and researchers' rights.²⁸ Smart points out that existing "universal freedoms" enshrined in the 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are troubled when examining Rudnicki's circumstances.²⁹ Smart places the Rudnicki case in the context of emerging public discussion about access to information legislation and concludes that "information and its controls are questions at the heart of these recent and current debates in our society. The work of archivists is thus becoming central to this society."³⁰

Rudnicki's subsequent approach to record creation and recordkeeping was shaped by his experience with the production of and access to government information. When a leaked document controversy and a secret blacklist threatened his public service career, Rudnicki responded by acquiring a wide variety of documents to defend his actions and advance his rights. Thereafter, he viewed access to records as critical not only to his needs, but also to the needs of others. Rudnicki designed his archives to resist restrictive access. He

27 Competing visions of access were profiled in the summer 1978 issue of *Archivaria* in articles by Gordon Robertson, Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations, Linda S. Bohnen, a lawyer with the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario, and Lorna Rees-Potter, Corresponding Secretary for ACCESS, a freedom of information lobby group.

28 John Smart, "The Professional Archivist's Responsibility as an Advocate of Public Research," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 139-49.

29 *Ibid.*, 144.

30 *Ibid.*

acquired thousands of documents from a wide array of sources to support the public's right to know. He became a custodian of copies of official government records, security directives, briefs, and background papers, as well as records from civil liberty associations, public rights advocates, and various Indigenous groups and organizations.³¹ These records were gathered and archived to shape and enrich public opinion through dissemination and use. As he became more deeply involved in Indigenous rights movements, Rudnicki focused on copying and keeping archival records to build a serviceable archival collection.

Establishing Archival Links: Policy Development Group Ltd.

Rudnicki's increasing turn to archives is seen in his consulting practice – Policy Development Group Ltd. (PDG) – through which he worked for Indigenous groups on inter-governmental relations, policy development, social programs, and urbanization. PDG referenced historical and contemporary records in its in-depth reports on issues ranging from the formulation of land claims strategy for the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs to the relocation histories of Inuit, Métis, and First Nations communities for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). Report methodologies and appendices list the records used to execute project goals, adding to Rudnicki's growing archival collection as he located and copied historical material during the research stage. One of PDG's earliest studies concerns access to archival government records in support of Métis land claims research. This 1979 report, called "Métis Land Claims Study: Destruction of Records," examines how recordkeeping affects the pursuit of Métis rights in the courts and how government file destruction between 1830 and 1959 affects the claims of the descendants of the Métis of the former Red River Settlement.³² In 1977, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) established the Métis Land Claims Commission, a research program funded by the federal government to "explore the claims of Métis people to the land that once belonged to them."³³ Submitted

31 Organizations include the Native Council of Canada, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Lubicon Lake Indian Band, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

32 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 82, folder 15, PDG, "Métis Land Claims Study: Destruction of Records" (1979).

33 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 225, folder 6, Manitoba Métis Federation, "The Métis Land Question: A Provincial Survey" (1977), 6.

to the Minister of National Health & Welfare, the MMF's proposal includes a list of "Sources of Research Materials": scrips, grants, family allotments, commissions, and Red River Rebellion records from the National Archives of Canada; court records of Assiniboia; Hudson's Bay Company Archives records; personal papers from the Provincial Archives of Manitoba involving scrip and land trade; as well as records from religious orders and Manitoba Land Titles Offices.³⁴ These records were essential to articulating the case for Métis land claims. The hired counsel and researchers spent months in archives, while PDG was enlisted to examine the absence of Métis government records. This prospect of missing records prompted Rudnicki to look at file management and destruction in government agency offices and the Public Archives of Canada.

Rudnicki relied on archival records, legislative histories, and interviews with civil servants to shed light on government record retention policies into the 1950s.³⁵ His report's appendices include a summary of relevant legislation and administrative practices for recordkeeping, and correspondence and directives for the Public Archives' destruction of records in 1954.³⁶ Rudnicki concludes that Métis records were frequently destroyed by those without archival training. He wanted to know why.³⁷ Were the records vulnerable to department transfers, storage issues, or waste paper drives? Or did they "fall victim" to the value systems and priorities that prevailed at the time? Rudnicki suggests the latter: in order to overlook a people, you discount their history. This idea is well documented in archival literature: archives and records have been frequent targets to "show that 'those people' never lived here."³⁸ Land records and similar documents become "inconvenient truths, best destroyed to erase a people."³⁹ Rudnicki's report states that this occurred with the Red River Métis: "By 1851, all mention of 'half-

34 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 255, folder 6, Manitoba Métis Federation, "Aboriginal Rights Research Proposal," submitted to the Hon. Marc Lalonde, Minister of National Health & Welfare (October 1976), 12-15.

35 The interviews are with former DIAND employees Marion Gilchrist, who was responsible for records management in the early 1950s, and Cy Fairholm, who had extensive knowledge of department policies at the time. UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 82, folder 15, PDG, "Métis Land Claims Study: Destruction of Records," 5-6.

36 *Ibid.*, Appendix I and Appendix II.

37 *Ibid.*, 30.

38 Ian E. Wilson, "Peace, Order and Good Government: Archives in Society," *Archival Science* 12, no. 2 (2012): 236.

39 *Ibid.*, 237.

breeds' had disappeared from Federal laws. By the turn of the century, Métis had been relegated to a mere historical foot-note in Federal affairs."⁴⁰ He argues that Métis-government records were included as "artifacts" among larger bodies of administrative records, regularly shuffled or destroyed. References made in existing documents suggested to Rudnicki that reports, briefs, petitions, and related correspondence were created despite their absence from institutional holdings. He addresses the significance of identifying missing records:

The implications for Métis land claims research are significant. It is necessary to assume that much relevant and valuable evidence for the period after 1872 has been lost, and that the case for both specific and general claims will have to be rebuilt painstakingly from surviving records. To some extent, gaps in these records may be filled by materials which survive in various provincial centres, in church basements and perhaps in private hands. The work of tracking such records and isolating them from what could be masses of irrelevant material greatly adds to the time needed for research and to its costs. This is a factor which the federal government will need to take into account in funding work on Métis land claims.⁴¹

Knowing that the Métis Land Claims Commission's findings were destined for the courtroom, this passage sheds valuable light on the role Rudnicki envisioned for records as evidence in litigation. Key to the conclusions of "Métis Land Claims" is the government's lasting obligation to make cohesive record sets accessible to those seeking legal and social justice. In Rudnicki's words, "Without recourse to such records, native persons and groups are at a clear disadvantage in producing evidence to support various rights and claims."⁴²

40 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 82, folder 15, PDG, "Métis Land Claims Study: Destruction of Records," 4.

41 Ibid., 28.

42 Ibid., 26.

The year Rudnicki completed the land claims report, *Archivaria* published an article by treaty research consultant James Morrison in which he examines the ways government archives support the advancement of Indigenous rights.⁴³ Morrison attributes the “modern era” of First Nations grievance and claims research to the 1969 rejection of the White Paper and subsequent mobilization to defend treaty obligations and rights to lands and resources. First Nations bands and organizations sent lawyers and researchers to scour archival institutions across the country in an effort to “clearly define their relationship to the federal government and to the other inhabitants of this country.”⁴⁴ Morrison identifies prohibitive restrictions on government records, saying that some are “so thoroughly screened as to be almost valueless.”⁴⁵ Conditions of access, heavy redactions, record gaps, and missing records have a profound impact on modern claims. By the end of the 1970s, Rudnicki was a part of a larger effort to explore the role and value of archives and archival information in the courtroom.

The MMF and individual Métis plaintiffs launched legal proceedings against the Crown in 1981, asserting that the Métis people of Manitoba had suffered a historic injustice by losing the land base they were promised under section 31 of the *Manitoba Act, 1870*. Over 30 years later, on 8 March 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) found that a historic wrong was committed when the Crown failed to fulfill its obligations to the Métis peoples of the Red River Settlement.⁴⁶ Central to the Supreme Court’s considerations were over 2,000 volumes of historical documents collected by the MMF to support its declarations of land ownership.⁴⁷ Two years before the case was first brought to court, Rudnicki had argued that the archival record would decide Métis land rights in Manitoba:

43 James Morrison, “Archives and Native Claims,” *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979): 15–32.

44 *Ibid.*, 15.

45 *Ibid.*, 25. As examples, Morrison mentions the records of the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RG 18) and the Department of Justice (RG 13) at the Public Archives of Canada.

46 *Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada (Attorney General)*, [2013] SCC 14.

47 Gloria Galloway, “After 140 Years and a Review of 2000 Volumes of Documents, Métis Win Land Claim,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 March 2013, accessed 11 April 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/after-140-years-and-a-review-of-2000-volumes-of-documents-mtis-win-land-claim/article9505274>. Rudnicki acknowledges the existence of great volumes of Métis-related government records. However, the report argues that “relevant material” seemed to be missing from government archives. On the CBC Radio program “Ideas with Paul Kennedy,” MMF lawyer Thomas Berger stated that co-counsel Jim Aldridge

In the final analysis, in the event that Métis land claims become a matter of litigation, the Courts will need to keep in mind the Federal Government's trust responsibilities vis a vis the Métis was poorly fulfilled indeed, when it came to safeguarding documents. Given this fact, the benefit of the doubt should go to the plaintiffs.⁴⁸

Rudnicki believed that Canada neglected Métis-related records just as it had failed to safeguard Métis lands. The Crown neglected the trust relationship in place for both land rights and rights to recorded Métis history:

Succeeding Indian Affairs' administrations, both before and following Confederation, were responsible for the safekeeping of documents affecting persons and property of native people. This was a form of trust responsibility because the government's file rooms, both in the Agency offices and in Ottawa, often contained the only written records of the innumerable transactions that were conducted with native people.⁴⁹

The SCC ruling declares that the Red River Métis did not receive the land to which they were rightfully entitled.⁵⁰ While a negotiated settlement has yet to reach its conclusion, the MMF accepted the ruling as a necessary step toward reconciliation.⁵¹

Rudnicki's work on this issue was deeply archival. Not only did he access the holdings of archival repositories across the country, but he also developed holdings of his own, observing in effect what Verne Harris labels the "call to

had spent one year in the National Archives of Canada to find such relevant records. Berger said the case would not have been won without Aldridge's work in finding the records on which the SCC judgment is based. CBC Radio, "Ideas with Paul Kennedy: Riel's Revenge," 11 July 2013, accessed 10 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/riel-s-revenge-1.2913516>.

48 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, "Métis Land Claims Study: Destruction of Records," 28.

49 Ibid., 26.

50 For a fuller statement on the decision, see *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)*, [2013] SCC 14 at para. 128 and 137.

51 Jason Madden and Jean Teillet, "Unfinished Business in Confederation: Understanding the Supreme Court of Canada's Decision in the Manitoba Métis Federation Case," 14, accessed April 11, 2016, http://www.mmf.mb.ca/wcm-docs/docs/aga_land_claims_brochure.pdf.

justice” for archives: “The call is to dirty one’s hands in the mess of the political, reaching always for a politics which is just. Politics, then, is always already at play in the archives.”⁵² Rudnicki’s collection grew from his tireless engagement in politics and advocacy. Projects outside of PDG brought additional opportunities to develop and deploy his research knowledge, skills, and abilities in ways that support the expansion of Indigenous rights. The archival collection documents efforts behind a variety of events and movements, including the Kelowna Accord; the Mackenzie Valley pipeline; the Oka Crisis; the Sechelt Indian Band self-government model; Lubicon Lake land claims; 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act* (Bill C-31); treaty research, including oral histories; Indigenous health programming; Canadian constitutional reform; and the fight against efforts to terminate the special status of First Nations peoples.

Archives and the Road to Redress

The Walter Rudnicki Fonds contains a large variety of records addressing the history of one of Canada’s most visible colonial projects, the residential school system. Documents in its “Residential Schools” series show Canada’s evolving response to the legacy of residential schools, particularly from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, when the RCAP’s recommendations were released (1996) and the federal government’s *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* (1998) and its plan for an Alternative Dispute Resolution program were made public. Federal efforts at reconciliation with Indigenous peoples proved inadequate. Rudnicki carefully documented each failed step and in 1999 advanced a solution: a national survivor group called the Organization of United Reborn Survivors (OURS). The work of OURS is intrinsically archival, based on “comprehensive archival research and analysis” that presented “a very different picture about responsibility and liabilities for the residential school program.”⁵³

Between September 1998 and May 1999, the federal government and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held a series of “exploratory dialogues” on an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) initiative designed to offer redress to

52 Verne Harris, “Archons, Aliens, and Angels: Power and Politics in the Archive,” in Jennie Hill, ed., *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), 112.

53 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 277, folder 3, Walter Rudnicki and Alvin Tolley to Matthew Coon Come, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, 11 August 2000, 1.

residential school survivors.⁵⁴ These dialogues involved survivors, legal counsel, Indigenous leaders, healers, and church representatives. Through participant contacts, Rudnicki acquired numerous documents associated with the ADR's development, leading him to label the dialogues as "pretend consultations," designed to serve federal interests.⁵⁵

With the support of a small group of residential school survivors, Rudnicki and his colleague Alvin Tolley, a member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and a survivor of the Garnier School in Spanish, Ontario, launched OURS to challenge the expected ADR program. OURS communicated that "by working together in our own national organization we shall cease being survivors and become people with a common cause."⁵⁶ OURS set out to document and expose the conduct of federal authorities; disclose tactics employed by the federal government to evade liabilities; monitor and evaluate various healing initiatives introduced by government; obtain a public apology from the prime minister; receive full compensation for survivors; lobby for the creation of independent tribunals to address the physical, sexual, emotional, and cultural abuse that took place in the schools; and address the legacy of intergenerational trauma.⁵⁷ In June 2000, OURS released "Federal Rules of Engagement: The Government's War Against Survivors and the Churches."⁵⁸ This paper identifies Canada's ongoing colonial policies, critiques the ADR process, and outlines the aims of OURS.

"Federal Rules of Engagement" was rooted in comprehensive archival research.⁵⁹ Rudnicki consulted and copied hundreds of archival records produced by residential school administrators, as well as contemporary documents, including three unpublished federal policy papers "extracted with great difficulty" by nameless source(s).⁶⁰ Although Rudnicki researched and wrote

54 The United Church of Canada, "Background Statements Principles to Guide Our Response in Resolving the Legacy," 8 May 2004, accessed 12 April 2016, <http://develop.united-church.ca/aboriginal/schools/statements/principles>.

55 Ibid.

56 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 280, folder 2, Walter Rudnicki, OURS, "Conference Proposal," Draft, 2000.

57 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38), box 277, folder 10, Walter Rudnicki, "Federal Rules of Engagement: The Government's War against Survivors and Churches," June 2000, 15.

58 Ibid.

59 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 272, folder 5, Walter Rudnicki, "Draft Notes," n.d., 5.

60 Ibid., 12.

“Federal Rules of Engagement,” he kept his authorship discreet, recommending instead that Tolley stand as the public face of OURS. As Rudnicki reveals in personal correspondence,

Although this paper is entirely my effort, I thought it would be more appropriate if it went out over a survivor's name rather than someone who has no such claim. Alvin Tolley spent his childhood in a residential school and is a Chief-in-waiting in the Kitigan Zibi reserve. He also says that the substance of the paper will be endorsed by survivors with whom he is in contact. On the strength of this, I've noted in the paper that the paper is a group effort.⁶¹

This detail is important. OURS not only advanced the contentious position that churches should be left out of survivor claims, but it also solicited church funding and support. Rudnicki worried that OURS would be judged for promoting non-Indigenous interests, assembled to protect churches from costly litigation under the guise of survivor redress. To refute this argument, “Federal Rules of Engagement” states that archival analysis determined its agenda:

An archaeological dig in the National Archives reveals much about responsibility and potential liabilities for damages arising out of the operation of residential institutions. The record shows that decision-making powers for all aspects of the residential program were exercised exclusively by the Department of Indian Affairs. It was federal officials who had the final say about facilities, staffing, salary levels, and standards of care in institutions which they trusted as their own instruments of a Cabinet approved assimilation policy.⁶²

“Federal Rules of Engagement” critiques the ADR's unbalanced approach to participation, compensation, and healing, finding that “a review of available ADR documents reveals highly restrictive conditions that are clearly biased against

61 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 277, folder 1, Walter Rudnicki to Roger Obonsawin, 11 May 2000, 1.

62 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 272, folder 5, Walter Rudnicki, “Annex to Study Entitled ‘Federal Rules of Engagement,’” Draft, n.d., 1.

survivors.”⁶³ Paramount to these “highly restrictive conditions” is access to government information. The ADR model requires former students to substantiate individual claims, a disadvantage that reinforces traditional colonial power relationships and re-victimizes survivors by questioning their credibility and requiring that they “prove” their historical physical and/or sexual abuse.⁶⁴ Much of the evidence considered pertinent to the ADR lay in government hands, a major barrier recognized by OURS considering “the government’s track record in sharing information about its role and practices in the administration of its residential program has been dismal.”⁶⁵

Following the ADR’s investigation into individual claims, former residential school students whose allegations were verified saw their “cases proceed by way of private negotiations and settlement.”⁶⁶ This step required claimants and alleged perpetrators to sign a confidentiality agreement, giving OURS cause to conclude the “problem with ADR as it is now designed is that it is not intended to administer justice,” but rather sees “the federal government manage a process that will keep any settlements cheap and from public view.”⁶⁷ The ADR would not only fail to offer fair compensation, but would also silence survivors.

If the ADR succeeded, OURS thought that other components of redress would be threatened, including the presentation of apologies. Little would compel the Government of Canada to present an official public apology if individual injustices were considered settled and remedied under the ADR. According to OURS, appropriate action would prioritize survivor needs while engaging Canadian society in conversations about truth-telling, redress, and reconciliation. If the ADR were to proceed, none of this would be possible. The program’s confidenci-

63 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38), box 277, folder 10, Walter Rudnicki, “Federal Rules of Engagement: The Government’s War against Survivors and Churches,” June 2000, 15.

64 As “defendants,” survivors were expected to provide documentary evidence, including photographs, report cards, diplomas, newspaper clippings, statements to police, and medical records to validate their student experience and hold perpetrators accountable. See Neil Funk-Unrau and Anna Snyder, “Indian Residential School Survivors and State-Designed ADR: A Strategy for Co-Optation?” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 293.

65 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38), box 277, folder 10, Walter Rudnicki, “Federal Rules of Engagement: The Government’s War against Survivors and Churches,” June 2000, 15.

66 Jennifer Llewellyn, “Dealing with the Legacy of Residential Schools Abuse,” *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 53, no. 3 (2002): 267.

67 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38), box 277, folder 10, Walter Rudnicki, “Federal Rules of Engagement: The Government’s War against Survivors and Churches,” June 2000, 15.

ality agreements would impede efforts to build a comprehensive and permanent record of the history and legacy of Canada's residential schools.

"Federal Rules of Engagement" ends with a section titled "Evaluating Alternatives." Here, OURS weighs options for justice and compensation, including litigation, mediation, and resolution by tribunal. OURS suggests that a "resolution by tribunal," paired with cross-country sub-panels, would offer the most "promising" option for redress. Key to its endorsement is a tribunal's ability to consider a "wider range" of information. As OURS explains, a tribunal "would not be bound by the same rules of evidence and protocols as a court and could consider Canadian as well as aboriginal and international law."⁶⁸ An essential feature of a tribunal committed to resolution would welcome, acknowledge, and implement diverse visions of justice and healing. Central to this approach are non-adversarial processes that neutralize long-standing relationships between government, churches, and survivors.

In May 2000, OURS distributed its report in order to galvanize people into action against the idea of a state-sponsored ADR.⁶⁹ Later that year, Tolley informed Rudnicki that OURS was dismissed during the AFN's Confederacy of Nations meeting, at which Chief Matthew Coon Come allegedly censured "Federal Rules of Engagement" for being "solicited by the churches."⁷⁰ Rudnicki brushed it off, assuming the AFN felt "threatened by an emerging OURS organization which neither he (Coon Come) nor the feds can influence or control."⁷¹ However, objections to the organization's agenda extended beyond the AFN. Although "Federal Rules of Engagement" claims to have the "broad support" of residential school survivors, letters in Rudnicki's collection reveal strong opposition toward assigning full legal responsibility to the Government of Canada. Finding fault only for churches' "tacit and sometimes overt endorsement of the government's

68 Kathy Blair, "Fledgling Survivors' Group to Lobby for Tribunal," *Anglican Journal*, 1 October 2000, accessed 12 April 2016, <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/articles/fledgling-survivors-group-to-lobby-for-tribunal-1013#sthash.da651B3B.dpuf>.

69 Recipients include residential school survivors, AFN members, Indian Affairs Minister Bob Nault, church representatives, media outlets, and other potential allies, with the goal of securing widespread public and financial support.

70 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 277, folder 9, Walter Rudnicki notes, 10 January 2001, 1. Tolley attended the meeting.

71 Ibid.

assimilation doctrine” was unacceptable, no matter the archival interpretation.⁷² Donald H. Sands, survivor and member of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association, wrote to tell Tolley that while he agreed with OURS on many points, “the one thing I do disagree with you is on the Church’s [sic] not being included. It WAS not the government people who beat me and abused me and made me forget my language, and it was the same for the rest of us boys and girls. It was the so-called Christian Church Missionaries who worked the schools.”⁷³ Sands closes his letter by stating, “I repeat you have to include the Church’s [sic] along with the Canadian Government, it’s useless to do otherwise.”⁷⁴ By the fall of 2002, nearly a year and a half after OURS was formed, the AFN was dismissive, the churches were silent, and survivors expressed legitimate concerns.⁷⁵ Tolley and Rudnicki were forced to revisit OURS’s official position.⁷⁶

On 15 October 2002, Tolley unveiled OURS’s renewed position on church responsibility in an updated paper entitled “A Diseased Brand of Justice: Residential School Update,” which he presented at the General Assembly of Algonquin Anishinabeg Tribal Council.⁷⁷ Rudnicki and Tolley agreed to include participant churches alongside government by assigning liability to school “principals and individual staff who practised abuse,” as well as to “any bishops or other church officials who knew about the abuse and did nothing.”⁷⁸ OURS’s main focus became exposing the harm caused by the residential school system, taking care to mention church and government together. As Rudnicki and Tolley wrote, “Till just a few years ago, the role of government and the churches in operating residential institutions was kept hidden in filing cabinets. And even now, they are working hard to keep this history hidden from public view.”⁷⁹

72 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 276, folder 8, Walter Rudnicki and Alvin Tolley, “A Diseased Brand of Justice: Residential School Update,” 9.

73 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 277, folder 3, Donald H. Sands to Alvin Tolley, 15 January 2001, 1 (emphasis in original).

74 Ibid.

75 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38), box 276, folder 8, Rick Motina, “Ottawa Has Plan to Settle Abuse Claims,” *Calgary Herald*, 13 October 2002.

76 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, Rudnicki and Tolley, “A Diseased Brand of Justice.”

77 Ibid., 14.

78 Ibid., 8.

79 Ibid.

OURS endeavoured to steer discussion of residential school redress, but its platform proved too contentious to inspire a national movement. Although OURS could not prevent the creation of the federal ADR in 2003, OURS ultimately obtained what it wanted – an end to the ADR – when the program was discontinued in 2007. The federal government's plan to treat survivors individually was ultimately unsuccessful. The ADR's failure brought about the definitive response to the residential schools legacy. Following the largest class-action settlement in Canada's history, the 2007 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement was signed by survivors, Indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada, and the involved churches.

By documenting the early years of redress, Rudnicki assembled an active archival collection that captures important aspects of the history of residential schools and of residential school redress by highlighting both the experience and expectations of survivors, activists, Indigenous organizations and leadership, and the church and government responses.

From “the Monastery” to the University of Manitoba

The complex relationships Rudnicki had with those who figure prominently in the fonds suggest how he managed to develop this extensive collection. It would be impossible to obtain this variety of records without outside contributions, as many documents were neither written by nor addressed to Rudnicki. From residential school survivors to government officials, at the heart of these socio-political relationships is trust: trust that Rudnicki would not only protect and preserve the record, but also use its contents justly. The fonds was built from countless short-term and life-long relationships, and the records they generated foreground the Indigenous voices mobilizing rights initiatives. One can follow First Nations leader George Manuel's career from his early days in the community development program of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to his organization of the Constitutional Express; or lawyer and educator Harold Cardinal's role as the principal author of the Red Paper; or the work of activist Rosalee Tizya, an elder, residential school survivor, and traditional therapist who studied the effects of historical trauma on Indigenous health.

Rudnicki was able to collaborate with others and document front-line social justice efforts. He conceived of the collection as a public resource designed to make an impact and to serve. Over the years, his archives grew to the point where

it was stored in a second Ottawa residence, a 100-year-old house nicknamed “the Monastery.”⁸⁰ At the end of his career, Rudnicki expressed a desire to donate the collection, knowing it would continue to be of service beyond his lifetime:

Inevitably, I shall in due course have to disengage myself from a mass of books and paper which now cover two floors and threaten to spill out onto the street. My long trek through the demolition derby conducted by Ottawa in First Nation societies is coming to an end.... As far as the collection is concerned, it would be desirable to keep it intact and in continuing use under some responsible auspices.⁸¹

The UMA was the first to formally inquire into the collections’ donation status. In 1996, UMA head Richard Bennett sent a letter to Rudnicki expressing interest in his document and manuscript library. In a draft reply, Rudnicki explained that the collection remained active in both use and accession, including an expected delivery of “a dozen bank-boxes of papers (most of it unpublished and unlikely to ever become public) from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.”⁸² Early the following year, two university representatives visited Rudnicki to examine the collection. Michael Angel, then UMA Associate Director of Collections, and Fred Hoskings, former researcher for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and co-founder of Public History Inc., spent the day with Rudnicki as he guided them through boxes of records and shelves of books. In a follow-up letter, Angel repeated the university’s interest in the collection, “particularly as it relates to the study of First Nations people in North America.” He added, “Your working collection of Canadian government documents, treaties, sessional papers, DIAND annual reports, and RG 10 materials, are as Fred noted, better than anything he’s ever seen.”⁸³

80 CBC Radio, “The Late Show with Gordon Pinsent,” Season 2, Episode 1, “Walter Rudnicki,” 14 June 2010, accessed 10 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/thelateshow/season-two/2010/06/14/episode-1---walter-rudnicki---july-1-and-july-4>.

81 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 20, Rudnicki to Catherine Twinn, Draft, 8 November 2006, 1.

82 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 21, Rudnicki to Richard Bennett, Draft, 10 September 1996, 3.

83 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 21, Michael R. Angel to Walter Rudnicki, 2 May 1997, 1.

In the years that followed the university's initial request, Rudnicki weighed his options. He hesitated to donate to an academic institution over concerns of significant "shortcomings in many university based native study programs."⁸⁴ It was important that the collection continue to serve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit interests. Angel provided Rudnicki with an outline of the Indigenous-focused programming, publications, and services already under way at the university. He acknowledged that "the materials in your collection would add immeasurably to our current materials ... and would greatly enhance our ability to provide support to our teaching and research programs in Native Studies and related areas, as well as providing invaluable support to First Nations researchers from the wider community."⁸⁵ The following year, UMA archivist Michael Moosberger sent another letter, stating, "Your collection would become the cornerstone on which the Libraries will build its collections of published and archival aboriginal holdings and would provide aboriginal students with an unparalleled resource in the study of issues and events that have impacted aboriginal peoples."⁸⁶

Almost 15 years passed between the writing of the first letter of inquiry and UMA's acquisition of Rudnicki's archival collection. Two years were needed to process and describe the 550 banker's boxes that arrived from "the Monastery."⁸⁷ While the UMA restricts select documents and folders according to provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Health Information Act*, management of the Rudnicki Fonds is overwhelmingly open.⁸⁸

The current emphasis on archival outreach as a core archival function underscores Rudnicki's vision for the collection, namely "to give it continuity and the

84 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 21, Shelley Sweeney to Walter Rudnicki, 2 May 2003, 2.

85 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 21, Michael R. Angel to Walter Rudnicki, 2 May 1997, 2.

86 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 21, Michael Moosberger to Walter Rudnicki, 2 May 1997.

87 UMA, "A Celebration of the Walter Rudnicki Collection," 13 September 2012, accessed 15 November 2017, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cprZCxZJBcU>.

88 UMA, Walter Rudnicki: An Inventory of His Papers at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections: Restrictions on Access: "Some folders are restricted. Additionally, upon review of the records in this collection, it appears that the records marked as being Federal records are in the public domain (e.g., The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples files, staff directories, legislation etc.), or were legally obtained by Mr. Rudnicki, either through access to information requests or through other arrangements with creating offices. As a precaution, however, the records in question will not be made available online, and access will be restricted to in-person visits only," accessed 16 November 2017, http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/collections/complete_holdings/ead/html/rudnicki_w_2010_1.shtml.

widest possible access.”⁸⁹ One way this was facilitated by the UMA was through the 13 September 2012 event announcing the launch of the fonds.⁹⁰ Open to the public, “A Celebration of the Walter Rudnicki Collection” was host to an audience composed of family members, colleagues, faculty and administrative staff, members of Indigenous organizations, activists, and students. A number of speakers took the opportunity to reflect on Rudnicki’s career and friendship, and the unique archival, political, and social value found within the collection. UMA archivist Shelley Sweeney characterized Rudnicki as “a rebel, a challenger, and a defender ... who bravely stood up for what he believed in – and what he believed in was fairness.”⁹¹ She closed the event by recounting the overwhelming effort it took to get the collection from “the Monastery” to the UMA. To complete the task, she found motivation by reminding herself that “if the government could find this stuff, would they give anybody access to it? ... Probably not.”⁹² To reach a larger audience, a recording of the event was made available on YouTube, along with the “Walter Rudnicki Slide Show,” an electronic exhibition of his political cartoons and photographs.⁹³ Other digitized records include significant reports, papers, correspondence, and images available through the university’s libraries page via the link UM Digital Collections – Aboriginal Peoples.⁹⁴

Since acquisition, the Rudnicki Fonds has received steady public mention and recognition. In 2013, Métis rights leader and activist Tony Belcourt wrote a paper documenting the history of Métis identity and governance, in which he mentions Rudnicki, whom the author calls a great “friend on the inside” for his work with the NCC in the CMHC years: “If you were not there at the time to see the needs, where housing was either not available or simply not available to our people because of discrimination, then it is difficult to illustrate how much it meant to Métis and Non-Status Indian families to finally have a warm, healthy,

89 UMA, Rudnicki Fonds, MSS 331 (A.10-38.1), box 81, folder 20, Walter Rudnicki to Roger Obonsawin, Draft, 3 November 2006, 1.

90 NationTalk, “A Celebration of Walter Rudnicki,” 12 September 2012, accessed 15 November 2017, <http://nationtalk.ca/story/a-celebration-of-walter-rudnicki>.

91 UMA, “A Celebration of the Walter Rudnicki Collection.”

92 Ibid.

93 UMA, “Walter Rudnicki Slideshow,” accessed 11 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPms9BySuq8>.

94 UMA, “The Walter Rudnicki Fonds,” accessed 15 November 2017, <https://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3Arudnicki>.

and secure place to live and bring up their children.”⁹⁵ In the footnote to this passage, readers are encouraged to learn more about Rudnicki and his work by accessing the fonds through the UMA link provided. The following year, the Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel report *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory* recognized the collection as a “particularly rich and illuminating archives” for its holdings on forced community relocations, “among other topics.”⁹⁶ The report offers strategies and recommendations for cultural institutions to facilitate changing technologies, meet user needs, and continue to serve society at large. These issues and themes are being addressed in community-based archives across the country, including the archives of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S). In *Landscape, The Newsletter of Métis Nation–Saskatchewan*, MN–S archivist Carey Isaak writes about the April 2012 elimination of the National Archival Development Program, subsequent cuts to Library and Archives Canada (LAC), and what programming losses mean for heritage institutions tasked with preserving “community, group and individual identity.”⁹⁷ To compensate for a lack of funding and resources, the MN–S’s Genealogy and Archival Centre embarked on “filling the gaps” by “collecting copies of Métis-themed archival records from across the country” to provide “researchers access to records that may prove difficult to find elsewhere.”⁹⁸ Listed among the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, LAC’s Red River Settlement Collection and RCMP records, and parish records from the St. Boniface Historical Society is “The Walter Rudnicki Collection,” for centralizing “records related to Métis political action from the 1960s through the 1990s.”⁹⁹

95 Tony Belcourt, “For the Record ... On Métis Identity and Citizenship within the Métis Nation,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013): 131.

96 Patricia Demers et al., *Expert Panel Report on the Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory* (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 2014), 29.

97 Carey Isaak, “MN–S Genealogy and Archival Centre Fills Gaps Left by Archives Funding Cuts,” *MN–S Landscape* 2, no. 2 (December 2012), 6, accessed 15 November 2017, http://mn-s.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/1/4/15144322/landscape_vol_2_issue_2_dec_2012.pdf.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

Conclusion

Is it possible to identify direct impacts made by the Rudnicki Fonds? This article does not measure explicit “causal links.” Its intention is to demonstrate ways that the production and dissemination of information – records in action – reflect how people are governed and the ways people organize and counter oppressive and ineffective governance. The Rudnicki Fonds has the potential to demonstrate the kind of “archival impact” that Duff et al. refer to, which at its base level has “far-reaching effects” for social justice as “all people experience the larger social impacts that archives have: whether that be through experiencing a public apology or redress, being a member of a society that expects open access to government records, or by having a previously under-recognized history revealed through a grass roots heritage initiative.”¹⁰⁰ A significant chapter in the story of Indigenous rights in Canada is found in the Walter Rudnicki Fonds. The collection’s impact is rooted in foregrounding issues of great bearing on society, including Indigenous community relocations, housing, land claims, and redress.

In his discussion of the “archival endeavor,” Verne Harris concludes, “My argument is that in the end, and in the beginning, the most important accounting is one geared to answering the call of justice.”¹⁰¹ As an advocate and a supporter of archives, Rudnicki took great lengths to create, receive, and preserve the archival record for the future. A major goal of his life’s work was to amass an archive that would make injustice visible. Donating the collection was his final act of advocacy. Friend and colleague Tony Belcourt describes the Rudnicki Fonds as Rudnicki’s “vindication,” designed so that “his work can carry on, work that is so desperately needed.”¹⁰²

100 Duff et al., “Social Justice Impact of Archives: A Preliminary Investigation,” 333.

101 Verne Harris, “The Archive Is Politics,” in Marion Beyea, Reuben Ware, and Cheryl Avery, eds., *The Power and Passion of Archives: A Festschrift in Honour of Kent Haworth* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 2005), 125.

102 UMA, “A Celebration of the Walter Rudnicki Collection,” 14 September 2012, video, 49:38, featuring various speakers during a celebration held in honour of Rudnicki on 13 September 2012, accessed 15 November 2017, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cprZCxZJBcU>.

BIOGRAPHY Amanda Linden is the Corporate Records Officer at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Prior to that, she worked as an archival assistant for the Digital Archives and Marginalized Communities Project at the Mamawipawin Research Space/University of Manitoba and as Library Manager at MLT Aikins LLP. She is a graduate of the University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg MA program in Archival Studies.