



March 31, 2023

National Claims Research Directors
c/o Jody Woods
Research Director
Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs
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Dear National Claims Research Directors:

Thank you for your open letter of February 15, 2023, in which you raised concerns regarding the informal access to records process administered by Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Addressing past harms is critical to advancing reconciliation, not only to provide compensation for Canada's failures, but to support Indigenous Peoples as they move forward and advance their visions of self-determination. I agree with you that full access to relevant records is necessary for First Nations claims research, both by First Nations and by the researchers they hire.

I want to reassure you that I take the concerns that you raise very seriously, and want to ensure that the process is as simple as possible while ensuring that Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's obligations under the *Privacy Act* are met when releasing documents that contain protected personal information. I want to confirm that researchers and First Nation representatives can share research with authorizing First Nations, as aligned with the Informal Access Process and want to confirm that the existing 8(2)k form process will remain in place until our teams have had further discussions. I am pleased to hear that Jody Woods was able to connect with Darlene Bess, Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's Chief Finances and Results Delivery Officer, to discuss your concerns and strategize next steps.

As indicated in your letter, a joint working group was previously established to address issues regarding informal access to records held by Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. The Department stands ready to re-establish that group together with the National Claims Research Directors in order to discuss this important topic, and ensure everyone remains on the same page moving forward. I look forward to the re-initiation of this table so as to substantively address the issues that you have raised in your letter.

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Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. Addressing Specific Claims in a rigorous and expedient way is a priority for the Government of Canada and researchers play a vital role in that work. I am confident our teams can work together to ensure that the process continues to meet everyone's needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

The Honourable Marc Miller, PC, MP

c.c.: The Honourable David Lametti, PC, KC, MP
National Chief RoseAnne Archibald
Assembly of First Nations Chiefs Committee on Lands Territories and Resources
British Columbia Specific Claims Working Group
Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples BC
British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit
Stefan Matiation