



Backgrounder

Form Filler Support Services

Launched on November 6, 2003, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process is a voluntary process that offers a timely and alternative method to resolve claims of physical abuse, sexual abuse and wrongful confinement suffered at Indian residential schools. To qualify for the ADR process, former students are required to complete and submit a detailed application form to Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) that explains their claim. Although the government strongly recommends that applicants hire a lawyer throughout the ADR process, applicants have the choice to represent themselves.

The Form Filler Support Services were developed as part of IRSRC's commitment to provide help to self-represented applicants to understand how to complete the application form. Form fillers do not replace the advice a lawyer could provide and are not intended to interfere in the relationship between former students and their lawyers.

What is a form filler?

A form filler is a trained person who assists a former student in filling out the ADR application form through individual contact and consultation, in order to speed up the application process and make it more supportive. As part of their supportive role, form fillers work closely with the Indian Residential School Mental Health Supports Program to ensure applicants have appropriate supports available. There is no charge to self-represented former students who choose to use this service.

Form fillers *can*:

- clarify the application form by explaining what a question is asking and outlining which information is required and how it will be used;
- discuss generally how the ADR process works as well as identify counselling supports for the applicant during or following the application stage.

Form fillers *cannot*:

- replace lawyers and provide legal advice to self-represented applicants;
- tell former students what to say in their claims, advise former students on their choice of resolution process, or assist applicants in any other aspects of the ADR process, such as preparing for a hearing.

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How to contact form fillers

Former students needing assistance with the application form and who do not have a lawyer can contact the toll-free Indian Residential Schools Help Desk at 1-800-816-7293 or send them an email to: info@irsr-rqpi.gc.ca. Help Desk operators will refer applicants to the form filler support service in their region.

Background

The establishment of the Form Filler Support Services began as a year-long pilot project that ran from December 2003 to December 2004 in Western Canada and Ontario. The success of the pilot project and the input received from the church entities and former students have reaffirmed the need for this important service within the ADR process and have prompted IRSRC to take further steps to continue this service.

During the Fall 2004, the Government of Canada posted a Request for Proposal (RFP) nationally on MERX, the national electronic bidding system for the Government of Canada, to receive proposals for Form Filler Support Services from regionally-based, Aboriginal service providers.

Contracts for form filler services are awarded on an “as needed and as required” basis, and the Aboriginal organizations awarded contracts are responsible for the qualifications of the form fillers they provide to self-represented former students. A current list of form filler service providers can be requested from the Indian Residential School Help Desk.

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