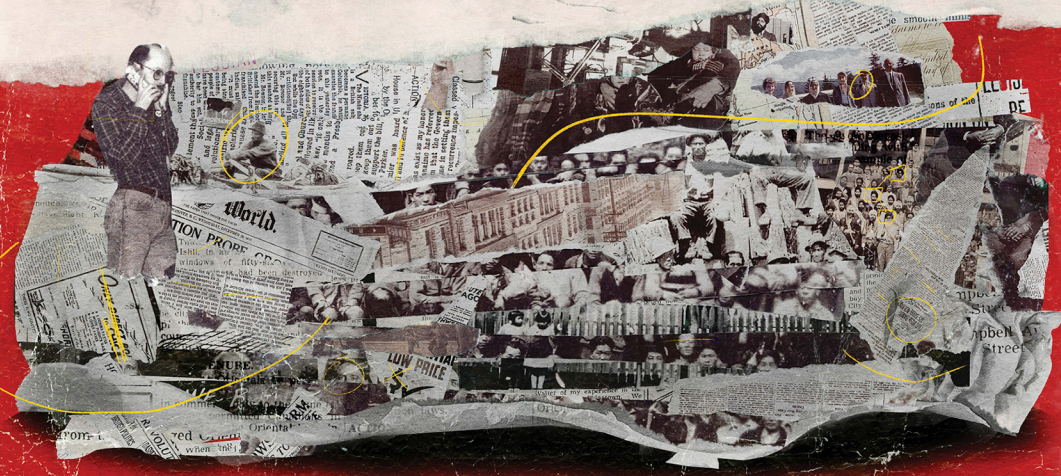


NFB FIELD TRIP GUIDE



UNARCHIVED



CRITICALLY CONSIDERING ARCHIVAL MATERIAL USED IN EXHIBITIONS

This resource was created as a guide to accompany the NFB documentary [Unarchived](#), a film about local knowledge keepers fighting for a more inclusive history through the stewardship of community archives.

This guide is to be used when visiting a museum, historic site or art gallery exhibiting archival material.

PRE-VISIT

Supplies needed: Pen or pencil, notebook or note-taking device.

Archives are composed of records.

Records are considered evidence and are often treated as confirmation of a truth. However, all records are created by people and therefore embody the perspectives of those people. These perspectives can also be considered biases—attitudes or assumptions shaped by experience and based on learned associations. Before you visit, consider what biases you bring with you.

A **record** is any recorded information and can come in many formats, such as:

- things you read, like letters, journals or documents;
- things you see, like photographs;
- things portraying land and structures, like maps and architectural drawings;
- things you listen to, like songs and interviews; and
- things you watch, like films and video clips.

DURING YOUR VISIT

Archival records are often included in exhibits to enhance the narrative being presented. While this can enhance the overall exhibit, you can also practise applying a critical perspective when visiting an exhibition.

As you take in the entirety of the exhibit, find one archival record that captures your interest. The record can be in any format and might be on its own or displayed in a group of items.

PART 1: Take out your notebook and consider the following:

- How is the record you've selected displayed?
- Is there any added contextual information, such as a text panel describing the item? Or are you left to interpret it on your own?
- What senses are you invited to use when encountering the item?



PART 2: As you examine the record, think about the following questions:

- WHO created the record?
- WHAT do you think was the purpose of creating this record? For example, if the item is a photograph, consider who took the photo and what they were hoping to portray. If it is a document, what was the author hoping to achieve by writing this text?
- WHEN was the record created? What was the context of the era from which it comes? What else was going on in society at that time?
- WHERE was it created? What is the history of that location or community?
- WHY do you think it was added to this particular exhibit? Is it contributing to a pre-existing commonly told narrative? Or has it been included to challenge and question outdated understandings of the event, community, people or place depicted?



POST-VISIT

- Did the archival record(s) enhance the exhibit?
 - If yes, what made them a positive addition?
 - If no, what would you replace them with?
- Exhibits are a powerful way of representing people's lives. In the case of your own life, what archival record would you include to tell your story?

Extension Activities

1. Imagine and then create a fictional archival record to add to the exhibit you visited. The record can be in any format and can serve one of two purposes:
 - a. Enhance the exhibit and provide additional evidence to corroborate the story the exhibit tells;
 - b. Challenge the narrative of the exhibit and encourage visitors to reconsider the accepted history.
2. Design a small exhibit—for example, a window-sized display case—about an event or period of your life. Include at least one archival record that will illustrate the perspective you hope to present to the viewer of the exhibit.

If you would like to watch the full version of *Unarchived* and access more learning resources on archives, click [here](#).

This guide was written in collaboration with project consultant Genevieve Weber.