



**KTUNAXA  
NATION**

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## **Michael Phillipps' Original Records Donated to the Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives**

*Cranbrook/ʔa·kiskaq#iʔit* – Archivists live for finding the “ultimate” original record, whether it comes in the form of a letter, photograph, sound recording or as moving images. Rarely will 100 year old records come through the door of archives in our province, but when it happens, it is something to celebrate. And what better time to celebrate than during Archives Week in British Columbia, which happens annually during the third week of November.

A collection of valuable records ranging from 1867 to 1916 have recently been acquired by the Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives in Cranbrook. They are original records of Michael Phillipps, who was one of the first homesteaders and government officials in the area. He emigrated from England to the East Kootenays during the Wild Horse Creek gold rush of the mid-1860s. His records reflect the various government positions he held over several decades, and is perhaps most remembered as being the first Indian Agent for the Kootenay Indians. Shortly after arriving in Kootenay territory, he married Rowena, daughter of Tobacco Plain's Chief David, and together they had 12 children. Michael Phillipps' descendants are deeply rooted in the fabric of the Ktunaxa Nation.

These records have remained in Grasmere under the care of Michael Phillipps' descendants for the past century. The Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives acquired the records this summer when a forest fire forced the family to evacuate their home on the old Phillipps Ranch in Grasmere. Dave Brown, great grandson of Michael and Rowena, and his wife Pearl, responded quickly to the evacuation alert and loaded these records into their car before they even packed their clothes. Realizing the magnitude of the responsibility that is attached to these records, Dave and Pearl decided it was time to donate the records to the Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives for safekeeping.

“The climate in Tobacco Plains has been good to these delicate records. They are in excellent condition thanks to the dry environment and the care provided by the family over the years,” states Margaret Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Archivist.

The following statement is provided by Rosemary Phillips, Ktunaxa Nation Council employee and great granddaughter of Michael Phillipps: “It is really a bit of serendipity how this all unfolded. I am really happy the Dave and Pearl agreed to allow us to bring these invaluable documents to the archives at our Government Building but even more exciting for me is to really get a sense of who this man - my great grandfather - whom I knew a little about, really was. There has been a bit of stigma that has cast a dark

shadow on him but as the documents reveal their stories we can see that he really was a great man, humble, kind, and most of all not your typical Indian Agent. I have always been proud of my family history and lineage but now I feel that I know this man just a little better and am very proud to be his descendant.”

The Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives is currently preparing the documents for long term care including placing documents into acid-free folders and boxes, preparing an archival finding aid according to the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description*, digitizing documents, and assigning associated metadata to electronic documents for searching purposes.

Anyone who may have additional original records relating to this collection is encouraged to contact the Nation Archives. Any donated records will be housed in acid-free folders and boxes for permanent storage, and electronic copies will be provided to donors for their reference.

The Ktunaxa Nation Council Archives was established in 1997 and holds the operating records of the organization as well as records of cultural and anthropological value. The role and mission of the Ktunaxa Nation Archives is to serve the Ktunaxa and Kinbasket peoples by protecting records which are of legal, fiscal, administrative, historical and cultural value.

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