

SECTION K: FILE MANAGEMENT

FOLDER AND FILE NAMING CONVENTIONS GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

WHY USE NAMING CONVENTIONS?

Consistency in naming files, emails or folders is important to identify information quickly and easily. Putting time and effort into naming files consistently and logically will distinguish similar files from one another at a glance, allowing for more effective and efficient searching and retrieval of files. Titling electronic files and folders according to agreed office conventions will also make file naming easier for each employee because they will not have to 're-think' this process each time a document is created, received and/or saved. Establishing office conventions for electronic file/folder naming will also prevent files from being misfiled and "lost".

HOW SHOULD ELECTRONIC FILES AND FOLDERS BE TITLED?

Office file naming conventions should reflect efficient and consistent workplace practice; while folder structure and naming should reflect agreed upon office functions. While there is room for a certain degree of adaptation by individuals, it is important that the office-wide folder structure and file naming conventions **be agreed upon, understood and implemented by all office staff.**

In general, a file title should be:

- **Descriptive** – it says what the document is about;
- **Helpful** – it distinguishes the document from others on the same/similar topic;
- **Consistent** – it follows the convention described in this document.

File Title Elements: file names should *always* contain **two or more** of the following elements listed below:

- Date;
- Subject;
- Document Type; and/or
- Version or Status.

The logical sequence of these four elements will vary depending on the file being titled and the retrieval requirements of each office department. The most important thing to remember is: consistency is **critical**.

CONVENTIONS

ORDERING THE ELEMENTS OF A FILE NAME

The elements to be included in a file name (i.e. Date, Subject, Document Type, Version or Status) should be ordered according to the way the record will be retrieved. *For example*, if the records are retrieved according to their Date (i.e. meeting minutes) the date element should appear first. If the records are retrieved according to their Description (i.e. subject or document type) the description element should appear first.

EXAMPLE

- **Naming by Date:** **2004-06-30 Agenda.doc** [i.e. YYYY-MM-DD, Description, file extension]

- Naming by Description: **Event Donor List 2004-06-30.pdf** [i.e. Description, YYYY-MM-DD, file extension]

The key to an effective file naming strategy is **consensus** and **consistency**. Effective naming conventions should be **designed to assist people**, not cause them to change their whole way of working and so they should be tailored to best suit office requirements.

USE THE APPROPRIATE COMPUTER DRIVE FOR ALL PROJECT FILES

- If your office computer system has server support, save project files to the drive that is regularly backed up by the server. If your computer crashes you could lose *all of your work* if you haven't saved it to the drive that is regularly backed up.
 - **Important Note on Preservation:** Once your digitization project is finished, consider purchasing 1-2 external hard drives and saving copies of all of your digitized audio files to these units. Then store these 1-2 external hard drives in **different, secured, geographical locations**, such as a tribal council archives, a university archives, etc... This will also help ensure redundancy, so if something catastrophic such as flooding should destroy the original audiocassettes or server containing the digitized files, the external hard drives stored away from the flooded area should be fine.
- If your office computer system **does not** have server support, invest in 2-3 external hard drives and be sure to save your work to each drive at the end of every day. Saving all of your digitized files to each of these external hard drives will ensure redundancy so that if one hard drive fails, chances are the files saved to a different external hard drive will still be viable.
 - **Important Note on Preservation:** Again, once your digitization project is finished, consider storing 1-2 of these external hard drives in **different, secured, geographical locations**, such as a tribal council archives, a university archives, etc... As mentioned above, this will help ensure data redundancy.

ESTABLISH CLEAR FOLDER STRUCTURE

- Establishing efficient folder structure within your office computer system is as important as establishing file naming conventions. Clear folder structuring allows for the most efficient and predictable means of filing/finding a document.
- Clear folder structure also ensures that all files pertaining to the same activity or subject are filed in the same place.
- Be sure to establish folder titles which broadly reflects contents, so duplicate sub-folders are not required.
- Office computer folder structure should reflect office functions.

EXAMPLE FOLDER STRUCTURE

Band Office "X" consists of four large Departments, all of which use space on a shared drive. This is what a hierarchical folder structure *could* look like for them:

Shared Drive Level →

Band Office Departments Folder Titles

1. Administration
2. Governance
3. Lands, Planning and Resources
4. Social Sector

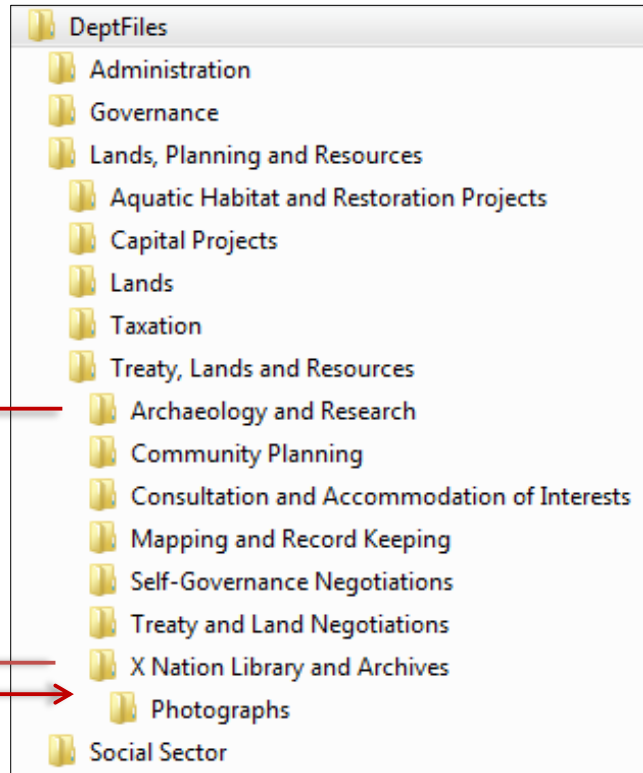
Offices *within* Departments = Primary Folder Titles

For example, the Department of Lands, Planning and Resources is made up of the following Offices:

- Aquatic Habitat and Restoration Projects
- Capital Projects
- Lands
- Taxation
- Treaty, Lands and Resources

Units within Offices = Secondary Folder Titles

Subject Sub-Folder →



Within each office, or secondary folder, would be a number of **sub-folders** and even **sub-sub folders**, *depending upon office function and work flow*. In this basic example, the sub-folder of “Photographs” is identified – the titling of a sub-folder “photographs” would indicate that the contents are often retrieved and therefore titling the sub-folder by a subject (“photographs”) would make sense for this unit.

EXAMPLE FILE PATH

G:/LPR/TLR/Archives/Photographs/YouthCultureCamp/Doe.Jane.2009-03-13.tiff							
Shared Drive	Folder Title	Primary Title	Secondary Title	Sub-Folders at this level	Sub-sub-folder Title	Document Name	File Extension
	<i>Dept.</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Unit</i>	determined within Unit		(eg. “Naming by Person	(eg. “.tiff” = image
	(eg. Lands, Planning & Resources Dept., aka. LPR)	(eg. Treaty, Lands and Resources, aka TLR)	(eg. Archives)	according to office requirements	(eg. Youth Culture Camp)	name, first name, date (YYYY-MM-DD)	File extensions are automatically applied when a file is saved)
				(eg. Photographs)			

USE SHORT, MEANINGFUL NAMES FOR FOLDERS AND FILES

Short meaningful folder names (i.e. 40 characters or less) are used to provide a clear and immediate indication of content. Folders using general terms such as “Misc.” or “Joe’s files” or “to keep” provide no explanation as to the nature of the files inside. Even a folder named “Correspondence” might sound like it works; however when this correspondence is all of a different nature (i.e. different subject, incoming, outgoing, etc...) it offers no assistance in retrieval. Likewise file names like “James correspondence” might be descriptive to the person who created the

file, however another user doesn't know if James is a last name or a first name, or if the correspondence was sent or received.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A file name does not require every single word in the document title be used in order to identify it; for example, don't include words like "the" or "a" in your file name. Abbreviations and acronyms *can* also be used; however, **all staff must be aware of their meaning** otherwise their use will make finding and labeling files much more complicated.

When using acronyms, each letter should appear in capitals, as should the first letter of the following word; whereas, only the first letter of an abbreviated word should be capitalized.

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** FinCtteeetermofref.docx (for "Finance Committee Terms of Reference")
- **Use:** Finance Cttee TOR.docx *or* Finance Cmt TOR.docx
- **Acronym:** "TOR" for Terms of Reference (all capitals)
- **Abbreviation:** "Cttee" *or* "Cmt" for Committee (first letter of abbreviation capitalized)

Please see the **File Naming Conventions Worksheet** for an "Abbreviations and Acronyms Key" template. Feel free to use this template as a guide help identify your office's abbreviation and acronym usage – just ensure it is readily available to all staff using the same computer drive **and** keep it up to date!

NO DUPLICATION

Try not to duplicate the folder name within the file name as all the files stored within in a folder should relate to the *same subject*. For example, all files stored in a folder titled "Indigitization Project" should refer to that subject, so it is not necessary to include the word "Indigitization" within the filename.

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** /Indigitization Project/Indigitization Digitization Procedures 2017-06-14.doc
- **Use:** /Indigitization Project/Digitization.Procedure-2017-06-14.doc

IDENTIFYING WORDS WITHIN TITLES

- Use one space (or a period) to separate each word within a file title, and a dash to separate the numeric elements of a date (see "Date Notation" below)
- Capitalize the first letter of each word within a file title.
- Avoid using other separation marks (underscores, slashes etc.) as these can affect searching capabilities.

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** staff.appeal.docx *or* Staff_appeal.docx
- **Use:** Staff Appeal.docx *or* Staff.Appeal.docx

DATE NOTATION

To maintain file chronology, write the file date backwards using a hyphen to separate the year, month and day. The date format should always follow the ISO standard ISO 8601: *Data elements and interchange formats – Information interchange – Representation of dates and times* to ensure continuity, which recommends: the four digit year, followed by the two digit month, followed by the two digit day. Use a zero before any numbers 1-9 to maintain numeric ordering. Alternative date notations include:

- YYYY-MM-DD
- YYYY-MM
- YYYY
- YYYY-YYYY

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** Jan. 27.14_Minutes Finance Cmt.doc
- **Use:** 2014-01-27 Finance Cmttee Minutes.doc

APPLYING VERSION NUMBER AND DOCUMENT STATUS

Version control should be applied to documents which are frequently updated (such as policy, by-laws, etc.). Including a number and date on the title page (and within document footers) will reduce confusion over which document is the current version, as well as providing an audit trail for tracking changes.

A version control table on the document could also be used to keep track of what changes have been made and by whom.

Decimal increments should be used so that a distinction can be made between major and minor changes. You can also add 'DRAFT' or 'FINAL' to show the difference between working drafts and final versions. For example:

- A first draft of a policy might be titled: "Digitization.Policy.v0.1-DRAFT"; the next set of revisions to this draft could be titled "Digitization Policy.v0.2-DRAFT", etc..
- Once the document has been finalized, the numeric value of the version changes to reflect this status: "Digitization.Policy.v1.0-FINAL". Any future minor revisions to this version could then be noted in the title as such: "Digitization.Policy.v1.1-FINAL". The second final version would be v2.0-FINAL etc.

To ensure effective ordering of version numbers, always locate version naming/numbering at the end of a file name. Convention also dictates the use of a lower case "v" to indicate "version" followed by a two-digit number - again using a zero before numbers 1-9 to maintain alphanumeric ordering and assist retrieval by placing the last file first.

USE OF NON-ALPHANUMERIC CHARACTERS IN FILE NAMES

Avoid the use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names as these can affect search results and do not add much meaning. Avoid: * : \ / < > | " ? [] ; = + & £ \$, . However, hyphens (-) can be used to separate elements of file titles as specified in this document.

EXAMPLE

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| • Instead of: | | Use: |
| • Guidelines & Regulations | → | Guidelines and Regulations |
| • Project Budget 2006/07 | → | Project Budget 2006-2007 |

USING PERSONAL NAMES

When required to include a personal name in the file title list the surname first followed by first name. This will arrange files alphabetically by surname which will make retrieval easier.

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** Interview with Axel James Point Sept.13.pdf

- **Use:** Point Axel James Interview 2013-09-12.pdf

COMMON WORDS USAGE

Common office language (i.e. correspondence, minutes, timeline, budget, etc...) used in file names are a useful means of identifying document type; however they should only be used at the end of a file title, and not at the start. This makes file name ordering within a folder more consistent.

EXAMPLE

- **Instead of:** Minutes FinCmt Jan.24.2014.doc
- **Use:** 2014-01-24 Finance Cmte Minutes.doc

NAMING CORRESPONDENCE RECORDS (INCLUDING EMAILS)

File names for correspondence documents should include the following elements so that the record can be easily identified and retrieved:

- name of correspondent, (i.e. the name of the person who sent the letter/email/memo or to whom you sent the letter/email/memo)
- subject description, where it is not given in the folder title
- date of letter/email/memo (and time HH:MM for string emails)
- for all incoming correspondence, include 'rcvd' at the end of the file title
- when saving emails, rename messages so they can be identified, and delete any prefixes such as RE:, FW:, etc.

EXAMPLE

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| • Instead of: | | Use: |
| • William Evans-15Jul04 | → | Evans W-Appeal-2004-07-15-rcvd |
| • William Evans-20Aug04 | → | Evans W-Appeal-2004-08-20 |

STANDARDS

The naming conventions identified in this document are based upon the following standards and guidelines:

- ISO 15489-1 and 2: 2001- Information and Documentation – Records Management;
- ISO 8601:2004 - Data elements and interchange formats - Information interchange - Representation of dates and time;
- Naming Conventions for Electronic Files and Folders – York University
- Naming Conventions for Electronic Records Q&As – University of Calgary
- *Standard Naming Conventions* - University of Edinburgh (U.K.);
- Naming Conventions for Electronic Documents – University of St. Andrews (U.K.);
- Standard Naming Conventions for Electronic Files, Folders and Records (Sept. 1, 1012) – University of Hertfordshire (U.K.)

These Guidelines were adapted with permission to use from the University of Hertfordshire, UK, [“Corporate Records Management Standards – Standard Naming Conventions for Electronic Files, Folders and Records”](#).

FILE NAMING: AUDIOCASSETTE FILES

AUDIOCASSETTE INVENTORY

If you haven't already constructed an inventory of your audiocassette collection, this would be your first step. Creating an inventory is critical when undertaking a digitization project – it assists in project management, establishing workflow and in identifying cassette names and content. Most audio cassettes will have information written on their inner sleeve – such as a date, speaker or subject. If they were created as part of a larger recording project, they may even have an identifying project number. All of this information is important to record as it provides context to the recording itself and will help identify each tape as a unique unit. An inventory can be as simple or as complex as you want; however a basic inventory should include the following fields, usually in a table format:

ID #	Title Information	Description	Date of recording	Original Tape #	Length of Tape	Tape Format	Notes
0001	J. Seymour Jr. – trap line	1985 TLU Study: Joseph Seymour Jr. talks about trap lines on north shore of Cold Lake.	Nov. 13, 1985	VC-101	90 min	Maxell XL-II-S, high bias	Ownership: Band
0002							

Consistent Identification is CRITICAL. It is recommended that as you complete an inventory, you provide a *unique ID #* to each audiocassette – see “ID #” column in table above.

LABELLING

Be sure to fully label each cassette as well - this will assist in quick identification and will help maintain efficient digitization workflow. Regular file folder labels (approx. 3-7/16”x 2/3” or 8.7cm x 1.7cm) work well and will usually fit along the spine of a standard audiocassette case. You can also feed such label sheets through a printer which will ensure consistent font. If you store a digital copy on a CD or DVD, it is recommended to label these cases as well. Don't forget to add the *status* of copy being stored on that CD /DVD; for example: “Master”, “Access Copy”, “Access Master”, “Web Copy”, etc...

EXAMPLE LABEL

Interview: Joseph Seymour Jr.	ID #: 001
Date: Nov. 13, 1985	[ORIGINAL]

← This label could be used on the spine of the original audiocassette

Interview: Joseph Seymour Jr.	ID #: 001
Date: Nov. 13, 1985	[ACCESS COPY]

← This label could be used on the front of a CD/DVD case

EXAMPLE CASSETTES

An example of such audiocassette identification and labelling looks like this – see photos below. The photo in the centre shows a shoe box size archival storage container with the original audiocassettes stored on the left (see close-up image below left) and access copies stored on the right (see close-up image below right). Note the unique ID #'s are referred to here as “Accession #” and both the original cassette and the access copy both share the same #.



Don't forget to label the BOX containing all originals and/or CD/DVD copies!!

EXAMPLE BOX LABEL

Cold Lake Archives
 ORIGINAL Audiocassettes
 #001-#050
 Box 1 of 22

ACCESSION NUMBERS

An “accession” is a simply a new item added to an existing collection. The development and use of accession #'s can be a great way to record important information in a very concise manner. *For example*, let’s say your office has a collection of audiocassettes, videocassettes and photographs which are all planned for digitization this year (2017).

EXAMPLE ACCESSION NUMBERS

Accession # 2017.1.001	Accession # 2017.2.001	Accession # 2017.3.001
2017 – the year of the project	2017 – the year of the project	2017 – the year of the project
.1 – a unique group number assigned to audiocassettes	.2 – a unique group number assigned to videocassettes	.3 – a unique group number assigned to photographs
.001 – the first audiocassette listed in the inventory	.001 – the first videocassette listed in the inventory	.001 – the first photograph listed in the inventory

FILE NAMING FOR DIGITIZED AUDIO FILES

Step 1: Establish folder structure on your computer

Step 2: Establish file naming convention – see File Naming Conventions Guidelines, Worksheet and Quick Reference Guide

Step 3: Make sure everyone responsible for file creation, or who will be using digitized files, understands this convention and the folder structure

Step 4: *Follow* your naming convention and folder structure

EXAMPLE AUDIOCASSETTE FILE NAMES

File type	File Structure	Example	Comments
Master (M)	####_side_M.wav	0025_a_M.wav 0025_b_M.wav	“####” is a zero filled number which can accommodate 9,999 cassettes. This is where you would insert your audiocassette ID# or accession # from your inventory; “a” or “b” represents Side A or Side B of audiocassette; “M” = Master file type and “.wav” indicates file format for the original master recording that should be saved as the preservation copy.
Access Master (AM)	####_side_AM.wav	0025_a_AM.wav 0025_b_AM.wav	As above; “AM” = Access Master ; this is the master version on which additional processing for noise reduction and other manipulations should be applied.
Access Copy (AC)	####_side_AC.mp3	0025_a_AC.mp3	As above; “AC” = Access Copy ; this is the copy to be used for <i>playing</i> , its file format would be dependent on access requirements for chosen media player.
Access Sub-Copy (ASC)	####_side_ASC_001.mp3	0025_a_ASC_001.mp3	As above; This is a way to title <i>sections</i> or “clips” of full recording where “_001” indicates the numbered clip , track (or portion thereof) of the recorded information on the audiocassette.

FILE NAMING CONVENTIONS WORKSHEET

ESTABLISHING FOLDER STRUCTURE AND DOCUMENT NAMING CONVENTIONS

(Examples only - please establish a standard based upon your unique office requirements. The most important thing is to make sure everyone in your office is aware of the standard and agrees to use the standard.)

EXAMPLE FOLDER STRUCTURE

Folder Structure							
G:/LPR/Treaty/Archives/TUS/Interviews/Doe.Jane.2009-03-13.Transcript.docx							
Shared Drive	Folder Title	Primary Title Office	Secondary Title Unit	Sub-Folders at this level determined	Sub-sub-Folder Title	Document Name (eg. “Naming by Person	File Extension (eg. “.docx” = Word Document.

<i>Department</i> (eg. Lands, Planning & Resources Dept., aka. LPR)	(eg. Treaty Office)	(eg. Archives)	within Unit according to office requirements (eg. TUS: Traditional Use Studies)	(eg. Interviews)	Convention": last name, first name, date (YYYY-MM-DD), Description)	File extensions are automatically applied when a file is saved)
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Types of File Naming Conventions

Naming by Date: 2004-06-30.Agenda.doc [YYYY-MM-DD Description, file extension]

Naming by Description: Event.Donor.List.2004-06-30.pdf [Description, YYYY-MM-DD, file extension]

Naming by Person: Doe.Jane.2009-03-13.Transcript.docx [Last Name, First Name, YYYY-MM-DD, Description, file extension]

WORKSPACE: FOLDER STRUCTURE AND DOCUMENT NAMING CONVENTIONS

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

(Examples only - please add to/delete from as required. Use of abbreviations should be limited and used only when absolutely necessary; also ensure chosen abbreviations are commonly used by colleagues.)

ACG.	All Clan Gathering	Lands	Lands Department
Assoc.	Association	LC Mtg.	Land Claims Meeting
Bhlt.	Bah'lats	Mgmt.	Management
Chiefs Mtg.	Chiefs Meeting	Mtg.	Meeting
Conf.	Conference	OH	Oral History
Corr.	Correspondence	Plng. Mtg.	Planning Meeting
Dept.	Department	Ptch.	Potlach
Govt.	Government	Trnscr.	Transcription
Inter.	Interview	Treaty	Treaty Office

ACRONYMS LIST

(Examples only - please add to/delete from as required. Use of acronyms should be limited and used only when absolutely necessary; also ensure chosen acronyms are commonly used by colleagues.)

CSTC	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
FPCC	First Peoples' Cultural Council
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
LPR	Lands, Planning and Resources Office
MIBA	Musqueam Indian Band Archives
NCCAH	National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TUS	Traditional Use Study
UBCIC	Union of BC Indian Chiefs
YDLI	Yinka Déné Language Institute

NOTES

- **Document Location:** Once finalized, please ensure each employee within your office or department is aware of the shared drive file path for this document.
- **Document Revisions:** Revise as required and inform each employee within your department of these revisions.