



# Honouring the Children

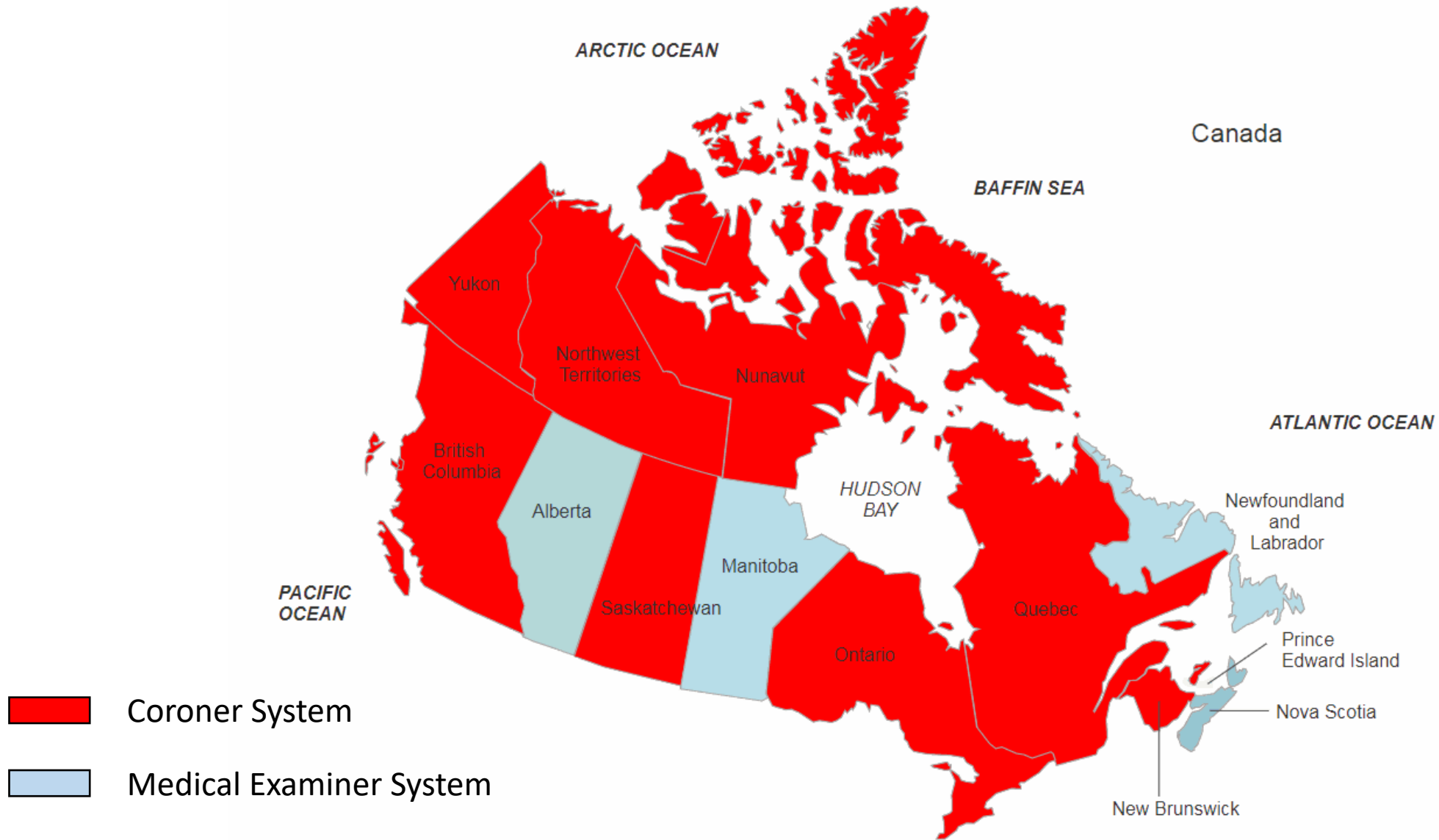
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Preparing for the work ahead – a forensic perspective

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# The Death Investigation System

- Each province/territory is responsible for its own death investigation system
- There is no federal authority, and therefore, no national standards
- Two different death investigation systems in Canada:
  - Coroner System
  - Medical Examiner System





# **THE DEATH INVESTIGATION TEAM**

coroners  
pathologists  
police services  
forensic scientists  
forensic anthropologists  
forensic dentists  
fire marshal  
subspecialty pathologists  
radiologists  
clinicians



## **What is a Forensic Pathologist?**

- Medical doctor
- Specialty training in Anatomical/General Pathology
- Fellowship training in Forensic Pathology
- Performs autopsies, and using science and medicine, determines cause of death

# WHAT WE DO

INVESTIGATE DEATHS

PERFORM AUTOPSIES

TESTIFY IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

PERFORM REVIEW

MEDICAL EDUCATION

PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE





# WHAT IS AN AUTOPSY?

a thorough pathologic examination of the body after death requiring:

- EXAMINATION OF THE SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCES
- EXTERNAL EXAMINATION
- INTERNAL EXAMINATION
- INTERPRETATION OF ANCILLARY TESTS
- FORMATION OF A MEDICOLEGAL OPINION (Cause of Death)

# Forensic Work in the Context of Missing Children, Unmarked Burials and Residential Schools





# Forensic Expertise Required

- Forensic Pathologists
- Forensic Anthropologists
- Other experts as required (ex: geophysicists, archeologists etc.)
- An Expert Advisory Panel to provide oversight and advice to families and communities



# Phases of the Forensic Approach

1. Family, community and leadership engagement (governance and oversight, communications, local action plans, ethics, ceremony)
2. Archival documents, research and interviews
3. Collection of ante-mortem data from prospective families (including DNA)
4. Multidisciplinary team to exhume and examine the remains
5. Identification and repatriation
6. Management of unidentified remains



# Points to Consider

- The wishes of the families and communities are paramount; the extent of our involvement depends on their decisions
- Forensic work needs a systematic approach based on international best practices that align with the ethical obligations to the living and the dead
- Each step must respect the cultural and traditional values of each community
- It may not be possible to locate all grave sites, identify each child and determine an exact cause of death





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