Records Management Policy

Policy

Records are a special form of information that is created, received, and maintained by Nipissing First Nation for business purposes or legal obligations, which enable and document decision-making, and support Nipissing First Nation reporting, performance and accountability requirements. Records must be created and collected, organized, retained, and safeguarded in a manner that enables their long term availability, understandability and usability.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance on effective recordkeeping practices that enable Nipissing First Nation to create and acquire; manage; and, protect the integrity of its records that support its decision-making, and support Nipissing First Nation reporting, performance and accountability requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to all Council members, members of the Finance and Audit Committee, officers and employees of the Nipissing First Nation and any contractors or volunteers performing services on behalf of the Council. The direction provided in this policy applies to all records created and acquired by the Nipissing First Nation regardless of format (i.e., both electronic and hardcopy paper records).

Definitions

"*Classification*" is the process of categorizing records according to a predetermined hierarchy or scheme. Functional-based classification is the arrangement of records based on the business functions and activities of the Nipissing First Nation. This allows the Council to understand the records collected and created related to each business process / activity and how that record is used.

"*Information*" is knowledge communicated or received and may be any documentary material regardless of communications source, information format, production mode or recording medium.

"*Information Security*" refers to the physical, electronic and policy instruments that are used to protect information from unauthorized access (protecting confidentiality), unauthorized use (protecting integrity), unauthorized modification (also protecting integrity) and unauthorized destruction (protecting availability).

"*Record*" is a special form of information, and for the purposes of this policy refers to information created, received, and maintained by Nipissing First Nation for business purposes or legal obligations, which enable and document decision-making, and support Nipissing First Nation reporting, performance and accountability requirements. A record may be electronic or hardcopy paper based.

"**Recordkeeping**" is a framework of accountability and stewardship in which records are created or acquired, captured, and managed as a vital business asset and knowledge resource to support effective decision-making and achievement of results for the Nipissing First Nation.

"**Repository**" refers to a preservation environment for a record. It includes specified physical or electronic storage space and the associated infrastructure required for its maintenance. Business rules for the management of records in a repository need to be established, and there must be sufficient control for the resources to be authentic, reliable, accessible and usable on a continuing basis.

Responsibilities

Council is responsible for:

- Establishing and implementing documented procedures for records management within the Nipissing First Nation.

The Chief Executive officer is responsible for:

- Implementing appropriate recordkeeping practices,
- Ensure appropriate safeguards of the Nipissing First Nation's records;
- Ensuring compliance with the established records retention and disposition schedule and overseeing the disposition process;
- Ensuring that employees and any contractors or volunteers performing services on behalf of the Council are fully knowledgeable of their responsibilities as they relate to recordkeeping practices.

Employees, contractors and volunteers are responsible for:

- Complying with the established records management policy.
- Immediately reporting to their supervisor any potential breach related to compliance with the record keeping policy, including the incidents in which the safeguarding of records may have been compromised.

Procedures

Accountability

Each record shall have a designated steward that ensures the recordkeeping framework outlined in this policy is applied to the record.   All employees, contractors, or volunteer that are in custody of a record must ensure it is managed in accordance with this policy.

Permanent records such as operations manuals, policies, and procedures will be reviewed and updated by the steward periodically, but at least every two years, or more frequently as required.

Records under the stewardship of an employee or any contractor or volunteers that is departing must be formally transferred to another employee through a knowledge transfer process. This process should include information on the types of records to be transferred, how the records are organized, in which repository the records are kept, and required safeguards.

Creation and Collection

A. All important activities and decision making processes of the Nipissing First Nation should be identified, including the records required to support those processes, to ensure accountability, preserve an audit trail, and protect the Nipissing First Nation from liability.

B. All information at its time of creation or collection should be assessed to determine if it supports Council's business purposes or legal obligations, and enables decision-making. If determined to be a record its management should comply with the procedures outlined within this policy.

C. The Nipissing First Nation's records shall be created using the most appropriate application so as to ensure that they adequately support the objectives for which they are created and can easily be used by those who need them to perform their duties – i.e., using MS Excel instead of MS Word to develop spreadsheets with financial figures, etc.

D. The Nipissing First Nation's records shall contain all the information which is necessary to achieve the objectives for which each of them is created; yet their contents shall be limited to only what is necessary to achieve those objectives. This should include limiting the information collected through forms to only that which is required.

E. Whenever possible, the record shall contain information about one single function or activity so as to facilitate information classification, organization, retention and retrieval.

F. The Nipissing First Nation's records shall be legible, written in plain language and adapted to their specific audience.

G. Only one copy of each record should be created or collected. When creating or collecting a record, individuals should first check to see if the record is already in existence. In instances of multiple copies of the same record, copies should be securely disposed in accordance with the requirements of this policy.

Organization and Classification

A. A classification plan structure shall be implemented based on the Nipissing First Nations functions and activities, with records stored in accordance with the activity and/or function that it supports. This classification plan should be used to support the filing system for both electronic records and hardcopy paper-based records.

B. Records should be subject to a consistent naming convention, with the name of the record including the title, version (v. XX) and date (DD/MM/YYYY).

C. The title of the document should be short but meaningful.

D. The title may contain multiple words, and should be ordered from most specific to less specific related to the business activity or function.

E. Common words such as 'draft' or 'letter' should not be at the start of the title.

F. An official repository shall be identified and designated for each record, in which the record must be stored. The number of record repositories should be limited and be consistent to support the format and type of record.

G. Records should be made accessible, shared and re-used to the greatest extent possible, subject to technological, legal policy and security restrictions.

Maintenance, Protection and Preservation

A. Records must be protected and stored in the appropriate repositories in a way that preserves their long-term availability, understandability and usability.

B. Backups should be taken of all electronic records on a regular basis and stored in a physical location separate from the location of the original records.

C. Any records that are only in hardcopy paper-based format should be assessed to determine if they need to be scanned or if other physical security measures need to be taken (e.g. use of fire/water proof cabinets) to ensure their long term availability.

D. Records that contain personal information or information of a confidential nature related to the Council, or a third party, such as the confidential financial information related to a business, should be labelled as CONFIDENTIAL.

E. Confidential records should be protected with appropriate safeguards to ensure only those with a need to know will have access to the records:

F. For electronic records, confidential records should be protected with controls on the document itself (such as password protection) and other administrative controls, such as restricting access to the electronic repositories in which the record is stored. Confidential records should not be emailed 'in the clear' without appropriate protection.

G. For hardcopy paper-based records, confidential records should be stored in secure filing cabinets at all times unless being used, and transported in a secure manner if required to be offsite.

Retention and Disposition

Nipissing First Nation records shall be retained for the period specified in the records and information retention and disposition schedule, as outlined in Appendix "J". They shall be disposed of in a manner that prevents their reconstruction (for paper based records) or recovery (for electronic records).