The Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench in Equity began to administer justice in 1872. Functioning as a "side" of Queen's Bench, Equity resolved civil disputes on the basis of fairness and good conscience. It complemented common law, but unlike that branch, it was not bound be precedent. Rather it employed flexible remedies such as injunctions and orders for specific performance. The operations of Equity generated a quantity of records that is valuable for its unique reflection of the court system and of the society from which that system sprang.

This thesis postulates that Manitoba's Equity records were created to serve the administration of equitable justice, that equitable justice is based on the underlying need for equity, and that the need for equity has coursed through many centuries of Western judicial history. The thesis argues that equitable treatment has been applied in a continuously evolving court environment, and that equity remains today a critical element in the justice system.

These posits are explored through three main themes. First, the thesis examines the development of equity in the English court of common law, and, later, in the court of Chancery. Equity's transference to Canada and Manitoba is identified and examined as a carrier of English law, and as a court system capable of adaptation. Second, the thesis considers the early histories of Manitoba's Court of Queen's Bench and Court of Queen's Bench in Equity. Equity jurisdiction is studied in detail, and the personnel associated with the two sides of the court are profiled. Last, the thesis focuses on the records themselves. Their organization and interrelationships, embedded in the record keeping systems, are analyzed. The records' physical characteristics are scrutinized for clues to the original creation and retention of the documents.

This threefold thematic inquiry is based on and inspired by the contextual approach in archival studies. The contextual approach embodies concepts whose utilization empowers archivists and users of archives. This approach emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the nature and evolution of administrative structures. It stresses understanding of the functions of institutions, their record keeping systems, and the individual documents created on those systems. This information enables and promotes better understanding and archival administration of records such as those of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench in Equity.