

# Chapter 7

## Genealogy Resources

This chapter introduces the basic genealogy resources for Indigenous family and community history research. The resources discussed include such important government records as birth, death and marriage certificates, and records currently stored at the BC Archives and Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

Chapter 4: Documents and Chapter 6: Oral History may also contain helpful information about family history research. You might also find valuable information in the UBCIC-Ecotrust Canada publication, *Chief Kerry's Moose: A Guidebook to Land Use and Occupancy Mapping, Research Design, and Data Collection* (2000) by Terry Tobias.

### Key Terms

**Genealogy** is the study of ancestry or “lineage.” It involves the recording of family names, dates and events.

Family history research is very specialized. It draws upon the methods and resources used in oral history, historical and genealogical research. The research is broader than genealogy research. It involves collecting information about everything related to your family, including oral history, pictures, videotapes, stories, and documentation. Family history is constantly changing through births, marriages, deaths, and other events. Therefore it is an ongoing project; it never really ends.

Community history research involves many of the same steps as family history. It involves compiling a family history for each member of the community and linking people and events together. However, a community history project will obviously be much more complex and time-consuming.

There are many reasons for people to be interested in family history research. You may be researching an issue of **Aboriginal Title**, tracking your biological parents or siblings if you or your siblings were adopted, or creating a genealogical history of your community. You may simply be doing research for your own interest.

Your research may take you in many different directions, depending on what type of records exist and how much information they provide. You will gather many different types of information. For example:

- You may come away from your research with humorous family stories, legends, and family trees.
- You may learn old stories about the community, such as where people hunted and fished, which trails they hiked, and campgrounds that they visited every summer.

- You may learn about the relationships between people within the community, and the relationships between different communities.
- You might find a lot of information exists within your family and community that has not yet been documented anywhere. This is especially true because information about Indigenous communities is often missing from mainstream writings about Canadian history.

## Research Issues

Many of the topics discussed here are also examined in the context of archival and other documentary research in Chapter 2: Research Methods and oral history in Chapter 6: Oral History. See these chapters for additional information.

### Important Considerations

#### ***The sensitive nature of family history research***

Family history research is obviously more personal than other types of research. You may discover information that has not been widely discussed in your family or community. You may uncover information that is potentially painful or sensitive. All family and community research should be conducted ethically and responsibly, following all local protocols established by the community.



Descendants of  
Chief Clalamin,  
Bella Coola,  
c. 1890s.  
BC Archives  
G00962

All family history research produces cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge has tremendous value and you will want to protect it. Your community's history belongs to your community. There are plenty of examples of researchers, scholars and others misusing and misappropriating cultural knowledge. You will want to be sure that this does not happen. If you are gathering and compiling personal information for the community as a whole, you will find yourself in the position of having to protect access to this information and draft confidentiality

agreements. See Chapter 2: Research Methods for specific information about confidentiality agreements.

#### ***The importance of consulting more than one source***

Family history information can often be found in more than one place, so take the time to consult many different records and check your information against other sources. Also, be sure to document the source of each piece of information. Provide as much source information as possible so that if you need to find a specific document again, you know exactly where to find it.

## Conducting Research

### Interviewing family and community members

Begin by asking questions of your immediate family and then move backwards through time. Most of the information you need for family history exists in your community. Cultural knowledge and history is alive in the memories and experiences of your community members. Depending on the goals of your project, you may be looking for the following kinds of information about family members:



Woman collecting plants. Through family and community history research you can learn a lot about the lives of people in your family and community, including how they used the land. (UBCIC Collection)

- Names (including traditional names, nicknames, spelling variations, name changes)
- Dates and locations of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths
- Where people lived and went to school
- What they did for a living
- Whether they had children
- Which church they attended
- How they lived their lives and how they used the land
- Any illnesses they had, how they died and where they are buried

Ask family members about band numbers because they will be of assistance for accessing Indian Affairs records organized by the band number system.

Old photographs, letters, and family bibles can provide information and they can also be an aid in prompting people's memories.

An aspect unique to Indigenous family history research is the use of language in describing family relations. For example, someone referred to as "Mother" may actually be a grandmother. She might be referred to as "mother" in some cases and "grandmother" in others. Names and nicknames may also change over the person's life.

### Expanding your research

After you have gathered as much information as possible from speaking with your family and community members, check the resources at your band office or cultural centre, library or community museum and archives. There may be oral history tapes and documented family history from previous researchers. Local histories, old newspaper articles or town directories may help you to fill in additional information.

Your local library and genealogical society will have "How To" books, local histories and other types of reference books. It is also a good idea to talk to experienced family

history or genealogical researchers, especially those who have done research specific to Indigenous Peoples.

## **Taking notes for family history research**

As with all research, it is important to take careful notes. Copy information exactly as you find it, especially dates, locations, and names. In general, never change information to what you think it should be.

### ***Variations in spelling of names and places***

Be prepared to encounter multiple spellings of the family and place names you are researching. Names were often misinterpreted or misprinted. Some people were known by both traditional and non-traditional names. It is very important to keep track of these. This is particularly important when copying down last names. Over time they often take on many spellings. As you read through older records, you will often find words and names spelled in a variety of ways, even in the same document. Also, when searching library catalogues and other databases, be sure to use multiple spellings of names and reverse the name (try “last name, first name” and then try “first name, last name”).

At some point during your project, you may find it necessary to revisit some of the sources or records already reviewed because you now have a longer list of names to check out. This is where good note-taking pays off, saving you time and inconvenience.

It is very helpful to visit with a community member who knows the language and traditional names to help interpret the information you gather. This may lead to more information about ties to other families, other locations, and other communities.

### ***Abbreviations***

Abbreviations are often confusing when you go back to review your notes. They also can lead to inaccurate information. Use standard abbreviations (b. for born, d. for died, m. for married). Spell out the month and use the complete year. Dates can be ambiguous: you can interpret the date 4/7/76 as April 7 or 4 July 1976 (or 1876, or 1776).

### ***Organizing your materials***

Try checking your local library, a larger library online, a genealogical society, and the Internet to find information on organizing your data. Make sure that the organizing system you choose gives you enough room for recording information. Stick with the system you choose, be consistent, and write everything down. The amount of information you collect will grow rapidly.

Many different systems and methods have been developed for organizing genealogical data. You can choose from a broad selection of charts (individual data sheets, family group records, kin and pedigree charts) research forms (name search records), diagrams (generational ladders), or family tree computer software programs. There are many books and other resources that can introduce you to these systems and methods. See, for example:

- Vital Statistic Agency, *Genealogy Resources for British Columbians*, 2004. It is available on their website at: <http://www.vs.gov.bc.ca> under “Forms.”

- Duane Kendall Hale, *Researching and Writing your Tribal Histories* (Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council: Michigan Indian Press, 1991)
- BC Genealogical Society website: <http://www.bcgs.ca>
- Center for Life Stories Preservation website: <http://www.storypreservation.com/home.html>
- Family Tree Magazine's Free Forms for Getting Organized: <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/forms/download.html>

## Resources and Institutions

The information you collect will take many forms including marriage certificates, photocopies of church registry entries, photographs, interviews, newspaper announcements or articles, passages from local histories, military service records, wills, records of land ownership, photocopies of voters lists, and rubbings of tombstone inscriptions. **Primary sources** are the most reliable. A primary source is the original document or record, such as a birth or death certificate. The best evidence is based on direct, first-hand knowledge or participation in an event.

Think about everyday human activities and the kinds of records that governments at local, provincial and federal levels might generate to keep track of them. Some of the most useful records for a family or community history project include census records, the records stored at Vital Statistics Agency, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, your band or tribal council office, as well as church, school and fur trade records. Consider personnel records such as those maintained by canneries, logging companies and local employers, the records of local funeral homes and cemeteries, and probate and will records. Be creative.

Be specific about what you are seeking. Try various search terms, including searching by area or region. Different resource institutions divide the province into different territories or jurisdictions for their own administrative purposes. You will need to be aware of the terms used to describe administrative divisions and how they changed over time in order to effectively target all of the records that are relevant to your research.

You can also try searching by the occupations and pursuits of family members. For example, has your family historically been involved in a particular line of work such as road or railway construction, sealing, saw-milling, logging, ranching, long-shoring, truck-gardening, arts, fishing or cannery work? There may be general information or detailed records on these activities in some of the resources that you review.

Unless noted in the individual entries, the contact information for the resources listed here is available in Chapter 3: Resource Institutions. There is additional information on many of the sources listed here in Chapter 4: Documents.

### Census Records

A **nominal census** identifies each individual counted by name and collects personal information. The privacy of the information collected is generally protected for a specific period of time. Nominal census records are the best source for family history research because they give details such as names, occupations, relationships, and birthdates. Head of



household census records would be the next most useful. **Aggregate census** records give only statistics and no names, providing little useful information for genealogical research.

There are two separate and distinct kinds of census records that may be useful to you in this research: the National Census and the Department of Indian Affairs Census. The National Census is a key record for family history research. Searching the Department of Indian Affairs census records will be more difficult and time consuming and so you may be better off searching other Indian Affairs records for family history.

### ***The National Census***

The National Census was first carried out in the Canadian colonies in 1851. The Government of Canada continues to enumerate (count) Canadians every decade. The National Census is available for genealogical research only to 1901. That is, researchers have access to the National Census returns for BC for the years 1881, 1891, and 1901.

The National Census is available at LAC, Government Archives Division. It is stored in Record Group 31 (RG 31). Microfilm copies of the publicly available census records may be borrowed through **inter-library loan**.

For a discussion of how to identify Indigenous populations in the National Census returns, see Bill Russell's, *Records of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs at the National Archives of Canada: A source for genealogical research* (Toronto: The Ontario Genealogical Society, 1998, pp. 24-25). Microfiche copies of the manuals of instruction provided to enumerators for the National Census in the years 1871-1901 are available through LAC or the Statistics Canada Library. These can be useful for making sense of the abbreviations and categories used by the enumerators who gathered the census statistics.

There are limitations and challenges of doing genealogical research using the information in the National Census. First, the census says nothing about recognized status under the *Indian Act*. Also, they did not count the entire Indigenous population in BC. Finally, Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations were counted together according to enumeration districts and sub-districts so you must figure out which enumeration district includes your reserve.

For further information see Lorne Maine, *1881 Census of BC* (Vancouver: BC Genealogical Society, 1981). It is available through the BC Genealogical Society. You can also refer to the manuals of instruction provided to the enumerators for the National Census in the years 1871-1901 for context information. These are available through LAC or the Statistics Canada Library. They can be useful for making sense of the abbreviations and categories used by the enumerators who gathered the census data.

### ***Indian Affairs census records***

Indian Affairs has gathered census information for many administrative purposes over the years. There are many challenges researchers face when using RG 10 at LAC records for family history research records and you should be aware that the results may not be worth your time and effort. Some specific challenges are:

- Not all of the records identified as census records are census lists. Some of these lists provide the name of the head of family only and were used to document the distribution of presents or money by the department.
- Some files identified by the title "Census" contain instructions to the agents regarding the taking of the census but do not contain the census lists themselves.

- The census data that does exist does not include all communities, and its accuracy is questionable. These censuses counted the number of people in each band but they were likely not an accurate count.

Still, you may want to check RG 10 records for possible references to correspondence about the census in your community.

There are blocks of census records scattered throughout RG 10. Some were created at headquarters and others in field offices. Some of the headquarters census records are available on microfilm. In the Vancouver Regional Office of LAC there are field office census records for the following field offices:

- Babine Agency, 1920-1940
- Kamloops Agency, 1920-1940
- Kootenay Agency, 1920-1940
- Thompson Agency, 1930-1939
- Lytton Agency, 1937-1948
- Nicola Agency, 1924-1946
- Okanagan Agency, 1920-1946

Some potentially relevant RG 10 files include:

- 1882-1883 BC Census of Indians, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3627, file 5922.
- 1877 Reports of the IRC with census reports, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3645, file 7936.
- 1878 Census report on the Shuswap and Okanagan by Alexander Anderson, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3659, file 9500.
- 1879-80 Census in Yale, New Westminster and Coast Districts, LAC, RG 10, 10122, vol. 3695, file 14830.

### ***Census records in other places***

Census material may be scattered throughout different institutions and record groups. You may find partial or location-specific census material in a number of places:

- The UBCIC Resource Centre has microfilmed census records from 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1971.
- There is some census material in the Hudson's Bay Company records.
- The BC Archives has some census materials. For example, see Census of Indian Population of Vancouver Island 1856, CO 305/7, microfilm reel 393A, pp. 103-109 and Census of Aboriginal Population 1878-1878, GR 494.
- The history of the Thompson-Okanagan region is featured on the Living Landscapes website created by the Royal BC Museum and Okanagan University College: <http://www.livinglandscapes.bc.ca>. This site contains the 1881 and 1891 Canada Census, Yale District, BC; the 1877 Indian Reserve Commission Census (IRC), southern interior of BC; and the 1877 Okanagan (Native) Census taken by missionaries, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI).
- There is a published version of the 1881 Canadian census for Vancouver Island. See Peter Baskerville, Eric Sager; with Raymond Frogner and George Young [editors], *Vancouver Island* (Victoria: Public History Group, 1990).



## Indian Affairs Records

The historical collection of Indian Affairs records contains information that can be very helpful when you are researching family and community history. Indian Affairs records can provide a great deal of information about individual community members as well as communities as a whole. See Chapter 4: Documents for additional information on Indian Affairs records.

Useful Indian Affairs records include membership files and lists of members of a band according to band numbers, estate records, interest distribution paylists, enfranchisement and commutation records, and band council minutes. You may also find records regarding social assistance, community development, and band elections. While much of this is protected under privacy legislation, an authorized band researcher should be able to obtain copies of many of these records upon request, through Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada (INAC) or LAC (RG 10).

## Other Government Records

You may also want to research records dealing with military service, estates, band membership, interest or annuity payments to a band, and enfranchisement. Some of these records are available through Indian Affairs, others can be found at LAC or the BC Archives, or through various government departments and ministries.

## Archives and Special Collections

Archives and other specialized collections may have anthropological or ethnological materials containing genealogical information. Maps can also be a source of information. Archival maps sometimes indicate the names of chiefs or band members. See Chapter 3: Resource Institutions, Chapter 10: Maps and Surveys, and Chapter 8: Anthropology Resources for more information about using these resources for your research.

You might want to check records relating to any early settlers or well-known non-Indigenous families in your community. Even if there is no apparent family connection, their family histories and papers may include stories and information about your community or family. Useful records include settler memoirs and personal papers, and reference works like F.W. Laing's *Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1858-1871* (Victoria: N.p., 1939).

**Vertical files** at public libraries contain subject files of newspaper clippings and other collected materials. Vertical files contain a large and diverse collection of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, pamphlets and small publications about people, places and events.

## BC Archives

The BC Archives has a wealth of records containing genealogical information in its many government record groups (GR) and manuscript record groups (MS). Manuscript record groups have documents that were created by individuals or non-government organizations. They include things like personal correspondence, diaries, other personal papers,

unpublished materials, field books, and business records. All of these documents can be rich sources of genealogical information.

The BC Archives has prepared a number of information sheets explaining census records, coroner's records, wills research and probate case files. This information is also available online. For a list of their research resources go to their website. See also Terry Ann Young, *Researching the History of Aboriginal Peoples in BC: A Guide to the Resources at the BC Archives and Record Service and BC Lands* (Victoria: B.C. Archives, 1992).

### ***Library and Archives Canada (LAC)***

In addition to government record groups (RG), you will also want to look at manuscript record groups (MG) at LAC. Manuscript record groups have documents that were created by individuals or non-government organizations. They include things like personal correspondence, diaries, other personal papers, unpublished materials, field books, and business records. All of these documents can be rich sources of genealogical information. See also Russell, *Records of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs* mentioned on pages 40-43 of the "National Census" entry above and Bennett McCardle, [Revised and updated by S. Barry Cottam & Theresa Redmond], *Archival Records relating to Native People in the Government Archives Division of the National Archives of Canada* (Treaties and Historical Research Centre, 1995).

### ***Museum of Civilization***

The Museum of Civilization may have unpublished field notes and reports about your community. You can consult the finding aid listing their ethnology manuscript holdings, which is available at the UBCIC Resource Centre.

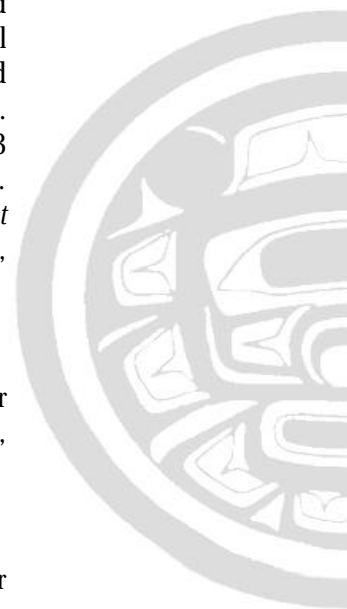
### ***BC Vital Statistics Agency***

The province started to register vital events (births, marriages, and deaths) shortly after 1871. However, Indigenous Peoples were largely (but not completely) excluded from this civil registration until 1917. Indian Affairs Indian agents were assigned responsibility for registration of vital events under the direction of the province. The information they collected and maintained is incomplete. However, it is worth checking for information on vital events in RG 10 and other Indian Affairs records, as well as with the BC Vital Statistics Agency.

You may wish to access the online Vital Events Index that indexes birth registrations (120 or more years old), marriage registrations (75 or more years old), and death registrations (20 or more years old) created since 1872. The BC Vital Statistics Agency and BC Archives provide an electronic index to British Columbia's historical vital events records on the BC Archives website. Microfilm copies of the registrations indexed can then be viewed at the BC Archives in Victoria or your local library through interlibrary loan. Some vital event registration records are available in digital image format for on-line purchase and delivery via email.

For more recent vital events information, and information on adoption records, consult the British Columbia Archives website. The disclosure of this information is regulated by provincial protection of privacy legislation.

For more information on adoption, see also the United Native Nations (UNN) Reunification Program.



United Native Nations Reunification Program  
[http://www.unns.bc.ca/family\\_reunification.html](http://www.unns.bc.ca/family_reunification.html)  
 Suite 310 - 425 Carrall Street (23 West Pender Street Entrance)  
 Vancouver, BC V6B 6E3  
 Ph 604-662-8711 or 1-800-544-9701 Fax: 604-662-8611

### ***Cemeteries***

Cemeteries are a good source of genealogical information. A good place to start is the British Columbia Cemetery Finding Aid at <http://www.islandnet.com/bccfa>. This is a database of the surnames, cemetery name and location of more than 344,000 entries collected from records and headstone inscriptions associated with 264 cemeteries in BC and across Canada. It also includes two cemeteries in Washington State. Many Indigenous cemeteries may not be included in this database because they are on reserve or private land or because they are unpublicized. Indian cemeteries registered under the provincial *Cemeteries Act* will have a file with the provincial Registrar of Cemeteries that you can consult if you have band authorization. Some communities have had summer students undertake inventories of their cemeteries. Check with the band or tribal council office for information on community and local cemeteries.

### ***Fur trade and church records***

Fur trade and church records are two of the earliest post-contact sources of genealogical information for BC. These records are key resources for Indigenous family history research. Always bear in mind the agenda or bias of the creator of the records. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) records were never intended by their creators to be a thorough and accurate recording of Indian names and activities.

For fur trade information you will want to look at any relevant HBC materials, and files with BC Archives or LAC. Check trapline, game and wildlife related record groups in Indian Affairs records, and the BC Archives and LAC. University libraries may also have materials in their special collections. See also Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980) and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670 – 1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980). Both these books are available at the UBCIC Resource Centre.

Church records can also be a rich source of information. If possible, start by looking at some of the general histories about the activities of the churches in your area. Be aware that most churches divided BC into different jurisdictions so records relevant to your project may be scattered in more than one place. Many of the churches that have been active in BC have centralized archives and many early records may be microfilmed. Start by checking at the local church for more recent records.

### ***School Files***

It will be necessary to search by the name of the school, not the name of the individual, to find school records. School records are extensively documented throughout the RG 10 records and this is a good place to start. Churches and missionary groups ran many schools, so church records may contain information about the schools. You may want to check federal records MG (Manuscript Group) 17 and other MGs in the Manuscripts Division of LAC.

The UBCIC Resource Centre has many resources related to schools and school histories.

### ***Military records***

Military records may be helpful for your project. Indigenous men from BC participated in the Boer War, both World Wars and the Korean War. The Records of the Canadian Expeditionary Force - First World War are available on-line through LAC ([http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/020106\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/020106_e.html)).

You may be able to find information regarding Indigenous military personnel in RG 10 records. Other useful military records include RG 38 (Veterans Affairs), Soldier Settlement Board and Land Settlement Board (LSB) records at LAC. Veterans' records at LAC are subject to access and privacy restrictions. If you are seeking information about a relative who served in the United States military, you will have to contact the US government directly.

See also Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985).

### ***Newspapers***

Newspapers can be a valuable source of information. In addition to birth, marriage and death announcements and advertisements, coverage of special events and news articles may provide detailed information. Newspapers will also give you a good sense of what was happening in the time period you are researching or may point to other sources to research. See Brian J. Porter, *BC Vital Statistics from Newspapers 1858 – 1872: Including, in an Appendix, Vital Statistics from Diaries 1852 – 1857* (BC Genealogical Society, 1994).

## **Resources**

Carpenter, Cecelia Svinth. 2000. *How to research American Indian blood lines: A manual on Indian genealogical research*. Bountiful, Utah: Heritage Quest.

*Handbook of Indians of British Columbia* [compiled by] B.C. Native Studies Bibliographic Centre N.d. (This is a two-volume index of personal and place names).

### **Websites**

Canadian Genealogy and History  
<http://www.islandnet.com/~jveinot/cghl/cghl.html>

This site is a starting place for genealogical research, providing many links to genealogical and historical websites across Canada.

Canadian Genealogy Centre  
<http://www.genealogy.gc.ca>

This site is a centralized genealogy resource for LAC. It offers access to services and research tools, how-to guides and discussion areas, plus a name index linked to scanned images of the 1901 Canadian census.

#### Canada GenWeb

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc>

A global library for genealogy research on the Web. There is also a BC GenWeb site.

#### The Center for Pacific Northwest Studies Collection of Western Washington University

<http://www.acadweb.wvu.edu/cpnws/collections.htm>

The collections date from the mid-1800s to the present and are especially strong in regional political and cultural history, and in the area of economic development (particularly fishing and fish processing). The collections include information about British Columbia, but are richest in the northern Puget Sound area, specifically Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. The website has a searchable database.

#### Cloverdale Library Genealogical Collection Orientations

<http://www.spl.surrey.bc.ca/Programs+and+Services/Genealogy/default.htm>

The Cloverdale Branch of Surrey Public Library has one of the most extensive collections of Canadian genealogical materials in Western Canada.

#### Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Links to Native Genealogy Sites

<http://www.abo-peoples.org/NativeLinks/GenealogyLinks.html>

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) was founded in 1971 as the Native Council of Canada (NCC). It represents the interests nationally of “off-reserve Indians and Métis people living in urban, rural and remote areas throughout Canada.”

#### Early Canadiana Online

<http://www.canadiana.org>

This site includes colonial, federal and provincial government documents from the time of the first European settlers up to the early 1900s. It is maintained by the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, a non-profit organization for preserving and providing access to early Canadian publications. Part of the collection is accessible free online. Access to the complete collection is available by subscription. ECO can be accessed at the UBCIC Resource Centre.