

# Chapter 5

## Basic Reserve Research

Basic reserve research involves reconstructing the history of your reserve lands from the time the original allotments were made to the present. This research can contribute to a range of different projects. You may be interested in researching the allotment of reserve lands as part of a larger study about your community's history and traditional land use and occupancy. If this is the case, you can examine the resources listed here in combination with those discussed in other chapters of this manual (Oral History, Genealogy, Anthropology, and Archaeology Resources) to document activities and settlement patterns throughout your territory.

Alternatively, you may be conducting basic reserve research to examine the role of the federal government in allotting or alienating, managing or mismanaging your community's lands and resources. This may be part of a project to document the dispossession of Indigenous lands or to document community challenges to decisions imposed by federal or provincial governments. This chapter focuses on investigating reserve history and will provide information on important documents and research strategies. Refer to the chronology in Chapter 1: Dispossession and Resistance in BC for an overview of historical events important to reserve allocation and protection.

### Research Guidelines

Basic reserve research involves examining all of the documentation you can find about the size, location and description of your allotted reserve(s) across time. You will need to review the materials you collect in chronological order, starting with those created to document the original allotments and finishing with current records. Then, you will need to compare the findings from each. This will help you determine if there were any changes to the original reserve allotments and why.

You will likely be required to collect, organize and compare a large volume of materials for your project. It is a good idea to follow the tips for organizing large research projects outlined in Chapter 2: Research Methods. These will help you manage all the information you collect and stay focused throughout your project.

One of the most important requirements for a basic reserve research project is to have very clear and specific research questions to guide you through and compare the materials you collect. There are a series of important questions to ask. For example:

- On what date were the reserves first established?
- Who reserved the land and under what authority, policy or law?
- How many reserves were set aside and what were they called?

- What was the size and specific location of each reserve?
- What quality was the reserve land when set aside?
- Were there any resource rights reserved in addition to land?
- Were any specific provisions made for the band, such as rights to water?
- How was the land being used before it was allotted as reserve land and who was using it?
- Was the community satisfied or unsatisfied with the size, location and quality of the reserves? How did they express their views?
- Were the community's needs met? For example, was its cemetery or important fishing station included in the reserve allotments? Were the reserves reduced in size ("**cut off**") at any point?
- Were there any instances of settler encroachment (intrusion) on reserve land?
- Did the band surrender any of its land at any point and if so, for what purpose and according to what terms?
- Are there any current easements (**rights-of-way**) on any of the reserves and if so, when and by what authority were they introduced?
- Are there any inconsistencies in the size or location of reserves in the documents and how are these explained?

## Resources

There are a number of important resources to consult for basic reserve research. The specific documents are discussed below. They have been listed in the order in which they should be consulted. For detailed information about the documents see Chapter 4: Documents.

Start by reviewing Indian Affairs' reserve schedules, reserve general registers, and survey plans. These documents will help you establish the basic foundation information you need. They will help you determine the date your reserves were allotted and find any details about the size, location, and purpose of the original reserves. It is especially important to find out who allotted the first reserves for your community at this point in your research. If the reserves were recognized in a pre-confederation treaty or reserve you will need to examine the records created during the colonial period (Colonial Correspondence, *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question*). If not, you will need to check the records created by the subsequent reserve commissions (Joint/Indian Reserve Commission, McKenna-McBride, and Ditchburn-Clark).

If you have found evidence in the reserve schedules, reserve general registers, and survey plans that your reserves were cancelled or altered you will want to review other Indian Affairs records. Check annual reports, archived records (RG 10), and any relevant active records from the current ministry. The correspondence in the Indian Affairs collections will help you track official decisions, determine if there were any administrative errors or omissions in the allotments or changes to the allotments, and find out community members' perspectives about the lands that were reserved or cancelled. If you find evidence that there were any legal transactions that took place on your reserve (such as leases or surrender of reserve land) look for the associated **instruments**.

If your community's reserve lands were reduced, or cut off, during the successive waves of reserve creation and review in BC you can focus in on the archived RG 10

correspondence and other documents that were created at that time. Some specific examples of the events you will want to research are:

- Trutch Cut-offs: Pre-confederation reserves cut off by Joseph Trutch.
- Sproat Cut-offs: Indian Reserve Commissioner Sproat's allotments cut off by Sproat's successor, Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly.
- McKenna-McBride Cut-offs: Reserve lands cut off by the 1913-1916 Royal Commission on Indian Affairs in the Province of British Columbia.
- Ditchburn-Clark Cut-offs: Lands cut off by the 1920 – 1923 Ditchburn-Clark review.

## Additional Information

Many of the documents you will review for basic reserve research were created by Indian Affairs for the purposes of managing Indigenous lands and resources. All of these are catalogued according to the Indian Affairs organizational system, whether they are archived or active files. As a result, you may need to learn a little bit about Indian Affairs administrative systems. The important topics to be aware of are: Indian agency boundaries, authorities, and community names and affiliations. If you have a list of this information for your community you will be better equipped to find the detailed information you will need.

**Indian agencies** are jurisdictional boundaries for Indigenous lands created by Indian Affairs for the purposes of government efficiency and organization. These jurisdictions can be confusing because the administrative structure of Indian Affairs (and therefore the names of agencies) has changed many times. However, it is important to know the name of the Indian agency the records for your band will be stored in the agency files for your region. A useful tool to identify the agencies that included your community is Paula Caird's *RG 10 finding aid, Guide to Indian Agencies in British Columbia, 1875-1990* (Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1996). It is available at the UBCIC Resource Centre. The introduction is available on the Library and Archives Canada website through ArchiviaNet. Find the link "Aboriginal Peoples - Guide to the Records of the Government of Canada" ([http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201200116\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201200116_e.html)), and click on "Bands and Agencies."

It may also be necessary to make a list of the authorities active in your agency for the period you are researching. The most important historical figures to track are the Indian agents. If you have a list of the agents you will be able to quickly determine who was responsible for carrying out specific government policies in your community and at what time. A useful tool to identify Indian agents is G.M. Matheson's *Historical Directory of Indian Agents and Agencies in Canada* (Ottawa, c.1955). It is also available at UBCIC Resource Centre.

There is a chance that your band moved, changed its name, or **amalgamated** (joined) with or split off from another band. It is important to trace the details of these changes in Indian Affairs records so you know all of the names of the other communities your band has been associated with. This is especially important if parts of your traditional territory were reserved and listed under a previous name, or if they were referred to under the name of another band. If you are looking into these questions you can track references to the communities you are interested in through the following sources, all of which are available at the UBCIC Resource Centre:

- Indian Affairs annual reports and reserve schedules. Annual reports list a total of 231 distinct bands in BC in 1916, but only 191 bands by 1969.
- M. Douglas Johnson and Marie-Josée Audet, *Canada Lands in BC: Indian Reserves and National Parks* (Vancouver: Legal Surveys Division, Geomatics Canada, 1996). This resource contains information about amalgamations and alternate band names.
- *Handbook of Indians of BC* (Vancouver: BC Native Studies Bibliographic Centre, 1979).

