

Chapter 12

Village Sites and Burial Grounds

This chapter provides background information and lists resources for research projects relating to Indigenous village sites and burial grounds. If your community has a village site or burial ground that was not included in the original reserve allotments, this chapter will help you uncover important information to track its history. The process for researching burial grounds and village sites is similar, but each has specific issues you will want to consider.

Historical Overview

Settlements and Village Sites

Government legislation and policy in British Columbia directed that Indigenous settlements and village sites were to be protected for the use and benefit of Indigenous People. Among the various decisions and policies, the following are important:

- The first colonial Land Ordinance of 1860, which set out the rules for **pre-empting** unsurveyed agricultural land, stated that Indian villages were not eligible for pre-emption.
- Governor James Douglas' reserve policy directed that lands used by Indian people were to be set aside for them as reserves.
- The policies of the Joint/Indian Reserve Commission (J/IRC) of 1876 to 1878 and 1878 to 1910 were to reserve tracts of land to which Indigenous people had some "attachment."

Regardless of these decisions and policies, many Indigenous settlement and village sites were never set aside as reserves. Some of those that were set aside were later cancelled, cut off or otherwise changed. In many cases, this took place because the Indian Reserve Commissioners who visited the communities to create new reserves or assess previously established reserves assumed that if the land was not being used in the way they expected, it was not being used at all. For example, if village sites were not used year round or for the type of agriculture practiced by immigrant settlers, Commissioners noted that it had been neglected. This misconception was responsible for many of the reductions and cut-offs made to allotted reserves, and many omissions of lands that should have been included. For many Indigenous communities, knowledge of these valuable areas and the important role they played in the community's connection to the land and resources of their traditional territory has only survived because it has been passed down through oral history.

Burial Sites and Graveyards

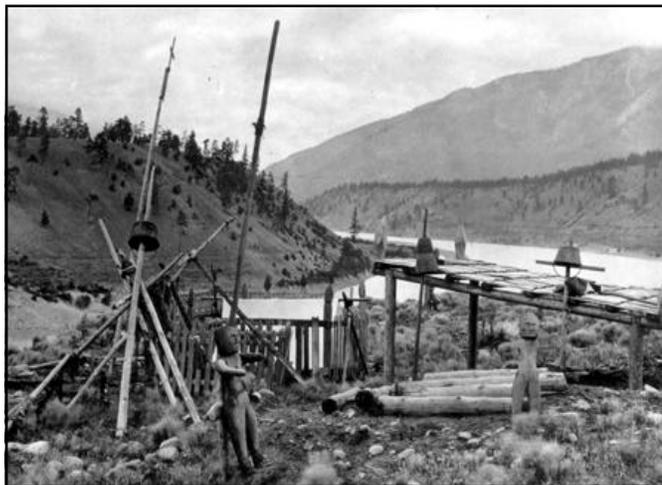
Government policy and legislation in BC directed that Indigenous graveyards and burial places were to be protected. Governor James Douglas' reserve policy made provisions for burial sites to be set aside for Indians. Subsequent legislation, the 1865 *Indian Grave Ordinance* and the 1867 *An Ordinance to prevent the violation of Indian Graves*, was passed to ensure some protection for Indigenous graves.

The J/IRC included some burial grounds in the reserves they allotted. They also set aside reserves to be used solely for graveyard purposes. Many of these graveyard reserves were small in size or they were not properly surveyed or protected as reserves. Also many of them were subsequently alienated to **third parties**.

The McKenna-McBride Commission of 1913-1916 also had a policy of protecting Indian graveyards and burial grounds. Correspondence, Minutes of Decision sketches, surveyors' field notes, diaries, local histories and official surveys often refer to one or more Indigenous graveyards set aside as a reserve or graveyards included within the boundaries of a reserve.

Regardless of these policies, some Indigenous graveyards/burial places were not reserved. Many communities are aware of these unreserved burial sites. They may be informally recognized or they may be registered as archaeological sites with the Heritage Conservation Branch (provincial Archaeology Branch) or as cemeteries with the provincial Cemeteries Registrar. In all cases, the *BC Heritage Conservation Act* protects sites containing

archaeological or cultural material. (At the federal level there is no legislation for the protection of Indigenous burial grounds.) The legislation makes it illegal to damage, change, vandalize or remove anything of historical or archaeological value, (including human remains) from a burial place, whether or not it is registered with the provincial Archaeology Branch. See Chapter 9: Archaeology for more information on this topic. The



Cemetery,
Lytton
(BCA E01938)

BC Cemeteries Act also offers some measure of protection to cemetery sites in BC. However, since many Indigenous graves and burial sites are located on what is now third party land, the issue of adequate protection remains a serious concern.

Researching Village and Burial Sites

Village sites and burial grounds are distinct topics for research. However, the process of searching for information on both topics is similar. They are discussed together here so

you can make the best use of your resources and research both topics at the same time if necessary.

Researching Unreserved Village and Burial Sites

If your community knows about a village or graveyard site that was not set aside as a reserve, or was reserved and then cancelled, you will want to thoroughly research your community's history. Various research techniques involving the examination of settlement patterns and burial practices in your area, or your community's traditional use and occupancy will help you to establish a foundation for your research. Start by researching land use and occupancy patterns in your territory for evidence of these sites. For more information on land use and occupancy research, please refer to 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. When conducting this type of research, it is important to be aware of how place names change over time. Such changes occur frequently in government records.

You may also want to consult the following chapters in this guide for help answering your research questions:

- Chapter 4: Documents lists several archival documents that may include information on village sites and burial grounds. Archival documents will help you by providing documentary evidence that the land was used as a village or burial site. The files that you will want to review include:
 - The numerous record groups at BC Archives, particularly Department of Lands **Government Records (GRs)**, and the Library and Archives Canada, particularly Indian Affairs, Record Group 10 (**RG 10**), as well as your local archives.
 - You may also want to look at Hudson's Bay Company records and church records, accounts by explorers, surveyors and settlers, and local histories.
- Chapter 6: Oral History offers detailed information about interviewing community members. There is a good chance that Elders or other community members have information relevant to your research.
- Chapter 8: Anthropology Resources directs you to a wide range of ethnographic studies and academic studies that deal with the subject of Indigenous settlement patterns and Indigenous ceremonial and burial practices in BC.
- Chapter 9: Archaeology Resources outlines the process of searching for recorded archaeological sites. This chapter will help you determine if there were any archaeological excavations in the area you are researching. If there were, the records may include information about historic village or burial sites.
- Chapter 10: Maps and Surveys offers information on early colonial maps which reference reserved, as well as unreserved, village and burial sites. Early British Admiralty charts sometimes show features such as longhouses, and many surveys and field notes show Indian dwellings, gardens and graves. Reports on survey expeditions, such as those carried



out by the Royal Engineers for the Canadian Pacific Railway or the Canadian Geological Survey can also be very good sources of information. Pilot and navigation guides can also be helpful.

Researching Reserved Village and Burial Sites

When researching reserved villages, reserved graveyards, or reserves that include graveyards, you will want to do some basic reserve research to get an overview of the history of your community's allotted reserves. See Chapter 5: Basic Reserve Research for information on this topic. Basic reserve research will assist you in determining if your community's village or burial sites were reserved, alienated or cut off. During this research you may encounter references to unreserved lands. These references may help you determine why specific sites were not included with your community's reserves.

If your topic is specific to reserved burial grounds/graveyards the following resources may help you:

- Check with the provincial Cemeteries Registrar to see if any of your community's graveyards have been registered under the *Cemeteries Act* (the registration of cemeteries in BC started in the 1960s). If they have been registered, the Registrar will have a file, which you can ask to see. You can contact the Registrar at:
 Registrar of Cemeteries and Funeral Services
 Consumer Services, Ministry of Attorney General
 5th Floor, 1019 Wharf Street, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y9
 Ph: 250-387-1271 Fax: 250-953-3533
- UBCIC and Thalassa Research co-authored a research report in 1989 that has information on reserved graveyards that were cut off or alienated. This report contains a useful table of reserved graveyard cut-offs that can tell you how many graveyards were reserved for your community, who allotted them and when, the acreage of the graveyards, and the documents that list them. For instance, a reserved graveyard may be documented in the 1913 reserve schedule but is omitted in the 1924 reserve schedule. Contact the UBCIC Research Department to obtain a copy. The report will be of most use when read alongside primary documents.
- If you are looking into a reserved graveyard that was alienated by a third party, check provincial lands files or pre-emption records at the BC Archives. You will want to find the legal description of the parcel of land containing the graveyard and follow up the information you find in the land district register. To find a legal description contact the Land Titles Office or Land Registry Office. Contact information is available in Chapter 3: Resource Institutions. You should also consult field notes and official surveys such as those described in Chapter 10: Maps and Surveys. Chapter 17: Surrenders may provide you with additional information, depending on your community's history.

Other Considerations

Human Remains

The issue of human remains and burial places is a sensitive one. It can lead to conflict, not only with developers, but also within communities. It can be useful for communities to give some consideration to the different perspectives on this issue. For example, what should be done if a burial site is found or disturbed within your territory? What steps or ceremonies should be involved in reburial? Should there be some controlled study of human remains? Elders will play a critical role in this decision-making process on these topics.

Sacred Sites

Like burial sites, sacred sites are places of tremendous importance to Indigenous communities. Researching sacred sites is controversial because knowledge and information about these sites is often restricted and privileged. Therefore this type of research should only be undertaken following the initiative of the community. Since knowledge of sacred sites often exists in the oral tradition of your community, your research will rely upon oral history for information. The sensitive and sometimes confidential subject of sacred sites should only be discussed if you have the trust of all of the people you interview and the backing of the community. You will be required to be very clear about the information you want, why you want it and what you are going to do with it once you have it. While there may be many good reasons collecting this information, most communities understandably will want to take measures to ensure that the information remains confidential and protected. These measures should be clearly established before you approach people to do interviews. For more information on obtaining and protecting sensitive information see Chapter 6: Oral History.

If you do conduct oral history research on sacred sites you should compare the information you obtain with information from other sources. Compare the sites on your list with reported archaeological sites and check as many archival sources as you can, paying particular attention to anthropological, ethnological, and local history literature. Cast the widest possible research net but do not be surprised if you come across very few documented references for this particular subject.

Resources

Cole, Douglas and Bradley Lockner (Eds). 1989. *The Journals of George M. Dawson: British Columbia, 1875-1878, Vols. 1-2*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Laing, F.W. 1939. *Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1858-1871*. Victoria: N.p.

Oakes, J., R. Riewe, K. Kinew & E. Maloney (Eds). 1998. *Sacred Lands: Aboriginal Worldviews, Claims and Conflicts*. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute Press.

Landau, Patricia M. & D. Gentry Steele. Spring 1996. Why Anthropologists Study Human Remains. *The American Indian Quarterly*: 20 (2): 209-228.

Duff, Wilson. 1964. *The Indian History of British Columbia; Vol. 1 The Impact of the White Man*. Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum.

Websites

Early Canadiana Online
<http://www.canadiana.org>

Two important documents about settlements available on Early Canadiana Online are:

Jarrad, Frederick William Sharp, William Henry. 1888. *The British Columbia pilot, including the coast of British Columbia, from Juan de Fuca Strait to Portland Canal, together with Vancouver and Queen Charlotte Islands*. Great Britain. Hydrographic Office (London: Printed for the Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, 1888.) London, England: Printed for the Hydrographic Office, British Admiralty.

Henry, Sir Bedwell George and E.P Richards. 1864. *The Vancouver Island pilot: containing sailing directions for the coasts of Vancouver Island, and part of British Columbia compiled from the surveys made by Captain George Henry Richards, R.N., in H.M. ships Plumper and Hecate, between the years 1858 and 1864*. London, England: Printed for the Hydrographic Office, British Admiralty.

Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Land and Resources Registries Portal
<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/sstu/portal>