

Chapter 14

Hunting and Trapping

This chapter discusses the historical background for Indigenous hunting and trapping research and lists useful resources. Depending on your research questions, you will likely begin by investigating two related research areas: 1) your community's traditional hunting and trapping practices and 2) non-Indigenous (government) regulation of hunting and trapping in your territory. This chapter will guide you through these two research areas.

Historical Overview

Traditionally, Indigenous People regulated hunting and trapping in our own territories according to our own beliefs and practices. This changed in the 1850s with the arrival of Europeans who imposed their laws in our territories. Government interference with Indigenous hunting and trapping began with the Douglas treaties (1850-1854), which state that Indigenous people are “at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands” (lands that had not been **pre-empted** by settlers) of the treaty areas. As settlement grew, Indigenous hunting and trapping areas were reduced. Soon, Canada enacted the *British North America (BNA) Act, 1867*, establishing federal authority over Indians and Indian reserves. The *BNA Act* also guaranteed provincial jurisdiction over hunting and trapping. In 1899, Canada extended Treaty 8 into BC. The written treaty states that Indian people can hunt and trap throughout the treaty lands, subject to regulation by Canada.

In the 1900s, Indigenous hunters and trappers faced increasing government interference. In 1912, BC introduced registered traplines and later required licensing of all firearms. In 1926, trapline boundaries were surveyed. Meanwhile, the provincial police were authorized to enforce hunting and trapping regulations. From 1918 until the 1930s, all provincial police constables were also game wardens. With increasing regulation and enforcement, many Indigenous people hunted and trapped “illegally.” The secretive nature of this activity creates some challenges for the researcher trying to uncover archival information during this period.

Responsibility for hunting and trapping regulation began to shift away from the provincial police when the BC Game Commission was established in 1920. In 1957, the BC Game Commission was replaced by the BC Fish and Game Branch, which later became the Fish and Wildlife Branch. This agency is now known as the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Fish and Wildlife Branch, and is still responsible for regulating hunting and trapping in BC.

Researching Hunting and Trapping

Traditional Hunting and Trapping

Hunting is one of many land use activities studied through land use and occupancy research (UBCIC Collection)



A common method of researching traditional hunting and trapping is land use and occupancy research, which involves investigating your community's traditional hunting and trapping patterns. This includes researching cultural practices and important hunting and trapping locations in your territory. 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. As well, you may want to consult the following chapters in this guide:

- Chapter 4: Documents lists several archival documents that may include information on hunting and trapping. Archival information about traditional hunting and trapping practices may be found in the following:
 - o Hudson's Bay Company records are the best specific source of information about hunting and trapping. These records are useful for getting an idea about the types and amount of furs that were traded in a particular area at a given time. It is important to note that they do not shed much light on site-specific activities because they are essentially trading records.
 - o Indian Affairs records of game law violations beginning in 1896 may provide information about traditional hunting and trapping practices. These are available in Record Group 10 (**RG 10**), at Library and Archives Canada (LAC).
 - o Testimony from the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC (McKenna-McBride Commission) may also be a source of community-specific hunting and trapping information.
- Chapter 6: Oral History offers detailed information about interviewing community members to find information. It is always a good idea to start your project in your community and talk to as many people as possible about the issues you are researching.
- Chapter 8: Anthropology Resources discusses the wide range of ethnographic studies and **theses** that deal with the subject of Indigenous resource use in BC. See this chapter for information on how to gain access to these materials.

- 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 on historic hunting sites or trapping routes.

Government Regulation of Indigenous Hunting and Trapping

Government regulation of hunting and trapping is largely a provincial issue. The province asserts control over hunting and trapping in BC, whether or not a treaty exists. Thus, your best source of information is the BC Archives, which has provincial records relevant to hunting and trapping regulation in BC. These include records of the various agencies that have regulated hunting and trapping over time (several changes have occurred so records are spread across many different collections). The BC Archives also has maps showing administrative boundaries, registered traplines and guiding territories. Some departments you may want to investigate are:

- Office of the Provincial Game Warden
- BC Provincial Police Force (1913-1931)
- BC Fish & Game Branch
- BC Fish & Wildlife Branch
- BC Department of Recreation & Conservation
- BC Attorney General
- BC Game Commission

Next, you may want to look through the federal records. RG 10 is a good place to look for any information relating to Indian policy. Documents of particular interest are G.M. Sproat's 1878 *Letter Regarding Agreements between the Crown and Indians on Hunting Rights*, various files on British Columbia Game and Fisheries Laws and General Correspondence Regarding Fur Conservation and Traplines. Other relevant federal record groups include:

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1863-1982 (RG 18)
- Canadian Parks Service, 1873-1986 (RG 84)

In addition to departmental records and correspondence, Indian Affairs annual reports and Sessional Papers will be of interest. See Chapter 4: Documents for information on these resources.

If the issue you are looking into is more recent, you may want to request active files from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Also look for documents at the following provincial government offices:

- The Attorney General of BC
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Fish and Wildlife Branch

See Chapter 3: Resource Institutions and Chapter 4: Documents for information on gaining access to active records.



Resources

- Abel, Kerry and Jean Friesen (Eds). 1991. *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada: Historical and Legal Aspects*. Winnipeg: University Of Manitoba Press.
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- Hammond, Lorne. 1985. *Any Ordinary Degree of System: The Columbia Department of the HBC and the Harvesting of Wildlife, 1825-1849* (M.A. Thesis). Victoria: University of Victoria.
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