



# UBCIC Specific Claims Research Program

Annual Report to the UBCIC Chiefs in Assembly  
September 27-29, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING

## THE UBCIC SPECIFIC CLAIMS RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs Specific Claims Research Program (UBCIC Research) is the oldest and largest specific claims research program in Canada. We are funded by the federal government to undertake free specific claims research and legal analysis on behalf of BC First Nations, regardless of political membership with the UBCIC. The research is directed by First Nations and all information gathered remains the property of individual Nations.

UBCIC Research is also home to the UBCIC Library and Archives, a specialized research repository focused on BC Indigenous land rights history, policy, and law. The Library and Archives provides support to UBCIC Research and community researchers conducting work on behalf of First Nations.

UBCIC Research is also a leader in specific claims policy reform, advancing calls for justice and holding Canada accountable for upholding its lawful obligations regarding historical losses faced by First Nations. To this end, our staff provide technical support to the BC Specific Claims Working Group.

### UBCIC Research and UBCIC Library and Archives Staff

Jody Woods, Research Director  
Robyn Laba, Senior Researcher  
Allison Eccleston, Executive Assistant  
Lee Roy Yow, Researcher  
Angie Bain, Researcher  
Kristina Hannis, Researcher  
Deepshika Kelkar, Researcher  
Jennifer Gibson, Researcher (on leave)  
Will Archibald, Researcher

Jenna Casey, Researcher  
James Davey, Researcher  
Karen Slakov, Researcher  
Tracy Point, Research Assistant  
*Library and Archives Staff*  
Melissa Adams, Librarian and Archivist  
Syr Reifsteck, Archivist  
Tia Williams, Digitization Technician

### **\*We are Hiring – In Vancouver’s UBCIC Offices or Working Remotely\***

The UBCIC Specific Claims Research Program is seeking qualified full-time researchers and research assistants. This is a fantastic opportunity for community members interested in land rights history to apply their unique skills and contribute to seeking justice for First Nations.

- Specific Claims Researcher Posting:  
[https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/full\\_time\\_specific\\_claims\\_researcher\\_2021](https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/full_time_specific_claims_researcher_2021)
- Specific Claims Research Assistant Posting:  
[https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/full\\_time\\_specific\\_claims\\_research\\_assistant\\_-2021](https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/full_time_specific_claims_research_assistant_-2021)

## SPECIFIC CLAIMS RESEARCH WORK 2020–2021

UBCIC Research has approximately 200 claims in various stages of development, research, legal review, drafting, or post-submission support. This follows a continuing increase in the number of claims under development.

In 2018, Canada announced an increase to overall research funding over 5 years. In 2020, UBCIC received a multi-year funding commitment, the first of its kind, which allowed us hire new staff, maximize resources, and put systems in place that we hope will last in potentially leaner times ahead. This stability will allow us to make significant progress on our work plan. Our focus remains on researching and producing the highest quality reports and claims as well as advocating for a just, fair, and properly resourced claims resolution process, which includes stable and sufficient research funding. Our research team has continued its exemplary work over the past year and demonstrated enormous commitment and flexibility in the face of the serious challenges posed the COVID-19 pandemic. BC communities continue to show great support for our Specific Claims Research Program (see Appendix A: Resolutions and Mandates).

### Challenges and Impacts Related to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had concrete and serious impacts on our ability to meet a significant number of our deliverables this year and continues to affect our timelines. We did anticipate a considerable degree of disruption and delay, which I communicated to Shelie Laforest in a letter on behalf of the National Claims Research Directors at the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020). The greatest impacts are as follows:

- **Delays receiving community mandates for continuing and new claims** due to the multiple challenges communities have been experiencing due to COVID-19.
- **Delays accessing records to substantiate allegations.** Both federal and provincial COVID-19 health and safety measures led to widespread closure of libraries and archives, delaying access to necessary evidentiary materials. Provincial and federal access to information processes were also been placed on hold or experienced significant backlogs and delays as many repositories return to regular service.
- **Logistical challenges associated with adhering to public health directives mandating employees work remotely from home.** The move to at-home work resulted in delays as staff required time, capacity, and ongoing support to maintain their home offices, internet access, and workstations. Staff access to necessary in-office resources (including our own library and archives) was curtailed by stay-at-home and self-quarantine orders. Information sharing has also suffered due to the decrease in opportunities for staff to communicate directly in person on a regular basis. These challenges continue while some staff have returned to part-time work in our office and others continue to work from home.
- **Staff illness, self-quarantine, and mental health leave.** We experienced a significant increase in illness leave from staff as they continued to deal with the physical and mental health challenges arising from COVID-19, impacting our overall capacity.
- **Delayed site visits and community/Elder interviews.** COVID-19 mitigation measures have led to delayed or deferred travel plans (and their budgetary allotments). This has had impacts on our ability to maintain important relationships with communities and hold certain meetings. This has been exacerbated in those communities without reliable high-speed internet capabilities. While we are hopeful about resuming some travel this year, more aggressive strains of the virus and resulting travel and assembly restrictions may mean we need to make necessary adjustments.

Based on projections from both federal and provincial health officers and the aggressive advancement of the COVID-19 Delta variant, we anticipate that these impacts will continue as the year progresses. It has taken a tremendous amount of patience and determination to advance claims in the current climate and we appreciate the flexibility and understanding of our members in helping us navigate these unique challenges.

## WORK OF THE UBCIC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

During the 2020-21 year, the Library and Archives continued to conduct the majority of its activities remotely due to COVID-19, while still working to ensure the physical preservation of the materials we hold. This included regular activities that support acquiring, preserving, and making resources accessible, such as providing reference support and monitoring the space for pests and other hazards to the collection.

Digital activities comprised much of our work over the past year, including resources available to UBCIC members. A publicly available database of resolutions from past UBCIC meetings can be accessed from this page: [www.ubcic.bc.ca/resolutions](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/resolutions) (scroll down to the “Older Resolutions” section at the bottom of the page). However, UBCIC members have access to a password-protected version containing more detailed information which can be accessed by visiting [tiny.cc/UBCICresolutions](http://tiny.cc/UBCICresolutions) (password: UBCICpass). We are continuing to add more detailed information about past UBCIC Annual General Assembly, Chiefs Council and Special Assembly meetings.

Other 2020-21 digital projects included collaborating with Splatsin and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre on an online exhibition and publication commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Indian Child Caravan. A public launch of the exhibition will take place later in 2021. The UBCIC Library and Archives has also been working on refreshing our own online exhibitions using Omeka as a means of showcasing some of our digital collections. We plan to share more of our photos and documents online in the future using this tool. As well, we hosted a practicum student from UBC’s First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program who worked on adding information to the historical timeline available on UBCIC’s website: [www.ubcic.bc.ca/timeline](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/timeline). Staff have also been working to create metadata for digital photos taken within the last 15 years and assisting with the creation of a contacts database for internal use by UBCIC.

UBCIC Library and Archives staff continue to sit on a number of external advisory committees including Library and Archives Canada’s Indigenous Advisory Circle, the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia’s Historical Records Advisory Committee, and the editorial board of *The Midden*.

2022 marks the founding of the initial iteration of the Library and Archives with the creation of the Land Claims Research Centre in Victoria. As a result, we will be commemorating 50 years of the Library and Archives’ work and the many forms it has taken. If you would like to share memories of the Library and Archives, the ways it has supported your work, or know of previous members and staff who might, please let us know!

We are looking forward to welcoming researchers back to our physical space and are currently planning how this can be done as safely as possible to protect both researchers and staff. Watch the Library website for updates: [www.ubcic.bc.ca/library](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/library), and, in the meantime, we can still be reached for reference enquiries at [library@ubcic.bc.ca](mailto:library@ubcic.bc.ca) or 604-684-0231.

## CONTACT

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