



UBCIC SPECIFIC CLAIMS RESEARCH COURSE

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5-7: Survey Plans, Field Notes and Field Books

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Survey Plans

Legal survey plans are map-like documents which record the official boundaries of particular parcels of land (known as "cadastral maps"). Surveyors determine these boundaries by measuring distances and angles between points on the ground, and placing ground monuments (such as posts or caps) to mark these points. Survey plans can provide information about the natural and built features on a reserve.

For example, **click on Figure 39** to view an 1881 survey plan of the Spallumcheen reserves by Edward Mohun pictured below which indicates several important features.

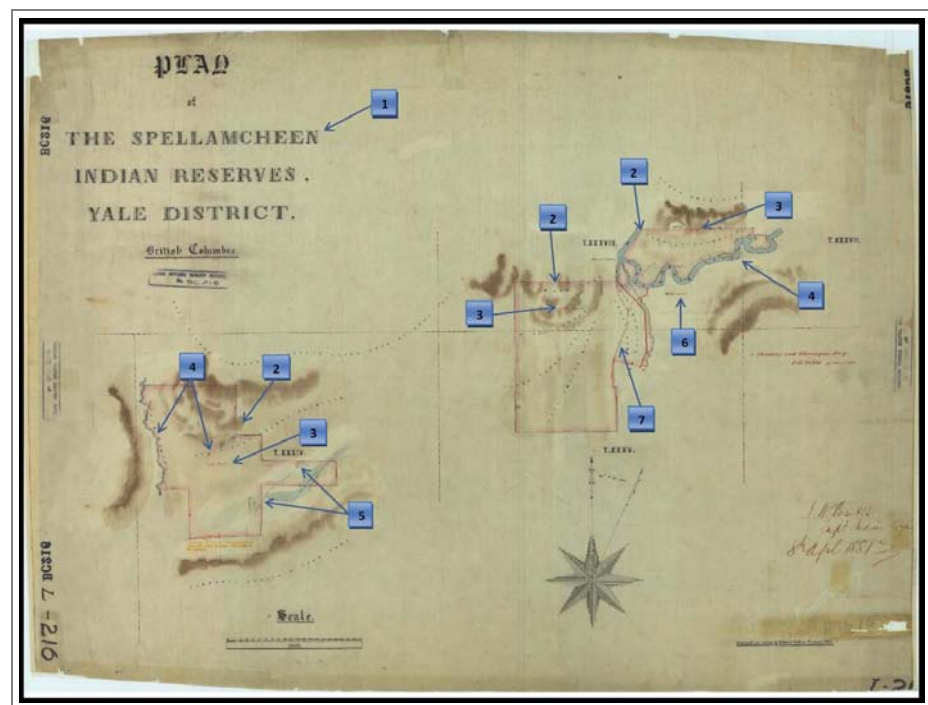


Figure 39. Survey Plan BC216 - The Spellamcheen Indian Reserves, 1881, E. Mohun (CLSS-NRCAN)

The survey map contains the following features:

1. The name of lands being surveyed. In this case, "The Spallumcheen Indian Reserves, Yale District."



Chapter 8



Course Summary

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2. The boundaries of each of the three reserves shown in the plan (the outer contour of each parcel, usually drawn with a solid bold line).
3. The size of each reserve. This is recorded in the centre of each reserve, measured in acres.
4. Descriptions of the surrounding topography, such as "Steep Open Grassy Mountains," as well as bodies of water.
5. Notations indicating two Indian fields in the most westerly reserve.
6. A notation indicating an Indian graveyard south of the Spillumcheen River, outside the boundaries of the Indian reserves shown.
7. The existence of the Okanagan-Spillumcheen wagon road running north-south through the reserve in the centre of the plan.

How Are Survey Plans Useful in Specific Claims Research?

Survey plans are a useful tool for examining changes over time to reserve land such as boundary changes, erosion, road construction, or development. Surveys alone will provide only a partial picture of these changes and should therefore be carefully reviewed alongside other historical documents.

Sources and Locations of Legal Survey Plans

There are many different sources for surveys and survey products. The most commonly used collection of post-confederation Indian reserve surveys is [Natural Resources Canada \(NRCAN\)](#). The NRCAN website has a searchable database of official Canada Lands Survey Records (CLSR), including copies of surveys, re-surveys, subdivision plans, field books, photomaps and reference plans. The documents not available online may be reviewed or purchased at the NRCAN office.

The Surveyor General Division at the BC Land Title and Survey Authority contains early Indian reserve surveys and field books. It also houses early surveys made by the Royal Engineers, who conducted the first land surveys in BC (until 1863) and established its survey and registry system. The BC Archives also has microfilmed copies of some of the Royal Engineers' surveys.

The BC Surveyor Generals Branch is also the repository for all Crown land surveys in BC. It may also be important to consult provincial surveys of parcels of land adjacent to your band's reserves to have a more complete picture of the area in which you are interested. It may also be necessary for you to study surveys of lands that have not been allotted as reserves for indications of Indian settlement.

My Saved Assignments

Open *My saved Assignments* to Assignment 12 to practice searching the NRCAN database.

My Community Research

Use the same procedures you followed for Assignment 12 to search for survey plans for your own reserves. Save your results to *My Saved Resources*. You will have the opportunity to record some of your findings in Chapter 6-3. Return to the course when this is complete.

Field Notes and Field Books

Field notes are surveyors' records of their findings in the field as they travel along a particular route (called a surveyor's traverse) to mark the boundaries or territorial limit of a parcel of land. Field notes are intended to represent important markers or relevant actions surveyors see or take in the process of establishing parcel boundaries listed in specific instructions (in the form of minutes of decision or full, written instructions).

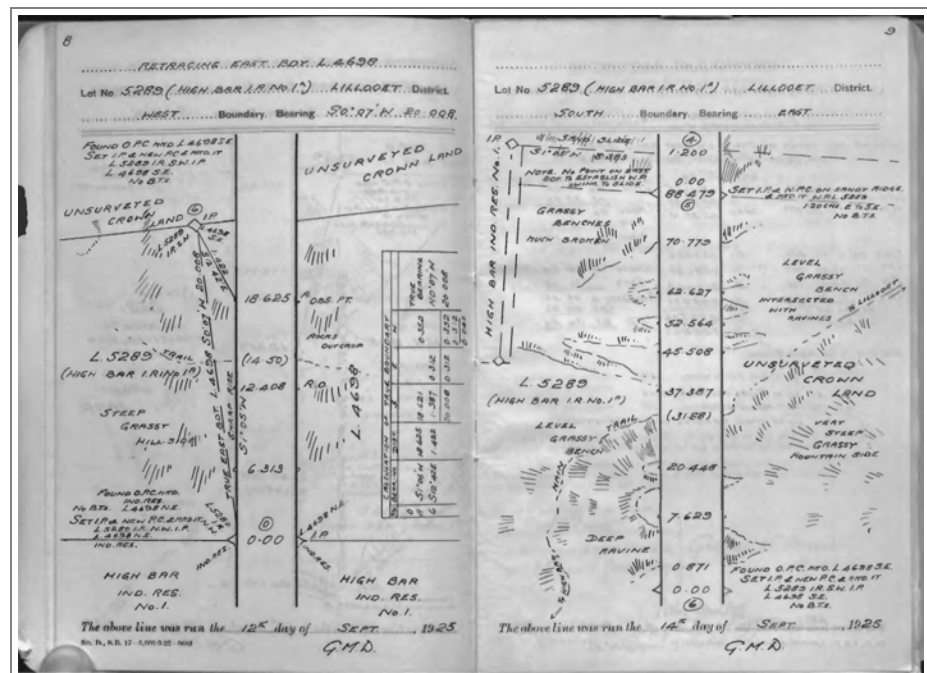


Figure 40. PP8-9, G. M. Downton Field Notes, High Bar IR 1A, FBBC503 (CLSS-NRCAN)

Land is described in a number of ways, using symbols to indicate starting points, directions, distances, and notable features on the ground. Historically, surveyors were required to describe features such as soil conditions, the locations of rivers, creeks, fences, roads, grave sites, buildings, areas of timber, and fields. **Click on Figure 40** to view Downton's field notes for the High Bar IR 1A.

The notes were compiled into field books and provided the basis for the official survey plan created by the surveyor upon returning from the field. Compare a surveyor's field notes with the final survey plan for any inconsistencies that may occur. The field notes often contain more detail than the survey plans themselves and may be important sources of information about natural and built features of the land being surveyed.

Where may field notes and books be found?

Field notes and field books may be found in the same repositories as the official survey

plans. If a reserve survey has been registered and filed at Natural Resources Canada, the corresponding field book will be filed there too.

My Saved Assignments

Open *My Saved Assignments* to Assignment 13 to practice looking at a surveyor's field book.

No matter what the time period, making sense of field notes takes practice. The Vancouver regional office of Natural Resources Canada has resource people for you to contact for help. These phone numbers and email addresses are available on the NRCan website.

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