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Subject: Review of the draft SCB Specific Claims Research Manual
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Hi Marie-Laurence,

I hope all is well.

The CRU working group has reviewed this. I also shared it in confidence with some of our research staff who have comments which I consolidate below. I think it could be useful to have this in advance of the NCRW.

The CRU working group is happy to meet about this.

Warm wishes

Jody

Feedback on the Research Guide

We appreciate the effort put into preparing this resource, and having a comprehensive guide is useful to our new researchers. We respectfully offer suggestions in several areas where we feel that the resource could be strengthened to better meet our needs.

Relevance and Timeliness: Despite the resource being prepared in 2023, there are still some references and examples that feel outdated or no longer applicable, given recent process changes. Some sections would benefit from more current information. More current resources and guides could be listed (e.g. oral history resources include some dated recommendations) and others might be featured. Past NCRW presentations might be good resources to point to, especially for topics, issues or resources not covered in this guide (www.ncrw.info).

The technical questions seem to reflect SCB's internal review criteria rather than the potentially broader or emergent interests of First Nation claimants. In this regard, the research questions provided can be good to check our work against in that they may provide a sense of what counter-researchers might examine.

Presentation and Accessibility: The manual is very dense, technical, text heavy and onerous to navigate. Content is often repetitive. A more user-friendly way of connecting with the materials, including visual aids, is recommended.

Utility for Specific Workstreams: From our perspective, the guide has limited applicability to our specific work despite this being one of the intended uses. It may be more useful to the second intended audience ("*to assist government claims analysts in reviewing specific claims*") than the first ("*to assist First Nations in researching their specific claims submissions*"). In many cases, it would be more effective for us to collaborate directly with our First Nations clients, our legal team or senior researchers to develop tailored questions rather than relying on a checklist

approach. This type of work often requires flexibility beyond what a standardized resource can provide. Greater emphasis on the variability of our work would improve this guide. There is danger in new researchers or departmental researchers using the guide alone to guide their research.

Adaptability and Engagement: Particularly since the manual was developed without direct engagement with First Nations researchers, there should be mechanisms for feedback and revision built into an online version. Ongoing updating and revision could be a regular function of the CRU-SCB working group.

National vs. Provincial Focus: The guide seems heavily focused on national resources, with limited attention to provincial resources, creating gaps in coverage. More regional resources, particularly from provinces, should be incorporated to provide a more useful guide. The contractor might reach out to research organizations in each province to get resource recommendations from each. In addition, there are types of claims and types of information that are not addressed in this guide (see some specific suggestions below). While it is understood that the contractor could not have expertise in each province, if the guide is to be used as intended, this gap should be addressed.

Indigenous Land and Records: There are significant gaps in recommendations for accessing First Nations records. While the Indian Land Registry System is mentioned, there's no discussion on communities under Land Code and how that impacts research. Additionally, the Railway Belt and its relevance to research is only briefly mentioned, which could be expanded upon. If this guide is intended to be a resource for our researchers, an understanding of these records and resources are important as these factors influence the research. While First Nations records are mentioned in a general way, greater emphasis on the richness of these records would improve this guide. For example, there is no mention of Tribal Councils and the records they might hold, including original copies of departmental administrative records that are needed for claims.

Water Rights and Records: Water rights are an important research area, yet there is little guidance or mention of relevant records in the guide. This may be a result of the national vs provincial focus. It is also an area of specialized research skill, but an important topic. The guide would be improved if the contractor reached out to departmental researchers on research teams with some expertise in this type of research.

Roads and Utilities Rights of Ways Research and Records: Roads and utilities rights of way are also an important research area, yet there is little guidance or mention of relevant records in the guide. This too should be addressed.

Access to Information: The guide mentions Access to Information but doesn't offer practical advice for navigating its complexities, such as timeline management. It would be helpful to compare the different processes and outcomes for accessing documentation from First Nations versus the government, as these distinctions are

crucial for realistic research expectations. Access to Information is an important tool in our research and it deserves greater consideration in this guide.

Outreach to Key Contacts: It appears there wasn't significant engagement with key repositories or contacts to enhance understanding of critical processes and records. Much of the resources laid out, while likely helpful to new researchers, is not detailed enough for more experienced researchers. One way to improve this guide would be for the contractor to reach out to key repositories, or research teams familiar with key repositories, for more information. This level of engagement would likely result in a less generic guide to research, and more up to date processes. A useful update would be to highlight digitization projects or partnerships that are making records more accessible.

Content Gaps:

- The guide is quite text-heavy, with some resource repetition and potentially outdated information. Some professional editing and formatting may help.
- It lacks depth in areas such as oral history, and there is a noticeable bias towards written evidence, which may be unintentional. This might be addressed by offering a more nuanced explanation of where it might be useful, or greater emphasis on the importance of this type of record.
- Relatedly, it lacks information about or acknowledgment of the necessity of exploring practical methodologies to incorporate and codify Indigenous laws, kinship systems, legal traditions, forms of evidence, and understandings of loss into specific claims. The guide should connect researchers to any available tools and resources in this area.
- First Nations profiles are incomplete and preliminary research on communities could be strengthened by pointing to additional tools and resources. It is great that FN own websites are mentioned, but there are many more resources that could be included. A fulsome understanding of communities is needed for our work, so listing as many resources as possible is important.
- Some genealogical and air photo resources are missing, and existing digital resources are not always the best available versions. It is possible that the contractor is not familiar with these resources. Reaching out to research teams would help improve this.
- Hyperlinks to LAC finding aids would be a simple but significant improvement, making the guide more user-friendly and relevant.
- More attention to provincial mapping resources, particularly topographical maps, would be beneficial, as these are often more up-to-date. In BC, we have many digital mapping resources available and this likely is the case in other provinces.

Missing Details:

- The appendix could be more comprehensive, including a water volume conversion table, links to the digitized copies of the DIAND file classification guides, and an explanation of regional Library and Archives Canada (LAC) finding aids, especially considering the work going on in each region with them

- There is a lack of resources for oral history in provinces such as British Columbia, as well as limited mention of heritage or archaeology resources outside of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).
- Updates like the new LAC order tracking process for the National Capital Region should be included to ensure the guide remains relevant.
- Genealogical records for Indian veterans and war records are missing and could be valuable for researchers.
- There is no consideration of missionary records or fur trade records and resources, which is critical to some pre-confederation claims.

Provincial Resources: There is little emphasis on provincial resources, such as lands correspondence or materials from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), which can be critical for certain research projects.

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OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

We acknowledge our place of work is within the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)

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