

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES RESEARCH GUIDE

CENSUS OF CANADA, 1901: BRITISH COLUMBIA

The BC Archives holds microfilm copies of the federal census returns for British Columbia for 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911. The census, unlike other research sources identifying individuals such as city/business directories and voters lists, intended to capture information about every individual. Although attempts were made to include returns for the Native and Chinese population, this was not a systematic enumeration until 1901 when the Native population was, for the first time, enumerated by “Indian agency”.

The federal Department of Agriculture organized the 1901 census. British Columbia was divided into five census districts (Burrard, New Westminster, Vancouver, Victoria and Yale/Cariboo), with each district divided into sub-districts. Local census enumerators were appointed to record detailed information about the population: name, age, sex, racial origin, religion, profession, wages, education and health. This information was written down in what is known as Schedule 1. On another schedule (Schedule 2), they collected information about buildings, lands, churches and schools. The original paper copies were destroyed after microfilming.

In addition to the complete digital version of the census available at no charge on the Library and Archives Canada Archivianet web site (searchable only by census district/sub-district or place), there are also some nominal indexes available only on the Web. The BC Archives does not provide access to these electronic resources, but they are described at the end of this guide. In order to locate an individual on the microfilm without first consulting these web sites, you will have to search through each census district/sub-district, line by line to find an individual. To be successful in your search, you need to know roughly WHERE the person was living in 1901. Please follow the instructions below in order to find a census entry for a particular individual on the BC Archives microfilm copy:

1. Consult the finding aid for the 1901 census (**GR-2927**) on a bookshelf in the reference room.
2. Turn to page 3 of the National Archives of Canada (NAC) finding aid, and you will see the beginning of the listing of districts and sub-districts. Each district is preceded by a short cross-reference list, which helps you determine in which sub-district a place is located. Many smaller communities were NOT identified by name, and you will have to approximate which sub-district these places were in. A place name index is also available in the finding aid. As a rough guide, the five census districts cover these areas: **BURRARD**: City of Vancouver and the entire coast to the Alaska border, including some Gulf Islands; **NEW WESTMINSTER**: the Lower Mainland (except the City of Vancouver) and the Fraser Valley; **VANCOUVER**: Vancouver Island (except Greater Victoria) and Gulf Islands; **VICTORIA**: Greater Victoria region; **YALE/CARIBOO**: BC mainland except the Lower Mainland (Greater Vancouver region), Fraser Valley, and the coastline.
3. Once you identify the likely district, carefully examine the list to determine the sub-districts you need to check. There are two schedules for each sub-district. If you are interested only in individuals, you need only view Schedule 1. Write down the district name, sub-district number, and the NAC reel number on which it is found, for example, Victoria, d-3, T- 6436.
4. Use the conversion list below or turn to the first page of the finding aid where you will find a list for converting the NAC reel number (T-6436) reel number to the BC Archives reel number (B11273). Help yourself to the self-service microfilm from the cabinets along the wall to the left of the retrievals desk. You may need to take the finding aid to the microfilm room to guide you through the microfilm to the correct district and sub-district. Please note that some reels contain returns from other provinces; just advance through them until you reach the BC portion.
5. Because the census is not arranged alphabetically, you have to search through the entire sub-district. Since it is time-consuming to locate someone in the census if you do not know where they lived, you may want to check other sources first to locate a person's residence. There are self-serve reference copies (red, bound volumes) of city directories located on top of the card catalogues and you might try to locate the individual in these. You will have to search by area, but it can be easier than the microfilm.

There are also clippings files and newspaper indexes that might contain information; staff can direct you to these.

- The Indian Agency schedules are all found on reel **B11279**. The following Indian Agency schedules did not survive and were possibly lost by Statistics Canada before being microfilmed: Kamloops-Okanagan, Northwest Coast, and Williams Lake agencies. If you do not locate a Native person within the agency return, it is possible that they were not living on a reserve, and were included in the regular census for their geographic area.

If you know the enumeration district and wish to browse the microfilm reels directly, use the following list .

BCA REEL NUMBER	NAC REEL NUMBER	CENSUS DISTRICT
Schedule 1: Nominal Return of Living Persons		
B-11273	T-6428	Burrard to New Westminster/Delta
B-11274	T-6429	New Westminster/Delta to Victoria/ Victoria (City)
B-11275	T-6430	Victoria/Victoria (City) to Yale/Cariboo/Kootenay West, Slocan Riding
B-11276	T-6431	Yale/Cariboo, Kootenay West/Slocan Riding to Yale/Cariboo, Yale West
Schedule 2: Return of Buildings and Lands, Churches and Schools and Indian Agencies		
B-11277	T-6436	Manitoba/Winnipeg City to BC/Yale/Cariboo, Rossland Riding
B-11278	T-6437	Yale/Cariboo, Kootenay West/Rosslan Riding to Yale/Cariboo, Yale West/Princeton Indian Reserves
B-11279	T-6554	Babine Indian Agency, Cowichan Indian Agency, Fraser Indian Agency, Kwawkwalth Indian Agency, Kootenay Indian Agency, West Coast Indian Agency

TO MAKE COPIES:

You can make your own copies, at the current price per page, during regular hours. It will probably require two sheets to print out one page of the census. Note that the quality of the microfilm varies.

OTHER RESOURCES AT THE BC ARCHIVES

There are also a number of published sources that deal with a number of different census returns. Please use the following subject headings as a guide to locating some of these resources in our library catalogue:

Canada – Census	Canada – Census, 1784	Canada – Census, 1890-91
Canada – Census, 1901	Canada – Census, 1911	Canada. Census and Statistics Office.
Canada. Dept. of Agriculture Statistical Office.		

INTERNET/WEB RESOURCES FOR 1901 CENSUS

- Library and Archives Canada has a guide to and a complete digital version of the 1901 census (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/>). Searching is by geographic location only.
- viHistory (<http://vihistory.ca/content/census/1901/census1901.php?page=main>).
- Automated Genealogy project (<http://automatedgenealogy.com/index.html>). Surname search for 1901 census.
- British Columbia GenWeb (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc/>)
- Canadian Genealogy Centre guide to census research (www.collectionscanada.ca/genealogy/022-911-e.html)