Who's Your Mob – First Nations Family History

Getting started

Work out why you want to know more about your mob. Are you:
- wanting to know more about where your family comes from?
- looking to create a family tree?
- searching for a specific family member?
- writing your life story or that of a parent?
- looking for connection to community, culture and country?

Having a clear idea of what information you are looking for, and why, can help you decide on the best way to search.

Use a family tree chart to organise your research

Start by recording everything you know, and have found out, on family tree charts and/or worksheets. These are the best way to keep track of a family history. Writing down what you know makes it easier to work out what you still need to look for.

Record the information as it appears on the records or as it has been recorded through family stories. This will help you when searching, as there may be different spellings of names.

Trace back through your family from yourself

Work back through your family starting with your full birth certificate.

This provides you with information about your parents, including:
- your father's full name, place of birth and occupation at the time
- your mother's maiden name, age and place of birth
- when and where your parents married.

With this information, you can then get a copy of your parents' marriage certificate. This will include:
- your parents' full names, ages, and birthplaces
- grandfathers' names and occupations
- grandmothers' maiden names.

You can then obtain and record the information from your parents' birth certificates, which will include:
- their father's full name, age, birthplace, and occupation at the time
- their mother's maiden name, age, and birthplace
- when and where your grandparents married.

Continue following back using available certificates to find more information.

Death certificates may provide valuable information:
- father's name and occupation
- mother's maiden name and occupation
- deceased person's birthplace
- when the person arrived in Australia from overseas, number of years in the colony and in which Australian colonies.

What other information may exist about your family?

Once you have exhausted birth, death and marriage records, look at other resources such as station/mission records, newspapers, photographs and more.

Many references to First Nations people are contained in records created by other Queensland Government departments as well as non-government agencies. For example, you may find references to your relatives in:
- Church and mission records
- Defence force records
- Police records
- Pastoral station records
- Tindale Collection of Aboriginal genealogies created in the 1930s
- Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islander genealogies

Hints and tips

Record information as you go, including the sources (where you found the information). Create a research log to keep track of what and where you have searched. This can be useful to cross-check and pick up errors.

Make use of worksheets such as family group sheets to record relationships other than the direct line.

Break your research up into small chunks so it doesn't feel overwhelming.

Useful resources

The following books are useful "how to" guides for First Nations people starting their family history research.
- *Lookin for your mob : a guide to tracing Aboriginal family trees* / Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead. Open Access, level 4 ; REFJ 929.1 smi
- *Telling it like it is : a guide to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history* / Penny Taylor. Open Access, level 3 ; G 994.0049915 1992

Useful websites

AIATSIS Family History – Research step-by-step
AIATSIS Family History worksheets and checklists
Brigham Young University (BYU) Family History Library
The Australian Family Historian free genealogy forms