

Who's Your Mob – First Nations Family History

Before you begin

Before you start, gather all the information you have. If you can, speak with family members to find out what they know. Get copies of any documents, photographs or research that has already been done.

Does your family have mixed family history?

Family history often involves researching family members who have come from different areas or places. For example, First Nations family history may include people from different parts of Australia, and may also include British, European, or Chinese family history. This means that there will be many different sources you can look at, and various organisations that can help.

Was your family affected by the Queensland 'Protection' Acts or other legislation?

Many First Nations peoples came under government control due to the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 and other Queensland legislation. These laws restricted the lives of Aboriginal people, enabled children to be removed from their families, and created reserves to keep Aboriginal people in restricted areas.

Some people were exempted from the Act, so were not subject to the same restrictions. If they were exempted, they were no longer allowed to associate with Aboriginal communities. People working on pastoral stations were often exempted to allow them to live and work on the station. Finding out if your family member/s were exempted may provide clues about other records to search.

After the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs were administered by the Colonial Secretary's Office for Queensland. From 1896 this role was transferred to the Home Secretary's Office.

The [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 \(Qld\)](#) created the positions of Protectors of Aboriginals and the Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

Many government reports created at the time, including the annual reports of the Protectors, give valuable insights into events and issues of the time. Key pieces of legislation and these reports are available on the [AIATSIS website](#).

The legislation meant the government created many records relating to First Nations peoples. If your family was affected by these laws you may find that there is valuable information available for your family history research. Due to the personal nature of this information, most of these files can only be accessed through the Queensland Government's Community and Personal Histories Team.

What are some of the challenges you may experience?

There are many challenges for family history researchers, and these are often more difficult when looking at First Nations family history. Records are often incomplete, inaccurate or have variations in names and spelling.

Records may have been created by many different organisations. This includes the Commonwealth and state governments, and other private organisations, such as churches, missions, or pastoral stations.

Information and stories from your family may help you to work out where to look. Family history research can be difficult and frustrating at times. Sometimes records you are looking for don't exist because they weren't created, or they have been lost or destroyed.

Some records you find may also contain information that is distressing or offensive. Historical records reflect the language and attitudes of the time at which they were made. They may include racist and unpleasant remarks.

Some records about individuals might contain personal information that is upsetting and may also include inaccuracies.

It can be an emotional rollercoaster, so it is always good to have support when you embark on your family history journey.

Useful websites

[AIATSIS Family History – Before you start](#)

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | slq.qld.gov.au/ask

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