



# Getting Started

## First Step - Know yourself

Write down what you know about yourself and family members on a Family Tree. Writing down your family members birth dates, communities they came from, marriage certificates, exemption certificates. This does not have to be accurate.

To gain a better understand of how you will need to record information. I suggest you read "how to" books on family history and review family history tools to use, such as:-

- Smith, D. and Halstead, B. (1990). *Lookin for your mob: a guide to tracing Aboriginal family trees*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
- Smith, Drew (2016) *Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and solutions for every researcher*. Publisher: F&W Publications Inc Morgan, George G. (2015)
- Smith, Drew & Morgan, George G (2014) *Advanced genealogy research techniques* New York : McGraw-Hill Education, [2014] , ©2014

These books are to teach you how to use tried-and-true methods to organise your genealogical research and techniques.

If you are going to take your family history seriously then you need to learn how to record and keep information in folders for you to easily access.

## Second Step - Prepare to Share

Computers, scanners, printers are common tools in family history, always make sure you have information backed up.

Remember, computer's break-down and external drive do get corrupted, so make sure there is a paper trail and photographic albums with original images, housed in archival albums [something that will allow the photograph to breath and keep safe away from sunlight].

Create two folders to house your family history information. In one of the folders place all the original information, this folder should remain in a safe location in your house.

The second folder should only contain copies of your family history research information, which you take when visiting family members.

When showing photographs demonstrate scan images and if an elder wants the image, give it to them. Then go home and print-off a replacement to place back in your album.

## Third Step - Learn from Family

Then go and talk to other relatives and ask them for proof and feedback on your family tree. Prepare questions to ask.

It is important to make copies of family history information provided and write down the name of the person providing the information. It would be better to make photocopies or scanned items, so if you can purchase a portable scanner this would help.

Remember to use your family photographs to assist memories so use any images that you have when talking to elderly people. If possible, make sure there is a duplicate copy of images to leave with family members.

It is an important time to show that you are sharing and have respect for their information, so if you find out something new concerning your family, make sure you sight down who told you what and when.

Remember memories change in regard to events, so don't judge or correct elders, just take down the information.

## Fourth step - Community Connections

Indigenous families need to trace their family members back to a specific area, or location, as traditionally the Indigenous family or group lived, married, died within the boundaries of their tribal land.

It is advisable to check records and information kept on local Indigenous people via councils, historical societies, churches, cemeteries, schools, police stations and historians.

Remember historical documents **did not** find Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples worthwhile to write about, but one can never be sure, so check these sources. Especially diaries of local landowners as they wrote small snippets on local Aborigines.

## Fifth step - Organisation Online Sites

Libraries, Museums, Art-Galleries, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Departments or Institutions and others hold information pertaining to Indigenous people. **They are a warehouse of confusion.**

**Queensland Archives** hold the largest amount of personal records pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and unfortunately, they are the worst organisation with providing information. Their approach is to pass on their responsibility to Community and Personal Histories or professional individuals such as Paul Mackette to open up their information, instead of providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to clients.

Libraries are more client friendly and the reference staff are willing to assist, so use them.

I suggest that you keep revisiting information organisations on a semi-decade time-frame, as small tibits of information are released every so often.

Remember that the local Public Libraries usually have historical facts pertaining to the earlier days.

## Sixth Step - Start Again

Start all over again, as people or organisations may come upon some forgotten material.