



Yorgum

ABORIGINAL  
CORPORATION

# Family History Research Kit

## Family History

If you have no knowledge of your family history but are interested in starting your own family history research, this basic step-by-step guide will provide you with some guidance on where to start.

There are many challenges involved with any family history research, such as studying records that can contain offensive language in historical and personal records, conflicts of information, records that may have been destroyed or missing and the emotional weight that can come with discovering your families past.

Be prepared and make sure you have support of family/friends or a counsellor who you can talk and debrief with. Yorgum counsellors are available if you wish to access this service.

## How to Start your Family Research

- **Start with yourself** and work backwards. Who are your parents? What are their birthdays? Who are your grandparents and do you know where they come from? Write down on paper the basic information that you know already.
- **Talk to family members.** Family and community yarns are the best source of first-hand information and the most useful. Sometimes the subject of deceased family members or places where they lived can cause distress. **Please remember to be respectful** as some people may find it hard to talk about the past.
- **Write down all information**, no matter how insignificant you may think it is (place of employment, school, and towns).
- Be mindful of the spelling of names and the number of multiple names and surnames.
- **Year of birth, death or marriage** can be inaccurate. Adding or subtracting a year or two from the supposed year of birth widens search results. Conflicting birth years, places of birth and places of burial are common.
- Keep copies of photographs on a thumb drive/computer or paper copies in a file.
- **Locations are important.** Towns, missions, stations or even street names can provide further information.



Once you have the basics down, start investigating further into your family. Don't worry if it's not perfect. Every little bit of information helps.

## Where to Start Searching?

Stories that have been passed down from generation to generation are a huge part of Aboriginal heritage and a guarded treasure within the family, though sometimes, the historical records may have recorded information that can be vastly different from what family may have told you.

This is one of the most personal ways to discover your family connections, as it can cause emotional and mental distress. Some family members and Elders may be willing to talk about their ancestors but understand that some may not wish to discuss the past at all.

Another way to find information on family history is the internet. There are many websites devoted to family history such as Ancestry.com. Aboriginal families from Australia are now starting to connect through these websites and share their family stories.

The three main agencies for Aboriginal records in Western Australia include:

- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries – Aboriginal History Research Services
- The State Library of Western Australia
- The State Records Office of Western Australia

If you wish to go further with your family history, it can be challenging for a number of reasons:

- Records by previous government agencies were poorly kept, sometimes destroyed or sometimes not recorded at all.
- In some cases, children's birth dates were not recorded and were instead given a generic birth date (e.g. 1st August).
- Spelling of names can change due to misunderstanding from those who recorded the names. The result is multiple first names or multiple traditional names.

However, don't give up as there are records and reference books that some mob find helpful. These can be found in local and state libraries.

## Different Ways of Recording a Family History

**Family Tree:** When you draw up your family tree, it's easy to see how everyone fits in and it can be changed with every new ancestor or relative that you connect with.

**Timeline:** A timeline can help you understand the important events of your ancestor's lives such as births, marriages, military service and death. It also gives you a better understanding of the era that they lived in and the hardships they may have faced.

**Scrapbook:** Scrapbooking is a creative way to display your family history with photos, stories and a family tree. Make sure you use copies and not originals of photos and documents.

**Family History Book:** If you have caught the genealogy bug and have delved into the full depth of family history research, this could be the fulfilling result of all your hard work. Once edited and printed, you may wish to hand a copy to your family and even one to your local genealogy library.

## State Library of Western Australia

The State Library of Western Australia has a whole section devoted to family history with free access (for members) to Ancestry.com, Aboriginal reference books, newspaper archives and photographic collections.

In regional areas you can still access certain books and documents at your local library or by accessing Document Delivery services that the State Library offers to their members. Contact your local library or the State Library of WA for further information.



## Storylines and Other Photographic Collections

The State Library of Western Australia now has an online portal to a Western Australian Aboriginal photographic collection. Storylines allows the Western Australian Aboriginal community to view and print photos that may have never been seen before.

If you wish to contribute and view the collection, the photographs are viewable online:  
[www.storylines.slwa.wa.gov.au/archive/index.php](http://www.storylines.slwa.wa.gov.au/archive/index.php)

The State Library holds numerous photographic collections referring to various missions, newspaper photographs and personal collections. There is a fee for obtaining a copy of the photographs.

### Address:

State Library of Western Australia  
25 Francis Street  
Perth Cultural Centre

**Phone:** (08) 9427 3111

**Website:** <https://storylines.slwa.wa.gov.au/welcome>

## Reference Books at the State Library for Aboriginal Family History

The following lists of reference books are very helpful in locating ancestral names:

- **The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, Volumes 1 to 8, 1829-1914**  
by Rica Erickson
- **Aborigines of New Norcia**  
by Neville Green
- **Aborigines of the Albany region (1821 - 1898)**  
by Neville Green
- **Far from Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest Island 1838 - 1931**  
by Neville Green
- **Aborigines of the South West Region 1841 - 1890**  
by Neville Green
- **Convicts in Western Australia 1850 -1887**  
by Rica Erickson
- **Asian Immigrants to Western Australia 1829 - 1901**  
by Anne Atkinson
- **Nyungar Traditions: Glimpses of Aborigines of South-Western Australia**  
by Lois Tilbrook
- **Aboriginal Names of the Pilbara 1870 - 1890**  
by Neville Green
- **Aboriginal Names of the Gascoyne 1880 - 1890**  
by Neville Green
- **Aboriginal Names of the Kimberley 1880 - 1890**  
by Neville Green
- **Aboriginal Names of the Murchison 1848 - 1890**  
by Neville Green
- **Natives of the Swan River Colony**  
by Neville Green



## State Records Office WA

The State Records Office of Western Australia provides access to records from past state government agencies, stations, missions and prison records.

They also hold the Index to the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files which has three searchable indexes:

- **Aboriginal Names Index**
- **Aboriginal Alias Index**
- **Mission/Stations and Reserves Index**

You can also search records on the State Records search engine:

<https://archive.sro.wa.gov.au/>

### Address:

State Records Office  
Alexander Library Building - James Street West Entrance  
Perth Cultural Centre  
Monday - Friday: 9.30am - 4.30pm

**Phone:** (08) 9427 3600

**Fax:** (08) 9427 3638

**Email:** [sro@sro.wa.gov.au](mailto:sro@sro.wa.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.sro.wa.gov.au](http://www.sro.wa.gov.au)

## The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages WA

The registry office has a free online historic index of births, deaths and marriages which date from 1841. Some helpful hints:

- The more details you enter; less information will be returned.
- It is more helpful to enter the first three letters of the name you are searching as this will return more options to you.
- Widen the search years to include dates either side and this may return more successful results.

Prices for certificate are as follows:

### Birth Certificate

\$35.00 (\$49.00 if less than 75 years old)

### Death Certificate

\$35.00 (\$49.00 if less than 75 years old)

### Marriage Certificate

\$35.00 (\$49.00 if less than 75 years old)

### Urgent Certificates

\$34.00 (in addition to above certificate fee)

**Uncertified copy of an Open Era Record (Births/Deaths/Marriages) - Birth at least 100 years ago, Marriage at least 75 years ago, Death from 1983 back.**

\$20.00

For more information, go to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages WA website:

[www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au](http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au)

### Address:

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages WA  
Level 10 Westralia Square  
141 St Georges Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

**Phone:** 1300 305 021



## Births, Deaths and Marriages in Western Australia

If you do not find any results, there are other options available to locate marriages, deaths and burials that may not appear on the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages WA.

### Reverse Marriages WA

This website offers a searchable index which includes those marriages which the BDMWA Registry does not list on the online index.

**Website:** [www.wamarriage.info/](http://www.wamarriage.info/)

### Metropolitan Cemeteries Board WA

Searchable index of metropolitan cemeteries and those interred.

**Website:** [www.mcb.wa.gov.au](http://www.mcb.wa.gov.au)

### OZ Burials

This site lists Cemetery listings from all over the country and lists the names of those interred and at what cemetery their burial may be found at.

**Website:** [www.ozburials.com](http://www.ozburials.com)

## Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (formerly known as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs)

### Aboriginal Research History Unit

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Aboriginal History Research Services undertakes detailed Aboriginal family history research and provides valuable genealogical, historical information and advice in response to applications received from Aboriginal people, State Government departments and the wider non-Aboriginal community.

Some of the records that are managed by the Department are:

- Administrative files
- Mission, station and personal records from 1886 to 1972
- Personal Native Welfare Records that were once held by the WA Department of Child Protection
- Norman Tindale Collection (genealogies, journals, photographs)
- The Jan Goodacre Collection

To make an appointment to meet with a representative at the Aboriginal Research History Services, please contact them on 1300 651 077.

**Website:** [www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au](http://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au)



## State and National Agencies

### Australian War Memorial

There is an extensive amount of records online for those who are wishing to find information on family members who served in the armed forces

**Website:** [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

### Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Institute of Studies (AIATSIS)

AIATSIS has an online search engine called the Aboriginal Biographical Index and MURA which contains records and collections from every state in Australia.

**Website:** [www.aiatsis.gov.au/main.html](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/main.html)

### National Archives of Australia

You can search for photographs, maps, films, sound recordings and war or conflict records. The Bringing Them Home Index can be found here.

**Website:** [www.naa.gov.au/](http://www.naa.gov.au/)

### National Library of Australia

Here you will find an extensive collection of books from all over Australia, including family history guides.

**Website:** [www.nla.gov.au/](http://www.nla.gov.au/)

### Trove - The National Newspaper Archives

This site provides digitised newspaper articles available online from around Australia dating from the 1800s to 1950.

**Website:** <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

### Find & Connect

The Find & Connect website brings together historical resources relating to institutional care in Australia.

**Website:** [www.findandconnect.gov.au/](http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/)

### Western Australian Genealogical Society (WAGS)

This organisation is committed to promote and encourage the study of family history. With an extensive library, this organisation is a great resource for those in the pursuit of family history knowledge.

**Website:** <https://membership.wags.org.au/>

## Other Resources and Websites

### Ancestry.com.au

This is currently the most popular family history and genealogy website. Records, photos and family trees are available to view online from all over the world. A cost is involved but most libraries have access to the website.

**Website:** [www.ancestry.com.au/](http://www.ancestry.com.au/)

### Daisy Bates Papers

The papers consist mostly of Daisy Bates manuscripts and background material for The Native Tribes of Western Australia, written during 1904 to 1912. There are 54 microfilm reels and some reels contain the genealogies of WA Aboriginal families from the early 20th century.

### Outback Family History

A Goldfields based research website.

**Website:** [www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au/](http://www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au/)

### Carnamah Historical Society and Museum

The Carnamah Historical Society was founded in 1983 to collect, record, preserve and promote local history. Includes some Aboriginal records.

**Website:** [www.carnamah.com.au/](http://www.carnamah.com.au/)



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**ICN 1747**