

Genealogies and Native Title in NSW

Genealogies play a critical role as native title evidence. They show not only how families stay together over many generations, but also how families stay connected to country.

In many cases in NSW, genealogies can show that Aboriginal families have stayed strongly connected to their homelands from the time of the British invasion right through to the present day. When an Aboriginal woman or man tells you where they are 'from' in NSW, the NTSCORP Research Unit can usually back them up with genealogical evidence going back many generations.

Genealogies are not just important as evidence in native title claims. They are also interesting records of family histories that help reinforce a sense of belonging among younger generations. For young Aboriginal people, being able to prove where their ancestors came from can bring a great sense of pride in their surname and their community.

How Can I Learn More About My Genealogy?

The NTSCORP Research Unit produces personal genealogies on request. This is a free service so long as the request comes from a member of a community that the Federal Government has funded us to assist. Since 2006, we have processed more than 1,000 requests for genealogies. Together, these genealogies cover almost the entire state of NSW.

Because there is no such thing as a 'complete' genealogy, the NTSCORP Research Unit is continually working to build up the genealogies we hold on behalf of the native title claimants who we represent. This means that we are always on the search for new information that might help bring native title claims to a successful close. The most important sources of information in this respect are families themselves and especially family elders.

What is the Process for Producing a Genealogy?

Each time NTSCORP receives a personal request for a genealogy we collect as much family information as we can from the person making the request, such as the names and birth places of parents, grand-parents and great grand-parents. The next step is to turn to the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages which is administered by the NSW Attorney General's Department. Provided we have sufficient funding, we then set about searching for and purchasing the relevant birth, death and marriage certificates that reinforce and extend the existing oral record of family history.

In some cases, we are also able to collect additional information from archival sources, such as hand-drawn genealogies collected by anthropologist Norman Tindale during 1938-39. Using these combined sources, the NTSCORP Research Unit has been able to construct genealogies over 13 generations deep for many different communities around NSW.

All information that NTSCORP collects from individuals is kept strictly confidential.

Where Can I Get More Information or Request a Genealogy?

If you are an Aboriginal person from NSW and you would like a copy of your personal genealogy, or if you have any questions about the genealogical research conducted by NTSCORP, please contact our Research Team: Michael Bennett, James Rose, Natalie Rugiano and Jia-Wei Zhu on (02) 9310 3188.