ABSTRACT

PROTECTING BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHY: ORAL HISTORY FOR AND BY THE MIAMI NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Lauren Saulino

This practicum was designed to contribute to the efforts of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma as they revitalize their culture and language. A handbook was developed and later introduced through a workshop to familiarize Miami tribal members with methods for planning, conducting and processing life history interviews. The information contained within the handbook and workshop empower this sovereign Nation to responsibly manage and share the bio-cultural knowledge of its members as it strives to reconnect its people with their historical and contemporary places of occupation. These interviews maintain and revitalize the traditional use of oral history as a means of sharing valuable information, knowledge and skills with family and community members. The recording and documentation of interviews helps tribal families and the community in organizing, managing and preserving important historical accounts about the connection of people and place for posterity.
PROTECTING BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHY:
ORAL HISTORY FOR AND BY THE MIAMI NATION OF OKLAHOMA

A Practicum Report

A practicum submitted to the faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Environmental Science
Institute of Environmental Sciences

by

Lauren Saulino

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2009

Advisor________________________
Dr. Adolph M. Greenberg

Reader________________________
Dr. George Esber, Jr.

Reader________________________
Mr. Daryl Baldwin
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Work</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Handbook on Collecting Life Histories</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Workshop on Collecting Life Histories</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment through Ethno-History Toolkit</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life History Interviews and Biocultural Knowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Future Phases/Uses</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Practicum Objectives</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*References*                                                            | 18   |

*Appendix: Guide to Conducting Life History Interviews*                 | 20   |
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Adolph Greenberg for the time we have shared. He has served as more than a mentor, he has been a friend; without him I would not have arrived at this point. My time with him has opened my eyes and expanded my understanding of the world. Through this practicum, I have been challenged to think outside of my traditional academic experiences and have been given the opportunity to make a direct and practical contribution to a community which I hold in high esteem and sincere regard, the Miami Nation. Without the oversight of Dr. George Esber, Jr., my writing of both the handbook and this practicum would have suffered greatly. He shared his extensive knowledge and experience of working with other Native American communities in teaching me to rethink the words I used and ways I expressed myself and my thoughts. Of course, this opportunity would not have been made possible without the collaborative efforts of Mr. Daryl Baldwin and Mr. George Ironstrack. These men knew that I had a limited background in ethnographic studies and very little knowledge of the history of the Miami Nation, but they helped me learn about both of these subjects as we collaborated in the development of the handbook and workshop. Through them I was fortunate enough to see the world using a different cultural lens and to see the importance of my work in a greater context than simply the satisfaction of a graduate degree requirement. There are many others I would like to thank for their contributions during my graduate career at Miami University, not all of these had direct influence on the development or success of my practicum and yet without them, I may not have gotten to where I am today. Among these: Dr. Mark Boardman, Director of the Institute of Environmental Sciences, who challenged me to prove (more to myself than anyone else) that I could indeed accomplish whatever I set out to do; Dr. Sandi Woy-Hazleton, Deputy Director of the Institute of Environmental Sciences, who always had the time and patience to discuss environmental issues, policies, and problem solving; and Dr. Hardy Eshbaugh, Professor Emeritus of Botany, whose extensive knowledge and experience often led me to new and unexplored ideas. To these, and many others, I thank you.
BACKGROUND

The Institute of Environmental Sciences teaches both a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to environmental issues and emphasizes the importance of effective communication of knowledge and information. In addition to the completion of a Public Service Project and graduate coursework, Master of Environmental Science candidates choose to undertake one of the following: a six month internship, thesis, or practicum; this work serves as the culmination of their graduate studies and integrates what was learned in the classroom into a practical, professional experience. The practicum, similar to a thesis, must consist of a project which is seen from beginning to end. However, it does not need to make an original contribution to knowledge or be of general applicability; rather projects selected for practica are generally designed around a particular problem or case study. My practicum experience was centered on the continued efforts of the Miami tribe to perpetuate its Miami identity through the development of an educational tool which would benefit the tribe as it reclaims, revitalizes, restores and preserves the bio-culturally significant knowledge of its elders.

The Miami Tribe of Oklahoma currently has about 3,500 members. It is a sovereign American Indian Nation, headquartered in northeastern Oklahoma, with tribal members also living in Kansas, Indiana and Ohio. Over the years, the Miami Nation and Miami University have established a mutually beneficial relationship through academic, institutional, and interpersonal enterprises. This relationship is symbolized by the newly created logo which displays an Eagle feather, representing the Miami Nation of Oklahoma, and a Redhawk feather, representing Miami University (which received its name from the Myaamiaki people), tied together with a red string symbolic of the trust and respect that are the foundation of this union (Myaamia Project, 2009). The Myaamia Project, directed by Mr. Daryl Baldwin is based at Miami University and serves as an important connection between tribal members living across the country and those still residing in Oklahoma. The Myaamia Project has as its mission tribal education and preservation of the Myaamia language and culture (members of the Project team work with tribal students who attend Miami University) as well as exposure of other Miami University students to the efforts in revitalization of tribal language and culture.

In 2005, the Miami Nation of Oklahoma and the Institute of Environmental Sciences (IES) agreed to partner in a series of projects that would build tribal capacity in cultural, environmental, and natural resource protection and management. Since that time, graduate and undergraduate students have worked with IES professors and tribal members in a range of projects from creating an inventory and map of cultural and natural resources found on tribal lands to creating an ethnobotanical guide and re-establishing the traditional Miami lunar calendar. These projects have been completed as both workshops and practicum or doctoral experiences.

Most recently, in 2008, recognizing that “knowledge is responsibility,” members of the Miami Tribe, the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive (MHMA) and Miami University jointly applied for and received a grant for Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant would be used to help tribal...
members, especially elders, share and preserve important information for other generations. Information came in the form of personal life stories, photographs and family memorabilia, documents, and other sources of historical accounts. To collect and preserve this valuable information, the grant supported the development of two instructional handbooks as well as the provision of seminars where information about how to archive and interview would be discussed.

Towards the end of that year I was approached by Dr. Adolph Greenberg and asked to join the grant team as a consultant to the Miami Nation. Before being able to understand the scope and expectations of my work as a member of the grant team, it was important that I get to know and become familiar with the people who were the intended audience and recipients of my work. In January of 2009 I was fortunate enough to be included on a trip to Miami, Oklahoma for the annual Stomp Dance event. I travelled with two groups of undergraduate students who were working on capstone projects which would benefit the Miami tribe. Together we were taken on a tour of the Miami lands, main office buildings, and elder care facilities (several of which were still under construction at the time of our visit). From this brief visit I returned to Miami University having made important connections with members of the tribe, including Chief Gamble and members of the Business Committee. Another person I met while in Oklahoma was Meghan Dorey (then Meghan Jensen) who works as the tribe’s archivist and director of the Myaamia Heritage Museum and Archive (MHMA). Meghan and I would spend the rest of the year working closely together on companion texts and presentations for archiving and preserving family documents, objects, and life history stories.

The scope of my project required that I work with members of the tribe, the MHMA, and my practicum advisory committee to develop and distribute a handbook that would enable tribal families to perform life history interviews. To introduce this work to members of Miami University, I participated in an end-of-semester capstone presentation organized by the undergraduate students I had travelled with earlier in the year. On April 27, 2009 I gave a ten-minute speech detailing the purpose and significance of my work to an audience of about sixty people which included such honored persons as members of the Tribal Business Committee and President of Miami University, Dr. David Hodge. Because this project, like those before it, was a result of the collaborative relationship between Miami University and the Miami Nation, and, more importantly, because it was intended for use by members of the Miami tribe, I also led a workshop during the annual Pow Wow and National Gathering event (June 4-6, 2009). At this workshop, I shared with tribal participants the intent and purpose of the handbook and orchestrated a mock interview session.

The handbook and workshop served as deliverables which increase the capacity of Miami tribal members to share and record bio-cultural knowledge held by their elders. The recollection and remembrance of oral traditions and histories – which are connected intimately and intricately with the lands the Miami have inhabited over time – broadens the Myaamia ‘way of knowing,’ reconnecting people to place. In addition to developing an approach which acknowledged the community’s autonomy in controlling their heritage resources, these deliverables serve as additional tools to support the mission of the Myaamia Project.
This practicum is designed and expected to meet the partial graduation requirements of the Institute of Environmental Sciences in that it addresses a particular, practical, environmentally-related issue which involved the application of knowledge and skills I acquired during my graduate course work at Miami University. In completing the practicum I have gained insight into how to collaborate with communities and developed skills for the creation and publication of relevant materials and resources that can be of use to such communities in the resolution of environmental issues. This experience brought together the concepts and methods I learned while focusing my studies in the area of Environmental Management. It has long been emphasized that the key to successful resolution of environmental problems is the involvement of stakeholders. While my work with the Miami Nation does not lead to the direct identification and resolution of a particular environmental problem which afflicts them, it empowers tribal members – through the sharing of stories – to recognize and remember their historical connection and stewardship of the landscapes they've inhabited over time. The sharing of life histories will encourage tribal members to reaffirm their rights as an indigenous nation and to maintain cultural ties with ancestral places – applying ecological knowledge and traditional ways of knowing to how they interact with the landscapes they inhabit.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Miami Tribe of Oklahoma**

The Myaamia people once occupied the lands surrounding the southern end of Lake Michigan (including portions of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan). They were members of the Algonquian family and their name, Myaamia, means “the downstream people” which was how their neighboring brother tribe, the Peoria, referred to them. This name was eventually modified to Miami by Father Jacques Marquette in the 1670’s (Shriver, 1989, in Governanti, 2005). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Miami settled in the fertile valleys of the Wabash and the three Miami rivers where they could raise corn (an important staple item and integral to many facets of their culture), as well as melons, squash, pumpkins and beans (Anson, 1970). When they settled into this area, just before 1700, they brought with them iron tools and weapons, items they had acquired from French traders to protect themselves against enemy tribes. While the Miami had likely made adaptations in the past to their social and political systems, contact with white colonials required rapid adaptations and initiated a difficult, troubled time. By the 1700s there were Frenchmen in all Miami villages, these were traders, soldiers, and missionaries; men who would later become influential in affecting changes in Miami history (Anson, 1970). The 1700s was a tumultuous time when there were struggles both among the Indian tribes and between allied Indians with the French and British who were themselves involved in a power struggle to control trade routes and settlements in the northwest region of the new frontier lands. By the end of this century several tribes were reduced to a shadow of their historic strength and number and many had ceased to exist, having lost all land holdings and merged with other tribes. In 1783 the Miamis were the easternmost tribe whose
traditional lands were still intact. But in this year the Treaty of Paris was signed, ending the American Revolution and serving as an instrument by which Miami lands would once again (the first time being when the French ceded Indian-occupied lands to the British in 1763) be transferred to a former enemy (Anson, 1970). By 1795, in an effort to end the hostilities and mistrust characteristic of the century, “the Myaamia, Deleware, Shawnees, Potawatomi, Ottawa and other neighboring tribes gathered at a peace council in Greenville, Ohio, to bring an end to over twenty years of hostility...for the Myaamia, the Greenville Council involved something definitively new: the American desire for permanent cessation of large tracts of land (How the Miami People Live, 2008).”

Following this Treaty, the Myaamia negotiated and signed fourteen additional treaties, each requiring the cession of more land, until in 1846 they suffered their first forced removal from their homelands in the lower Great Lakes region to west of the Mississippi (Anson, 1970). They were one of the last native tribes to be moved to the west, and when it happened it was damaging to the community: “Our people believed they would never have to leave their beloved homeland; as they were loaded onto the boats by armed military, they grasped handfuls of soil to carry with them on their forced journey...the removal was an experience of horrific social and cultural proportions (How the Miami People Live, 2008).”

Just as the Myaamia people had begun to make the adjustment from living in woodlands to among the tall grass prairies and plains, in 1867 they were again removed from Kansas to Oklahoma and were this time given allotments where each individual received a fixed amount of land. “This process destroyed the Myaamia practice of communal living and imposed American ideas of individualism, which further tore at the cultural fabric of the community (How the Miami People Live, 2008).” Only about 67 people of a tribe - described in the late 1600s as having several thousand members - reached Oklahoma. Many were lost to the consequences of colonialism: whether by diseases introduced by Euro-Americans or being left behind during the removals at the cost of losing one’s tribal identity.

Despite these hardships, the Myaamia people never relinquished their right to self-determination. They have defined their ‘way of knowing’ as a thoughtful balance of change and constancy. In the 1990s, they began to reclaim and revitalize their culture and language by repairing the fragmentation of land and people through community revival efforts spurred by an economic upturn and concerted effort to assert their rights as a sovereign nation (Miami Nation, no date). The tribe is experiencing a new ‘awakening’ as evidenced by an increase in their land base, successful economic ventures, the provision of elder care facilities and services, and the development of language and cultural education programs and resources.

The guide to conducting life history interviews and its sister text, a guide to preserving and archiving family documents and artifacts, comprise an ethno-history toolkit which will be distributed to tribal households of the Miami Nation. The toolkit serves to increase the capacity of tribal members to maintain autonomy over their bio-cultural knowledge. While in the past academics served as ethnographers, this toolkit enables the Miami tribe to serve as their own ethnographers: understanding and interpreting their stories through their unique cultural lens.
INTRODUCTION

Ethnography

Ethnography has a long history, and in its most basic form is considered social research. At best, it is ill-defined and most commonly referred to as a science which requires participant observation – that the researcher becomes part of the community he/she is researching. At times, researchers will take this to an extreme and “go native” by completely immersing themselves in the culture, practices, and lifestyle of the community being studied. On the flip side, there is a risk that the researcher will be unable to “leave the academic world” and will remain as an outsider - unable to see and understand the “other’s” view of how and why they do the things they do (Rock, 2001 in Atkinson, 2001). While ethnography is central to anthropological studies, it is also commonly used in sociology as well as other social sciences working with cultures and group identities. It therefore cannot be claimed by any one field of science. Ethnography requires a deeper, more qualitative exploration of “selves;” this not only refers to the “other” (those ‘subjects’ being studied), but to the ethnographer as well. An ethnographer must accept and understand that not only are the people he is studying viewing their world through a particular cultural lens, but so is he. An analogy would be that a Miami and a white settler could look at the same night sky and the Miami would see the Fisher, aciika, (a weasel) who circles the North Star, aciika alaankwa, whereas the white settler would look up and see Ursa Major (the great bear).

Modern ethnographic work includes a diversity of approaches, methods, and perspectives which feed into a multiplicity of information and research (Atkinson et al., 2001). As Wolcott (1999) asserts, “one can do ethnography anywhere, anytime, and of virtually anything, as long as human social behavior is involved…the important question is not whether ethnography is feasible in a particular instance but whether and how cultural interpretation might enhance understanding of the topic or problem under investigation.” To conduct an ethnographic study, it is important to have a question in mind which elicits the collection of information through experience and inquiry in such a way as to provide an answer to that question. This question can neither be too broad, nor too narrow and will determine the scope and detail of the work to be conducted. The researcher’s standpoint and perspective will form a particular view of the culture or group being studied. While ethnography does not expect objectivity, it is important to be aware, and even address, the role of the researcher as both a culture-bearing and a culture-maker (Reich, 1993 in Kutsche, 1998). All research is guided by paradigms: “particular worldviews of perspectives held by the researcher…within his or her own discipline.” Paradigms influence the way that an individual looks at and interprets what s/he sees and decides what is real, valid, and important to document (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Yet, in writing ethnography, it is important that the problem or question being considered is framed in the language and understanding of the people who are seen as experiencing that issue rather than being interpreted and translated in the words of the ethnographer performing the study. Researchers try to document and understand the views and behavior of interviewees as interpreted by those
individuals, rather than imposing the researcher’s own way of knowing and understanding on those voices and actions recorded.

Ethnography, as explained by Kutsche (1998) and Reich (1993), is full of contradictions. A good ethnographer can view what is strange within his/her own social world and find the familiar in a world that seems strange or “other.” The ability to address this oxymoron and produce a work that is both scholarly and artistic is to demonstrate successful ethnographic work. For ethnographers who are studying their own society, the framing of the problem or question at hand may be more easily expressed since they share the cultural lens of those being affected by the issue of interest. However, even among individuals there are differences in how the world is seen and understood; care must be exercised when conducting an ethnographic study to record the views of others while still giving meaning and explanation to the issue being examined.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The people of the Miami Nation do not view history as a thing of the past but rather as a living process which develops and evolves over time as people remember, share and experience the events of their lives. The Miami people have always maintained their autonomous identity and sovereign rights as an American Indian Nation. Yet, they are a contemporary tribe which since its first documented existence, has interacted and intermarried with people of other tribes and societies. After multiple forced re-locations and a significant disconnect from their traditional lands, the Miami lost some of the tribal expressions and culture that made them unique. While having professional ethnographers conduct life history interviews with the elders of this tribe may provide important information for the field of cultural anthropology, the strength and meaning of this information is most significant when it is shared and acquired from within the tribe rather than by those of the academic realm.

The skills and tools that have been developed by modern science when combined with traditional knowledge systems empower indigenous communities, such as the Myaamia, to exercise their sovereign rights. As indigenous communities and their languages are lost or changed, the biodiversity of the environment where they exist also declines. Defined as biocultural diversity, this intimate connection between people and place can only be maintained if these indigenous communities have the authority and autonomy to continue interacting with their landscapes as prescribed by their cultural knowledge. A project through which they can share and record life histories may not, at face value, seem to address the need to protect their biocultural diversity. However, like many Native American and indigenous communities, the Miami are a land-based society whose language and stories reflect their ecological perspectives of those lands which they have inhabited. For example, there is no word for “outside” in Myaamia; children are simply instructed to “go play in the field.” Because they do not see themselves as separate from those lands, their traditional knowledge includes intellectual, philosophical, spiritual and ecological ways of knowing as derived from experiences on their landscapes (Baldwin, 2007). How their growing knowledge base - influenced by collective and
unique experiences shared within the community - is applied and used in their community and on their lands is affected by their cultural beliefs and behaviors (Baldwin, 2007).

**SCOPE OF WORK**

A toolkit which provides the necessary guidance on preserving and archiving historical objects and stories would empower members of the tribe to study, interpret, and understand their community without the influence of an outsider’s perspective and opinion. In developing the handbook on how to conduct life history interviews, I am deprived the enjoyment of actually hearing the stories that will be shared; but, I have comfort in knowing that the stories told will reawaken the history and way of knowing of the Miami people and will enable them to use this knowledge as they adapt and develop their worldview and way of life, as is their right. The toolkit increases the capacity of the Miami people to manage biocultural knowledge and community identity as they reawaken the connection to and use of cultural and natural resources.

**A HANDBOOK ON COLLECTING LIFE HISTORIES**

To begin this project, I first had to research ethnography and ethnographic methods. Once I had a working knowledge of this information, I was challenged to adapt it - much of the texts on these subjects are written and developed for use by professionals and practitioners within the fields of anthropology and the social sciences - so that the same tools and knowledge could be applied within the home environment. Using such instructive texts as the volumes of the *Ethnographer’s Toolkit* (1999) and *You and Aunt Arie* (1975) I was able to develop a handbook on how to conduct life history interviews that responded to the particular background and objectives identified by the NA/NH grant and my scope of work.

The handbook is divided into five major sections with the first section serving as an introduction and the final section providing additional resources about donating recorded interviews, learning more about tribal preservation projects, and other references on ethnographic methods and conducting life history interviews. The handbook itself is not an in-depth, comprehensive text, but rather, a step-by-step guide which can be used, adapted, and added to over time. In addition to providing introductory information about ethnographic methods, there are pages included where the user can practice the concepts presented. By making this handbook both a guide and a workbook it is a more effective tool for empowering and adequately preparing tribal members to conduct life history interviews. An accompanying DVD-R will mean that families can print additional copies or record interviews in digital format and submit these electronically if they so desire. A complete version of the handbook can be found in the Appendix of this document (Pg. 20).

When I began to create the handbook I was immediately grateful for the work I had done with Warren County during my first year Public Service Project. When I chose to help in training municipal employees about Good Housekeeping Practices and Best Management Practices to reduce the input of pollutants in storm water runoff, I did not know that the manual our team created about these practices using the InDesign program would later become a useful
resource for my practicum work. Using that manual as a template, I worked with the InDesign program to also create the handbook on conducting life history interviews. This program has many advantageous features, such as advanced page layout settings, which are desirable for the creation of books, manuals, and other multi-page technical documents.

Prior to working with InDesign, I had submitted a working outline to my advisory committee of what I thought I would include in the handbook. It was then that I learned that my writing style was far too influenced by years of academic work and that I had failed to use colloquial words to explain the ideas and information I wished to convey. Flummoxed, I voiced my concerns about my ability to write the handbook in such a way that was appropriate for its audience with my ethnobotany professor, Dr. Hardy Eshbaugh. Dr. Eshbaugh shared with me You and Aunt Arie (1975), a text written by Pamela Wood which he has lent to students over the years and which became an invaluable resource for my own project. This book was based on the work of students in Georgia who produced the well-known Foxfire magazines as a class project. The book was written to help other young people produce their own magazines about their communities. The formatting and language used in this book to walk students through their first interview was influential in the development of my own handbook on conducting life history interviews. Many of the steps and suggestions laid out by Ms. Wood were incorporated into the second section of my handbook: Preparing & Conducting an Interview.

The main section is divided into two subsections: “Planning Time” and “Conducting an Interview.” “Planning Time” is divided into three parts. The first of these parts is an introductory explanation of the importance of storytelling within the Miami community as a means of sharing historical and cultural information and traditions. This was followed by a series of steps to help the interviewer begin; namely: identifying who she wanted to interview; what she wanted to learn from the interview or why that particular person was chosen for an interview; and, deciding where the interview would take place.

In the second part of “Planning Time,” the interviewer was instructed to conduct background research in order to have some knowledge about the subjects that would likely be covered during the interview. The background research is not intended to make the interviewer an expert in that subject but rather to help them feel familiar with the subject matter that might be discussed. It would also give them the ability to manage the interview in such a way that one main theme is covered from beginning to end, even if the interviewee gets side-tracked during the process. An important comment included was that while background research might make the interviewer feel prepared for the interview, it in no way made them a master of that information. Previously documented work on similar subjects as what would be covered in the interview does not necessarily reflect the personal worldview and way of understanding as that of the person being interviewed. This is an important theme which is consistent throughout the handbook: that the unique worldview of each person interviewed is to be respected and recorded.

Because the handbook will be distributed to all tribal families and given the deep respect and consideration the Miami people have for their elders, it was important to the clients that information for the person being interviewed as well as the person conducting the interview be
included. As such, a brief section about storyteller expectations was also included in this second subsection. This was intended as a means to inform those being interviewed of the project’s purpose by familiarizing them with the interview process and any recording devices or special equipment which might be used during the interview.

The last part of “Planning Time,” titled “Life History Information,” included a Life History Questionnaire. The questionnaire not only assists the interviewer in recording such important facts as the full name and date of birth of the person they are interviewing it also enables the person giving the interview to begin thinking about their life history. By requesting the names and birth dates of immediate family members, the interviewer is additionally supplied with potential sources for future interviews.

“Conducting an Interview” walked the interviewer through the process of conducting a semi-structured, open interview. The key ideas and suggestions on how to structure interview questions used throughout this particular subsection were adapted from the second volume of the Ethnographer’s Toolkit (1999): Essential ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The Ethnographer’s Toolkit (1999), a seven volume series organized and edited by Margaret LeCompte with Jean and Stephen Schensul, is a useful tool for novice ethnographers and others interested in conducting social research. A second element the client identified as being of importance was that those conducting and compiling these interviews not feel intimidated and inhibited by the process. More important than the information being collected was the encouragement of dialogue across the generations of tribal families. To make this subsection more readable and user-friendly the titles of its parts and the language of the instructions used the analogy of directing and producing a play. At the suggestion of the client, workbook pages were also included for the user to apply the given suggestions and instructions to make his own observations and prepare his own questions before and during the interview.

The first part, “Establishing Shot,” instructed the interviewer to make brief observations of the appearance and manner of the individual being interviewed as well as the location where the interview would take place. A physical description of the person, place, and activity would provide the interviewer, and any other persons reading the interview records, with a written account of the setting. These observations would allow a reader to visualize the interview well after it has taken place, regardless of whether that person was present or not.

While brief notes during the interview were encouraged as they help the interviewer maintain the theme and structure of the interview, taking extensive notes would detract from the interview by demanding the interviewer’s attention and inhibiting the natural flow of the interviewee’s narrative. To help the interviewer maintain a focused and meaningful dialogue without preventing the storyteller from deciding the timing and content of what would be shared, part two, “Preparing the Script,” gave guidance on when and how to ask questions as well as what subjects the interviewer might ask about. Generally, questions should be asked in a chronological order, with increasing levels of complexity, abstraction, and sensitivity. By beginning with “easy” questions the interviewee would feel more at ease and confident, thus increasing her ability to answer more difficult and thought-provoking questions later in the
interview. Questions should also be structured so that they are simple, clear, and concise. The interviewer should not ask questions that are leading, biased, or which are disrespectful of the respondent’s personal beliefs, feelings or views. Most important, questions should be open-ended so that a substantial response is elicited. Once the interviewer had determined when and how to ask questions, he might consider structuring the interview around one of the suggested themes provided. These themes, kept general so that they did not restrict the nature and content of the interview, were framed around the progression of an individual’s life: from childhood, through youth, and into adulthood. Again, it was important to note that no two people are the same and while “life is life,” the experiences each of us has and how we choose to interpret and share these with others will differ greatly.

While a main driving force behind the creation of the handbook was the desire to collect bio-cultural and ethnohistorical knowledge from elders of the tribe, the clients made it clear that it was important to keep interview questions relatively open and general so that those being interviewed did not feel compelled or confined to giving limited, unnatural responses. Many of the elders who would be interviewed are the same individuals who were sent as children to boarding schools where the use of native languages and the observation of cultural practices were strictly prohibited; these people aged during a time when many felt ashamed or afraid to admit they were “Indian.” As such, the client made it clear that while certain specific pieces of knowledge about the interaction between people and their landscapes over time were of interest, this information was not to be directly requested through the interview. What many Miami people may not be cognizant of is that their life stories are inherently and innately laced with information about how they have managed and utilized their landscape. Examples as simple as tending home gardens or using herbal remedies are suggestive of the close relationship the Miami have with their natural environment.

The final part, “Director’s Calls,” provided advice about interviewer conduct. These pointers, while appealing to one’s common sense, were important to note so that the interviewer would be conscientious of his behavior and language during the interview. Sending the wrong message to a person sharing her life story would potentially cause that individual to abruptly end the interview if she were made to feel uncomfortable, undermined or disrespected. A person who has had a negative experience with interviewing might become unenthused about and opposed to any future interviews; this would potentially lead to the loss of extremely valuable information and ideas. Because respect of elders is highly important in the Miami tribe, it was additionally important to include information about thanking an individual for her willingness to share her life story through “gifting.” While presents are acceptable, traditionally, gifting is done by offering a service or favor to the individual that has provided something (the interview). While the act of gifting may be a natural inclination for some of the young people who would be interviewing, it never hurts to remind them of this important practice.

The third section of the handbook instructed the interviewer on how to sort and process the information collected during the interview. Ideas and suggestions used in this section were also adapted from the second volume of the Ethnographer’s Toolkit (1999): Essential
ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, and questionnaires and Ethnographic Methods (2005) by Karen O’Reilly. The emphasis of this section was on finding the most effective way to summarize and condense the interview so that the meaning and understanding of its content was preserved in the speaker’s voice and not that of the person recording it. While the pre-interview descriptions would be written in the interviewer’s own words, he must collaborate with the person being interviewed when reviewing notes and recordings of the interview itself so that the interviewee is empowered to decide what is of importance and significance. Interviews which are successfully processed, sorted, and catalogued can serve as invaluable repositories of information for the family who possesses them or the tribal community if they are made public. The documentation and organization of interviews would also enable interviewers to identify themes or individuals that they would like to consider for future research and interviews.

The fourth section of the handbook was left as a working Glossary to which terms and phrases might be added as the handbook is used and adapted over the years. To begin, terminology used within the context of the handbook as well as related terms of importance were included so that those using the handbook are empowered with the jargon of practicing ethnographers. While the general public, including the users of this handbook, are generally perceived by academics as being poorly educated and incapable of grasping complex and difficult concepts, the truth of the matter is that the laymen simply lack the same tools and technical language and thus cannot have a meaningful dialogue with the latter. While it was not necessary that the users of this handbook become fluent in the terminology and methods frequently used by cultural anthropologists and social scientists, providing them with some of the more commonly encountered terms and concepts introduced them to the language used by professionals.

There were two principal requirements that directed how the handbook was written. The first was that the people using the handbook be empowered by the knowledge and information contained within and that it be of use and interest to them. This was accomplished by using concise, step-by-step instructions and informal, conversational language. The second was that those using the handbook and those sharing the life histories not feel that they were required or expected to provide information from the interviews with the tribal community. In the introduction, and throughout the text, it was explicitly stated that whatever came of the interviews was the responsibility of those involved and that it was their discretion as to whether or not the stories and information be shared with the family and/or with the tribal community. What is of greatest interest and importance to the tribe is that these stories continue to be shared and while the tribe would benefit greatly if they were made known to the community, the personal and private nature of some life stories is understood and respected.

A WORKSHOP ON RECORDING LIFE HISTORIES

On June 4th, 2009 I visited Miami, Oklahoma to give a workshop about the handbook to members of the Miami Nation who were in town for the annual National Gathering and Pow Wow events. During the two-hour workshop my colleague, Meghan Dorey, and I discussed the
information that would be available in the forthcoming toolkit. The workshop was well attended, with about 15 tribal members actively participating. During my 45 minute session, I distributed a draft of the handbook to the participants for feedback on its format and content. Following a brief walk-through of the layout and purpose of the handbook, a mother-daughter pair conducted a mock interview for the attendees. They conversed for about ten minutes, after which I highlighted the strengths (things that went well) and opportunities (things they could improve) of their short “interview” session. Participants seemed generally pleased with the information I provided and several took time after our workshop to approach me with both compliments and a few suggestions for improvement. Feedback I received was taken into consideration for future drafts of the handbook and has been included in the Discussion section of this report.

**EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ETHNO-HISTORY TOOLKIT**

The ethno-history toolkit – comprised of two handbooks on archiving and preserving historic documents, artifacts, photographs, and life histories – is an important resource for the people of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. This toolkit will be of use as they continue to pursue projects which will enable tribal members to revitalize their culture and language. The Miami Nation is a contemporary tribe which has interacted with other tribes and societies throughout its history, yet they are cognizant of particular stories, traditions, and cultural practices which are uniquely Miami. A land-based society, their life history is connected to the places they have inhabited over time. To maintain a living connection with their historical and current places of occupation it is important that their knowledge and understanding of these places continue to be shared. The recording of life histories and the archiving of historical documents and photographs would succeed in meeting this objective. It is possible that these life stories will also enlighten the tribe as they continue to purchase titles to properties with which they have cultural ties to ancestral places. Reestablishing a presence on these lands could also bring back traditional and ecological ways of knowing as they work to restore a sustainable balance between people and place.

**LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEWS AND BIO-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**

The use of life history interviews within the households of Miami tribal members could serve as an additional resource in revitalizing and restoring biocultural knowledge and enthobotanical practices to the everyday life of the Miami people. While many tribal members may not be directly aware of the connection they have with the land, the interconnectedness of people and place is embedded within their cultural practices and traditional knowledge. Evidence of this can be seen in the collaborative work of previous Miami University students with the Myaamia Project staff who have developed resources to aid in the restoration of Myaamia cultural knowledge and the native language. Such projects include dissertation work by Michael Gonella, a Department of Botany doctoral student, who researched traditional plant use within the Miami culture, specifically focusing on Miami corn and milkweed. His work was
influential in contributing to a growing body of research on traditional plant use and ethnobotany, a Myaamia cookbook, investigative work on sustainable traditional land stewardship, and many other applications. In 2003, Brett Governanti, an Institute of Environmental Sciences student, worked with the Miami tribe in developing a map of the traditional landscape of the Miami using interviews with tribal members, historical records, and scholars of Native American history to map the physical and cultural landscapes of the Miami during the period of 1650 to 1805 using a Geographic Information System. More recently, two Institute of Environmental Sciences’ students, Laura Wigren and Craig Voros, satisfied their practicum requirements by designing and creating a user-friendly lunar calendar. The traditional Miami calendar observes biological and seasonal cycles to record the passage of time. Many of the biological cycles of reflected in the month names. Different from the more commonly used Gregorian calendar, the Miami lunar calendar must add a thirteenth month about every three years to adjust for an eleven day difference between a lunar year and a solar year.

One trait that ties these previously mentioned projects together is the reliance on knowledge-bearers (typically elders of the Miami tribe) to acquire significant, important cultural and linguistic information about the natural environment. What makes the guide for conducting life history interviews unique is that for the first time members of the Miami tribe will not only be responsible for sharing their ecological knowledge and practices, they will be the ones responsible for eliciting it. Information obtained during life history interviews will be the sole responsibility and intellectual property of tribal members, reinforcing their autonomy and sovereign right to manage and maintain their biocultural knowledge. This project encourages self-reliance and self-determination in valuing and protecting personal and communal accounts of life as a Miami.

**POTENTIAL FUTURE PHASES/USES**

The handbook is designed in such a way that it can be adapted and added to over time as the Miami Nation deems appropriate. In the future, another section which could be added would be one that guides interviewers through a focus group session. Since it has been the experience of those tribal members who have already interviewed some of the elders that having several people together helps elicit more in-depth and comprehensive information, having a section in the handbook on how to conduct an effective and meaningful group interview would be useful.

If the tribe so chooses, the information collected through the Life History Questionnaire in the handbook could be used to provide quantitative data which may prove useful if the tribe would like to track and monitor who has been interviewed, when those interviews took place, and who else might be a potential source of information related to what they have already acquired. The data provided in the questionnaires might also serve as a repository of important information for the tribal archives.

With the exception of some of the suggested interview themes, the handbook is also general enough that it could potentially be used with other communities. There is already an interest in having the text translated to Spanish and used with the Maijuna of Peru in an
ethnographic study of their inhabittance of protected lands. Life histories of human occupation of their lands might prove useful as this community fights to maintain their sovereign right and entitlement to the lands they occupy.

**DISCUSSION**

This practicum experience was a challenging but rewarding experience. In order to succeed there were three obstacles I needed to overcome, that: 1) at face-value the work I was doing did not seem to be “environmental” in nature; 2) I was working with and for people of a different culture from my own; and, 3) I needed to communicate extensive technical information in a clear and concise manner to ensure the attention and involvement of its intended audience.

The handbook, although it makes few direct references to the natural world or environmental issues is designed in such a way that older generations will share with younger ones information about their lives. Because of the intimate connection between people and place that is inherent in the Miami experience, these stories are certain to contain valuable information about how the Miami people have inhabited and interacted with their landscapes over time. A renewal of their ecological knowledge would likely aid in the reawakening of their culture and language which have slowly eroded throughout their history due to a series of forced relocations and continual of subjugation under federal government policies.

When I was first invited to work on the team for this particular project I had had very little direct experience working with and for native communities, so I was very nervous that my language or behavior might be insensitive and disrespectful to others. In going down to Miami, Oklahoma for the Stomp Dance I learned that the members of the Miami Nation are just ordinary people; that we have a lot of similarities and, of course, some differences. In meeting and getting to know several members of the community, I felt more prepared to write the handbook. While there were still occasions where my language or its connotation conflicted with the culture of the Miami, the insightful guidance of Daryl Baldwin and George Ironstrack as well as that of George Esber and Adolph Greenberg, helped me recognize and correct these errors. For example, we spent a long time trying to find the right word to use for the person who would give the interview: “interviewee” and “contact” seemed too formal, so when I chose instead to use “elder” I thought that I had made a good decision. However, I later heard from George Ironstrack that to refer to someone as “your elder” was not a common practice among the Miami since they did not like to infer possession or dominance of another individual, particularly someone who is highly regarded and respected. We eventually agreed upon using the term “storyteller” since this was a literal identification of how we perceived the person who would be sharing their life story.

The ability to encourage elders to share their life histories was contingent upon how successful the handbook was at guiding potential interviewers through a semi-structured interview process. It was important that enough instruction be provided so that a meaningful conversation could take place; but, that it was not so confining as to force a particular dialogue or coerce the storyteller to share information or use particular language that he felt was expected of
him. To do this, I kept the language of the handbook relatively conversational and used the analogy of a directing a play in order to make the most technical section easier and more enjoyable to read.

To help introduce the ethno-history toolkit and motivate tribal members to utilize it once it reaches the households, a workshop was held during the National Gathering in June of 2009. This workshop had been previously advertised in the quarterly tribal newsletters. However, because the announcement was limited in space and content, some of the workshop participants were not well-informed about the subjects to be covered (namely that a guide to conducting life history interviews would be presented and discussed). Yet, the fifteen people who attended the workshop were attentive and participative, staying for the duration of the two-hour long session. I had distributed drafts of the handbook with the hope of receiving immediate feedback about the layout and content. While some questions were raised and addressed during the workshop, I believed that being unprepared to receive this information prevented participants from giving me immediate feedback. Later, in conversing with Daryl Baldwin, I learned that this was not a setback, as I had perceived it, but rather a common practice of members of the tribe who prefer to carefully consider and discuss new information before reacting to it. Therefore, it is quite likely that by the time we prepare to make final revisions on the handbook and prepare it for printing we will have received some comments and suggestions from those families which were present at the workshop. In discussing revisions on the handbook, it is also useful to mention that one participant made the suggestion that we include information on how to verify or validate information provided in interviews, this was particularly important in reference to specific dates or names. While I had read about this issue in the texts on ethnographic research which I had referenced, I made the decision not to provide details about this in the handbook for fear that there was no appropriate way to include it which would not have a negative or undermining effect on the person giving the interview. Because the Miami have a deep respect for their elders and because the notion of “truth” can be subjective based on a person’s worldview and individual perceptions, this is a sensitive and difficult issue to address in a handbook which will be shared and used among families.

Another issue I encountered during the workshop was a slight miscommunication with the women who volunteered to do the mock interview whereby they were under the impression that they were being consulted simply for feedback about a mock interview and not that they were being recruited to conduct it. Nevertheless, because sample questions had been developed, they were able to have an open and honest dialogue after which I provided consultation on how it could be adapted and strengthened in the future. This was another learning opportunity for me, since I later heard from Daryl Baldwin that communication is best done in person for the Miami community. In future workshops it would be helpful to take time both before and after the workshop to discuss participant expectations so that the workshop (and future ones) can be structured around what is of most interest to the attendees so that we can make the best use of our time together.
EVALUATION OF PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES

Through this practicum I gained practical knowledge and skills for community engagement and effective methods of communication. With an area of concentration in Environmental Management it has always been my interest to learn how to convey scientific, technical information to the general public in such a way that those people felt empowered to make decisions and take actions necessary to address particular environmental issues. While my personal interest is in the management and protection of marine and coastal environments, knowing how to conduct ethnographic work will likely make me a more effective and successful communications and outreach specialist since I now have the skills and ability to communicate with the general public or a particular community. To be a skilled and capable communicator greatly increases the likelihood that an environmental issue is readily identified and that all stakeholders, those affected by or involved in the particular issue, are brought together and empowered to address and solve the issue. The concept of an ‘environmental issue’ is contingent upon the individual perceptions and worldviews of the stakeholders, and having a greater understanding and ability to respond to cultural and social differences will likely lead to a more immediate identification and resolution such issues. While my work with the Miami Nation did not identify a particular environmental issue, the handbook will help the tribe to reconnect – through storytelling – to its traditional landscapes and ecological knowledge. “The information shared by the local community, through stories, becomes the story of the land as the people see it (Baldwin, 2009).” To succeed in this practicum, I had to develop a handbook and conduct a workshop that was of use and interest to the Miami tribal members.

At first, I researched the history of the Miami tribe and met with several of its members so that I could better understand the expectations and purpose of my project. These meetings also educated me about the differences in cultural and linguistic expressions between me and the Miami people. This learning experience influenced how I wrote the handbook so that it was culturally and contextually appropriate for its users. An example of this includes the difficulty I had in trying to determine how to prompt an interviewer to verify information they were receiving during an interview – namely, if they were confused about a particular name or fact they’d heard – as I had first written it I was told that the language seemed distrustful and manipulative. I had to work with my committee to find a way that would convey that the interviewer was humbly and respectfully requesting a clarification and not that they were doubtful or disbeliefing of what they’d heard. I was also reminded of the importance in not approaching a community with an attitude or air of superiority; without knowing, my advisory committee alerted me that several times in the original draft of the handbook I had used dominant or disempowering language. After I had a better understanding of how to communicate with my intended audience, I also need to familiarize myself with the technical information that would be used in the handbook. I initially lacked the confidence that learning how to conduct an ethnographic study and sharing this information with a specific audience would satisfy my practicum requirements. But, as I continued to edit the handbook, design the workshop, and meet with my advisors, I gradually realized that ethnography is everywhere.
In reflecting on my experiences both before and during my graduate studies I now recognize that I have performed ethnographic studies and acquired cultural knowledge several times without being aware of it. I would like to focus on the effect of community on gastronomy and the parallels I’ve drawn between the different cultures I’ve lived in with regard to staple food items. While living in the Galapagos, I was taught by my host mother how to knead flour dough and to fold it into a half moon shape which, if fried without having a filling, was called a *micha*, but if, before folding the dough, it was filled with cheese or meat and fried we called it an *empanada*. We often ate *michas* and *empanadas* at night with a little bit of raw sugar sprinkled on top and accompanied by hot coffee. In Belize, I learned how Mayan farms, called *milpas*, followed traditional slash-and-burn techniques. Similar to the Miami, an important food item of the Maya was corn and we were shown how they cracked and ground kernels of corn using a large mortar and pestle to create a “masa” or dough which could be flattened and shaped into tortillas and toasted over an open fire. The tortillas were best served with a fresh made salsa or jam. When I visited Miami, Oklahoma for the Stomp Dance I was able to try a food item common to many tribal communities, Indian fry bread, which, similar to the *michas* of Ecuador, is comprised of dough made of flour which is patted between the hands and torn into large pieces which are then fried in lard and later drizzled with honey. I think the reason I have become so intrigued by these similar, yet distinct, food items is that as a child it was always a treat to make beignets with my father. While we are not the descendents of Frenchmen, this recipe and how to prepare it became a part of our family traditions, just as the knowledge and consideration of the other food items I’ve mentioned were integrated into their respective cultural groups. I must mention that at least in regard to the fry bread, this was a food that was created out of necessity and which was introduced after contact with white settlers; so while it has been adopted into the culture of many First Nations, there is an effort to remove it from social and cultural events since it does not provide the same value, nutritionally or historically as other natural, native foods.

These are just a few examples of how traditional practices are passed down from one generation to the next, through the sharing and demonstration of knowledge and skills. In using the guide for conducting life history interviews, members of the Miami tribe may also increase their awareness and consideration of important ethno-ecological practices as they continue to strengthen and evolve their contemporary society within the framework of a unique historic culture and language.

Writing a handbook and conducting a workshop on how to conduct life history interviews taught me about the importance of knowing your audience, choosing your words carefully, and listening actively. This practicum experience has not only empowered the Miami tribal members to become their own ethnographers, it has empowered me to pursue a career specializing in community outreach and education.
REFERENCES


Appendix
işi meehtohseeniwiwiyankwi
aatatomankwi

‘How we talk about our lives’
Collecting Life Histories

Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
Miami University
This handbook is intended to assist you in conducting an interview. In the following sections there will be a step-by-step explanation of how to prepare for, conduct, and process the interviews you do. At the end of the handbook there will be a list of resources and references where you can learn more about tribal preservation projects and conducting life history research. The outline of the handbook can be found on the following Table of Contents page:
Section 1: Introduction

Why we tell stories................................................................................................................... 1
Why preserve these life stories? .............................................................................................. 1
How can we preserve these life stories? ................................................................................ 1

Section 2: Preparing & Conducting an Interview

Planning Time .......................................................................................................................... 2
  Establishing the “Who, What and When” ........................................................................... 2
  Preparing for the Interview - Background Research ............................................................ 3
  Preparing for the Interview - Storyteller Expectations ...................................................... 4
  Life History Information ................................................................................................. 4
  Life History Questionnaire ............................................................................................... 5
Conducting an Interview ......................................................................................................... 6
  “Establishing Shot” ........................................................................................................... 6
  “Preparing the Script” ....................................................................................................... 8
  “Director’s Calls” ............................................................................................................. 11

Section 3: Post-Interview Wrap-Up

How to process information ................................................................................................. 13
How to use this information for another interview .............................................................. 14

Section 4: Glossary .................................................................................................................. 15

Section 5: Resources

Information about Donating ................................................................................................. 16
Where to send your interview information .......................................................................... 17
Annotated Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 18

---

Figure 1: The stories we share teach us valuable information about our past and our people.
Here, Mildred recalls how to plant corn, even though she hasn’t done so for over 50 years.
Section 1

Introduction
Why we tell stories

Our history as a people is captured and shared through stories. Our history is expressed through the phrase *iši meehkwi aatatomankwi*, which means ‘we relate how we live’, or ‘how we talk about our lives’. Storytelling is a natural and integral part of family and communal life. Due to our recent history many stories were lost and much of our history went with the passing of our storytellers. But there are always elders within our community who have stories to tell and a record of their stories helps us preserve and recover important knowledge about the past that can be useful to the present. This handbook is designed to introduce ways that encourage family members to share their stories and preserve them for generations. Additionally, a list of resources is available if you would like to learn more about other preservation efforts currently underway through the Miami Nation.

Why preserve these life stories?

In gathering and recording the life stories of our family members we will keep our history alive. Additionally, should you choose to do so, you can share your family’s stories with other members of the tribal community by having the recorded stories copied and stored at the Myaamia Heritage Museum and Archive (MHMA).

Based on the founding principle that ‘knowledge is responsibility,’ in 2008 members of the Miami Tribe, the MHMA, and Miami University applied for and received a grant for Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which will help the MHMA share its collections and knowledge with tribal households.

The grant is intended to help tribal members, especially elders, share and preserve important information for younger generations. This information may come in the form of personal life stories, photographs and family memorabilia, documents, and other sources of historical accounts. In order to collect and preserve this valuable information, the grant supports the development of this handbook as well as the provision of seminars where information about how to archive and interview will be discussed.

How can we preserve these life stories?

One way of collecting stories is through *ethnography*, a formal term used to describe the documentation of oral histories and observed behaviors. Your role as an ethnographer will be to learn more about how our elders see and understand their world. By taking time to sit down and interview elders, you will help keep their memories and experiences alive. Simply sitting down with an elder, listening to what they share with you and recording their stories will be an incredible and enriching experience for both of you. The stories of our elders help us open a window to the past, where we can see how life was, learn things we may not already know, and to better understand our own lives.

This handbook is designed as a step-by-step guide for how to “conduct an interview;” there are pages included which you can use to prepare for your interview, to record information and take notes during it, and how to accurately document and archive that information. It’s good to remember that while this is not a formal activity, it is still important that you succeed in accurately representing the stories of the storytellers. You are spending time conversing with them, one is a narrator and the other is the audience. Both of you can take on either of these roles: the interview is unstructured and should be a two-way street where you can both teach and learn from one another.
Section 2

Preparing & Conducting an Interview
Planning Time

i. Establishing the “Who, What and When”

What is exciting about sitting down with family and other Miami tribal members is that we can learn first-hand in the same way that the tribe has passed down information about our people and culture for generations: through story-telling. While these stories may have been shared with others before, by recording them in the voice of the knowledge-bearer and in understanding them within our own tribal expressions and experiences, you are preserving unique information for our community.

By participating in this project you help preserve the stories, skills, and ways of doing things known by the elders of the Tribe. Here are some steps you can follow to get started:

1. Decide who you would like to talk to; this may be a grandparent, a great-uncle, a neighbor, or someone you admire in the Tribe.

2. Decide what you might like to learn from them, perhaps there is a particular story, skill, or time in the past that you would like to learn more about. Knowing what you want to learn or what the person you are talking with may want to share will depend on them. For example: Is she an avid gardener? Did he go to boarding school? Where did they grow up?

3. Keep in mind that they may have particular memories or ideas that they feel are important to share with you. If this is the case, it’s best just to let them talk and share stories with you. You may find that what you learn will actually be more interesting and exciting than what you had in mind, or it may relate to what you wanted to learn anyway.

4. Go ahead and call or visit the person you want to interview and make sure that they are willing to talk with you. Oftentimes people we would like to learn from don’t feel that they really have all that much to share or teach. If you are reassuring, and perhaps tell them what you are interested in hearing about, they are more likely to agree to talk with you.

5. Once they agree to speaking with you, decide a time and place that is best for them to do the interview. Keep in mind, they may start talking to you right then and there; or the interview may happen at another time when you have not planned for it. Be flexible and always prepared, these interviews are not meant to be formally structured and scientifically conducted. It’s story-telling. With that in mind, you may prefer to call it a conversation, or talk rather than an “interview” so that it does not seem so intimidating.

6. Lastly, if you have access to a tape recorder, camera or video camera, you should consider using it to record the interview(s). Before doing so, check with your elder to make sure they are comfortable with having you recording, photographing, or filming them.

7. If you do not own one of these devices but would like to use one, you may rent it from the Cultural Resources Office or visit the MHMA Office and use Meghan’s digital recorder (you must bring your own cassette though). You can even come to the Tribal Headquarters or the MHMA office if you would like a mutual, open space for the interview. Remember, the material produced during the interview is your property and you are not expected to share the stories you collect using such spaces or recording devices unless you would like to.
ii. Preparing for the Interview - Background Research

1. Once you have an idea of what kinds of life stories you would like to hear or you think the storyteller may want to share, it’s a good idea to do some background research.

   • Learning a little bit about the subject(s) you expect to cover will help you come up with questions that will help you learn about those subjects in greater detail and extent.

   • This is especially true if the person you plan to interview is either someone who easily gets side-tracked, or if they tend to be very short-spoken.

   • Doing some research will help you guide the storyteller through the interview; it doesn’t mean you will have learned everything about the subject, nor that what you hear during the interview will be the same as what you’ve read;

   • You are doing the interview to learn about how that person knows and understands their world.

2. By doing some background research into the topics you may want, or expect, to cover you will feel more prepared for the interview. There are already great resources available where you can read and research the history of the Miami people, but of course not all of these stories come directly from the Miami people themselves: that’s why it’s so important for you to record these life histories! For information on how to access these resources:

   The Miami Heritage Museum and Archive (MHMA), www.miamination.org, is an excellent resource for documents, artifacts and even previous interviews of Miami tribal members. If you cannot visit the MHMA, located at the tribal headquarters in Miami, OK, contact the Tribe’s archivist Meghan Jensen for help (918-541-1309 or archives@miamination.com).

   Because of the unique relationship between the Miami Nation and Miami University there is also an extensive collection in the Walter Havighurst Special Collections of the King Library located in Oxford, OH. For help accessing these resources, contact Janet Stuckey, Chair of the Myaamia Collection Review Board and Head of Special Collections (513-529-3324 or stuckejh@muohio.edu).

3. Keep good records of what you have researched. As you research, sort through what you think will be helpful versus that which will probably not be talked about with the storyteller. This will help you more quickly locate useful resources if there are things after the interview that you would like to read more about or refer back to for a comparison with what you learned from the storyteller.
ii. Preparing for the Interview - Storyteller Expectations

To make the person you have chosen to interview feel more at ease about this activity there are few steps you might take before launching into the interview:

1. Before you begin the interview it will help them relax if you engage in casual conversation: talk about family news, what you’ve both been doing of late, and other interesting events. Since introductions are typically very long while our departures are short, you will likely spend a good amount of time simply “shooting the breeze.”

2. The intent of this project is for our families to share their life histories, so let the storyteller know what stories you were interested in hearing more about and why you wanted to learn them (for instance: to pass on family traditions, stories, and knowledge). You may say something like, “Everyone has a life story, and I’m interested in yours because...”

3. You should also describe how you imagine doing the interview. Since this is an informal activity, you might talk to them about any recording devices you plan to use and re-assure them that anything they would like to share with you is of importance. Remember, anything you talk about can stay in confidence between the two of you or within your family if they feel that it is too personal or private to be shared with the community.

iii. Life History Information

Because it is important to keep a record of who is being interviewed, it will help if you acquire some standard background information. By filling in the following Life History Questionnaire (Pg. 5) you can “set the stage” for the interview. These questions should also help the storyteller open up and begin to think about their life and what they would like to share with you. Doing so will also help you both feel more at ease and ready to participate in the interview process.

- While filling in the questionnaire, it would be helpful to ask broad, general questions such as:
  “Where do you live?”
  “Where do you work?”
  “Where did you go to school?”

- From these questions, you can begin to move into questions about the storyteller’s life, such as:
  “Where were you born?”
  “What were you told about your birth?”
  “Who was there to bring you into this world?”
  “What was your childhood like?”
  “Who are you related to?”

- You are now conducting an interview, pay attention! Move on to Pg. 6 for more instructions.
LIFE HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: (Last, First, M.I.)

Miami Name:

PERSONAL HISTORY

Marital status:  □ Single  □ Partnered  □ Married  □ Separated  □ Divorced  □ Widowed

Location (City, State):

Job Title/Company Name:

Education: highest level completed (Check one)  □ Elementary  □ Secondary (High School or GED)  □ Trade or Vocational School  □ College/University  □ Master's degree  □ PhD/Doctoral  □ Other

Name of Educational Institution:

FAMILY HISTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>TRIBE, IF ANY?</th>
<th>FULL ENGLISH NAME?</th>
<th>MIAMI NAME?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Conducting an Interview**

The following sections will help you prepare for a good interview. Oftentimes we feel that we are just actors playing our part in this great show called ‘life.’ With that in mind, the next sections are titled as if you were preparing for a performance: you are the director and the storyteller is the principle actor, all you have to do is give a few “cues,” when necessary, to help the story be told.

Because we are all different, these techniques are very general and may not cover everything you want to know. They are also not meant to be a strict set of rules for how you should interview; through practice you will find which steps do, or don’t, work for you.

The handbook is structured so that it serves as both a how-to guide and a workbook. You will find in the following sections that we have provided examples followed by blank spaces where you can write in your own questions, prompts, or other details.

We hope you will give us feedback on how well these steps worked for you and any suggestions on how we might change and improve them.

i. “Establishing Shot”

“Establishing shot” refers to the shot used to introduce a scene to the audience. By creating an establishing shot using your words, you will help others reading your notes later feel like they were there with you and might make information from the interview richer and more meaningful. Remember your writing should take place mostly outside of the interview; once you are engaged in a conversation, you will learn from and enjoy the experience more if you are an active listener and participant.

Before you begin to get into the interview, jot down a few observations about your surroundings:

- Include a description of the storyteller (especially if you can’t take pictures or video)
  - How are they dressed (hair, clothes, jewelry)?
  - How is their posture (sitting upright, hunched shoulders, slumped)?
  - How do they appear (tired, happy, thoughtful)?
- Describe what the storyteller is doing (especially if you are learning a particular skill or technique)
- Identify and describe the location (such as who’s house, or in what neighborhood), you might
  - Draw a map
  - Draw a picture of the place
- Describe your sense of place: what does this location feel like or what does it remind you of?

Doing this will help you or someone else visualize the interview when looking at your notes; and, in the case of a skill or technique, could help you (or someone else) replicate that task at a later time

Making casual observations and taking quick notes will also help you guide the interview should it get “off-track.”
Now, you try: Use the space below to fill in the descriptions explained on Pg. 6. You should take these notes and make these observations briefly before beginning the interview.

- Dress:

- Posture:

- Appearance:

- Activity/Action:

- Location:

- Your Sense of Place:
ii. Preparing the “Script”

One thing all stories have in common is that they make us feel something. When you thought about who you wanted to interview chances are there was something about this person that made you excited to talk with them; maybe you even had a particular story, event, skill, or family memorabilia that you wanted to talk with them about. Our life stories are interesting and exciting; if we don’t share them, they may be lost over time, so listening to and recording (with paper & pen, camera, tape or video) what the storyteller says will help preserve our past, while enhancing our future, generations.

You are ready to interview; what questions will you ask (see Pg. 9), and when and how will you ask them?

When: By asking the sorts of questions mentioned on Pgs. 4 & 5, you have already begun to organize your questions, giving your interview some structure. Because it is natural for us to want things to be in order, ask questions using the following directions to help you and the storyteller ‘stick to the script’:

- **Time**: begin with earlier events (birth, childhood) and progress to more recent events
- **Complexity**: begin with simpler, easier topics and move into more complex, difficult ones
- **Themes**: group questions about subjects, events, or family photos/objects that are similar
- ‘**Reality**’: begin with concrete questions (things that happened) and move into more abstract (feelings, opinions, perceptions of what happened)
- ‘**Threat-level**’: begin with topics that are the least sensitive or threatening and move into the more personal, sensitive topics later

How: Now that you know how to order your questions, how will you ask them? It is important to keep questions short and simple so that the real emphasis of the interview is in the response:

- **Understandability**: questions make sense to you and the storyteller
- **Length**: questions are kept short
- **Honest**: questions do not “lead” the storyteller to the answer you want/expect to hear
- **Neutral**: questions have neither a positive or negative association to the topic
- **Simple**: each question is asked one at a time (not: “What did you do before and after school?”)
- **Open-ended**: question cannot be answered with just a “yes” or “no”
- **Respectful**: questions are sensitive to the storyteller’s personal beliefs, feelings, and opinions

(Continued on Pg. 9...)
What: Below are just some of the possible ‘themes’ (and related subjects) which while common to our families will be told and understood very differently by each of us:

A. Childhood Years:
   • Family Members
     • Parents, grandparents (Who was the primary caretaker?)
     • Siblings
   • Home Life
     • Rooms of the house
     • Meals (Did the food you ate change with the time of the year?)
     • Chores
     • Home gardens
     • Home remedies, healing practices
     • Family traditions, activities, celebrations
   • Schooling
     • Pre-school (life before school; getting ready to go to school (first time or daily))
     • In-home schooling?
     • School (What kind of school? Location of school? Feelings about school?)
       • Classes and Teachers
       • Recess (games and activities; setting: outdoor or indoor; interactions with others)
       • Meals
     • After-school (life after school; going home from school; vacations)

B. Youth/Adolescence:
   • Friends/Significant Others
   • Free Time
     • Popular places to go
     • Popular things to do
   • Schooling
     • School (What kind of school? Location of school? Feelings about school?)
       • Classes and Teachers
       • Extra-curricular activities (organizations or groups they were a member of)
       • Living arrangements (Where did they live? With whom did they live?)
       • Meals (Where did the eat? What did the eat? Who prepared meals?)
     • After-school (life after school; going home from school; vacations)

C. Adulthood:
   • Job/Career (Kind of trade/skill? Where did they learn how to do their job? Family traditions)
   • Family
     • Marriage (Where did they marry? ceremony; relationship with in-laws and/or with partner)
     • Children
   • Hobbies
   • Lifestyle (religious and political views; thoughts about the environment and/or society)

D. Interaction with Miami Tribe:
   • Awareness of being Miami
   • Participation in tribal events

* “What advice would you give to the younger generation?”
Now, you try: Use the space below to write questions related to the themes/subjects listed on Pg. 9. You will know what questions to ask once you know who you will interview and what you will be talking about. Write these questions before doing the interview and try to remember them so you don’t have to read them during the interview: doing so may make the conversation feel too formal and disconnected rather than free-flowing and open.

You may think of a subject not included on the list or you may decide on your own theme for your interview, this is great: you should not feel restricted to just those things listed previously.

A. Childhood Years:
   - Family Members

   • Home Life

   • Schooling

B. Youth/Adolescence:
   - Friends

   • Free Time

   • Schooling

C. Adulthood:
   - Job/Career

   • Family

   • Hobbies

   • Lifestyle

D. Interaction with Miami Tribe:
iii. “Director’s Calls”

Below are some things to keep in mind as you are conducting the interview. Many of these are things you would already think/know to do, but it’s always helpful to have them written out as a reminder.

1. An important thing to remember is that once the storyteller is talking,Listen to what they say.

2. Be humble and respectful.

3. If the storyteller is not much of a talker, try using information from your background research or refer to what you remember from your own family stories and pictures to encourage them to share their own thoughts and opinions (this is referred to as “prompting”).

Another way to get more information out of a short-spoken person is to ask “clusters” of questions; for example (if asking about a how to prepare a particular recipe used by your family):

- How do you do it?
- How did your parents do it?
- How did others do it (grandparents, aunts, cousins)?
- Did you ever hear of anyone else doing it differently (community members, neighbors)?

4. If there is a story that you can’t quite remember, you might consider recalling those details you do know and asking them for more information.

5. If you find that you don’t think you have all the details for (or are unclear about) a particular story that the storyteller has just shared, you might consider the following “probes”:

- Repeat/Re-state what the person has said in a question-form
- Ask for more information: “Could you tell me a little bit more about...”
- Ask for clarification: “I remember you saying something about my great-aunt, but I didn’t catch her name, could you please tell it to me again?” or “I don’t understand, how did you say that you helped her with the gardening?”
- Ask for an opinion: “Just now you said that [this happened], what did you think about it...?”
- Ask for the meaning of a word: “When you said, ‘aunt,’ did you mean your father’s sister? Or was this just someone close to the family?”

6. Remember, the interview is open and relatively unstructured; anything the storyteller would like to share is relevant and important to hear and record. Take a note of where the conversation has left the main theme and let them finish their thoughts before going back to what was being talked about. **Do not interrupt or stop them while they are talking.**

7. You may want to use pictures, documents, or objects to help the storyteller think and talk about a particular subject of interest. Take some notes and provide a thorough description of such items (after the interview) since this may help you better understand the subject of the conservation later.

- If you are relying on a tape recorder to document the interview, keep in mind that this machine cannot make sense of a finger pointing at a map or photograph
- Similarly, if you are using a camera, it won’t necessarily record what is being said about what is in your picture
- Make sure that you check equipment during the interview so that you know if they malfunction or stop recording.

(Continued on Pg. 12...)
8. You may reach a point where the storyteller becomes uncomfortable, emotional, or tired; if that happens, don’t push them. Take some time, or take a break, and decide if they would like to continue. If they are unwilling or unable to continue, see if you can reschedule to talk with them again, or if there is someone else who could talk to you.

9. An interview can go for as long as you and the storyteller are able and willing (generally, interviews can last from 45 minutes to two hours).
   
   • If you have to end the interview before you feel like it is really “finished,” try and reschedule for another time when you can both meet to continue the conversation. Don’t feel that you have to cover everything you’d hoped to talk about, some may have to wait for another day.
   
   • You may find that your first interview has made you think about new things you would like to learn more about, see if the storyteller would sit down with you again or if perhaps they know someone else who can answer your questions.
   
   • At the end of the interview be sure to thank the storyteller for their time and let them know how valuable this experience and information is to you.
   
   • A common way of thanking our elders is with “gifting;” this does not necessarily mean a present, but could be a promise to help with errands, or to do something for them when they need. You might gift them before and/or after the interview.

*Now, you try:* use the space below to write in questions you might ask if you encounter any of the following situations (use Pg. 11 for examples of such questions):

**Cluster Questions:**

•
•
•

**Asking for Clarification (“probes”):**

**Story you can’t remember:**

**Story where you’re confused about the word(s) or subject:**

**Story with word(s) or subject you don’t understand:**
Section 3

Post-Interview Wrap-Up
How to process information

You have spent time doing background research, preparing for the interview, making observations, and taking notes; and after the interview, you may find yourself overwhelmed by the amount of information you’ve collected. You may ask yourself how you can keep it all straight and what you will do to make sense of it. To make sure that your hard work “pays off” and that you pay due respect to what the storyteller has shared, consider the following suggestions for sorting the information you’ve gathered:

1. You should already have good records of what you researched before doing the interview. By having a list of resources you used, you know where to look if you (or others) have further questions or topics of interest.

2. Remember, ultimately you are the person responsible for deciding what and how the information from the interview gets remembered. In the past, we relied on oral history to share our life stories and as they were passed from one generation to the next the narrator adapted the story: changing certain words, embellishing some details, or altering the manner in which it was told. By having these conversations and recording them on paper or on tape and later giving your own summary and explanation of what was said, you have the same opportunity to understand and interpret the stories of the storyteller using your own words and worldview. However,

3. Take care if you begin to define or interpret the language and expressions of the storyteller: how you understand what they say versus what they understand of it may differ. Don’t hesitate to contact them if you have more questions about something that was said; you want to be sure that you honor their memories by recording and retelling them as accurately as possible. Be careful not to encourage them to give a title to their stories!

4. In telling the story, it was the storyteller that set the stage, selected the props, introduced major characters, and narrated the script. In recording this story, your role has become that of producer and the storyteller has now become the director.

5. Analyze as you go: every time you jot down a note, take a picture, record a video, etc make sure you take the time afterward to explain in your own words, or those of the storyteller, what that piece of information is and why it may be meaningful to you or your family.

6. Take the time to write a brief summary as well as to record your own thoughts and observations after each interview. This is helpful not only to you, should you use this information for more interviews, but also for anyone else who would also like to learn about what you’ve discussed with the storyteller. Your memory is a powerful research tool and you should use it to recount what was said during an interview (especially if you are unable to use a tape or video recorder.)

7. While summarizing may mean cutting out certain pieces of information, be sure that what you do include remains in context of the conversation. Just because you found something to be of importance will not necessarily mean that the storyteller (or others reading what you write) will feel the same way. Have the storyteller read your summary so that you both feel confident that you’ve succeeded in recording everything of significance.

• Preserve the narrative: summarize the interview as it was organized and recounted by the storyteller; this won’t necessarily follow the techniques you used to try and structure it (Pgs. 8-9)

• If you do plan to share the interview with the tribe, consider trying to identify information that is of cultural and historical significance to the Miami
How to use this information for another interview

You have reached the point where you would like to describe your interview so that you or others may use it to conduct further interviews with that same person or to have related conversations with others. To help you prepare for future interviews using what you have learned in the one(s) you have completed, consider the following strategies:

1. Remember, there is no standard method to analyze and interpret your notes, the transcribed interviews (this is when you take the time to write word for word everything recorded on tape), or the recorded materials (what you view or hear, but don’t write down).

2. Consider carrying around a small tape recorder or pad of paper and pen so that if you recall certain things from the interview or understand what you heard in a different manner, you can record and keep track of these personal thoughts and insights.

3. Create diagrams to help you visualize how the stories were told. We all tell stories differently, a few examples of how people structure their stories are: using chronology (a sequence of events over time); recounting recent memories which then jog up memories from their past which in their mind are related; or, sharing only those more dramatic scenes of their life even though these may be unrelated. A visual aid may help you better understand how your elder organizes their life in their own mind and why they may have chosen to do it in such a way.

4. Discovering how the storyteller structures their life stories may help you better understand how they think and how you might alter your interviewing techniques in the future to better suit their storytelling technique.

5. Try to pick up on when they involved you in the conversation: what was being said, did they expect that it was something you already knew, or did they want to be sure you understood? Learning what the storyteller may view as common knowledge or what they make sure you take away from the conversation will help you identify pieces of information which may recur in other conversations.

6. To help you organize your interviews, take the following steps:

   • Provide background information about the storyteller and the interview theme
   • Write a personal introduction about the purpose or intent of the interview
   • Summarize the interview and the main points you and the storyteller have identified (see Pg. 13)
   • Find words which help explain or make sense of what was discussed
     • This is a way to simplify and explain more complex ideas
     • This will help identify concepts (the same or related) to explore in future interviews
Glossary

The following words are ones which were either used in this handbook or are related terms. These words will be helpful as you conduct background research or if you want to learn more about ethnography. This is not a comprehensive list, and you may choose to add to it over time.

**Culture**: is considered to include such things as arts, religion, morals, and other beliefs and behaviors commonly shared among particular social groups. Culture constantly changes and develops over time.

**Cultural anthropology**: the study of culture in human societies.

**Ethnographer**: a person who researchs people and their community through participant observation - that is, they become a part of the community they are researching.

**Ethnography**: a scientific method of learning about a person or a group of people and their community. It’s a branch of cultural anthropology.

**Life history questionnaire**: a questionnaire designed to determine basic information about an informant’s life - including date of birth, family history, education, residence, and other important quantitative data.

**Myaamia Heritage Museum and Archive (MHMA)**: built in 2006, it is currently staffed by a full-time archivist during regular business hours. The MHMA is located within the Tribal Administration Complex in Miami, Oklahoma. The museum and archive houses contemporary and historical records including language records, maps, photographs, and governmental documents, as well as artifacts such as jewelry, clothing, and paintings.

**Qualitative research**: the collection of information through in-depth investigation using varied, but purposeful, methods.

**Quantitative research**: the collection of information using specific models, measurements, and strict methods.

**Sense of place**: develops as how a person sees and understands their world based on how they have inhabited their landscape and interacted with both the social and natural environment over time.
Options for Donation

At the beginning of this handbook, we told you it is important to preserve your family history because your families make up the Miami Nation, and your history is our history. We believe that it is important for our nation to preserve our own history, and thus support the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive (MHMA). The MHMA collects, preserves, promotes, and facilitates access to items chronicling myaamia language, culture and history for the purpose of advancing knowledge and understanding of these to all Tribal members, as well as non-member researchers.

What happens if I donate items to the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive at the Miami Nation?

The Miami Nation built the MHMA in 2006, and it is currently staffed by a full-time archivist during regular business hours. The MHMA is located within the Tribal Administration Complex in Miami, Oklahoma. The museum and archive houses contemporary and historical records including language records, maps, photographs, and governmental documents, as well as artifacts such as jewelry, clothing, and paintings. Even if you are not interested in donating or loaning your items to the museum and archive, it may be a place to find out additional information about your item, or about your family’s history in general.

The MHMA understands that sometimes Miami families want to take care of their documents and items, but don’t have enough space or products to store them properly. To accommodate these families, MHMA allows individuals or families to place items within the museum and archives vault for safekeeping as a loan to the institution, while still maintaining ownership of the items. The loan terms are agreed on by both parties through a signed agreement.

MHMA also welcomes the donation of items reflecting Miami history to the museum and archives. Your gift of papers or objects could be an important part of expanding the understanding of our ancestors and the way they lived. The process of donating items to MHMA is similar to a loan, but ownership of the items is transferred to the MHMA and the Miami Nation. For more information about donating items by gift or by loan, please contact the archivist at MHMA by phone, (918) 542-1445 ext. 1305, or by email, archives@miamination.com.

What happens if I donate items to the Myaamia Collection at Miami University?

All items donated to the Myaamia Collection at Miami University must go through a review process in order to insure that only primary materials relative to the Miami Nation are included in the collection. The review board is made up of both university and tribal officials who make recommendations on items donated.

If you decide to donate directly to Miami University’s Myaamia Collection, your first point of contact can be either Mrs. Janet Stuckey, at Miami University, or the tribal archivist. Janet currently serves as the Chair of the Myaamia Collection Review Board and is also head of Special Collections. It is possible to donate materials to the Miami Tribe but request that they be housed in the Myaamia Collection at Miami University.

Items that are donated to the Myaamia Collection fall under one of three categories:

1. **Temporary Objects**: Some objects are on temporary loan or stored at Miami University for the Miami Nation, which retains proprietary rights.

2. **Repatriation Objects**: Objects, owned by the Miami Nation, identified by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma as objects of cultural patrimony and protected under the description of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act of 1990.

3. **Permanent Objects**: Objects acquired by or for Miami University and are the property of Miami University. Proprietary rights for any newly acquired objects will be determined on a per-object basis.
Where to send your interview information

For more information on how to use this handbook or to find out where you can send any documents or recordings related to your interview(s), please contact any of the individuals below. Who you contact depends on what you would like to do with the information that the storyteller shared; for more details about making a donation, see the Options for Donation page (Pg. 16)

For information about conducting interviews, or questions/suggestions regarding this handbook:
  Daryl Baldwin, Director
  Myaamia Project
  Miami University
  Oxford, Ohio 45056
  (513) 529-5648
  Email: badwidw@muohio.edu
  www.myaamiaproject.org

For information about how you can share the documents and recordings of your interviews, or to use equipment or rooms:
  Cultural Resources Office
  Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
  121 N Main St.
  Miami, Oklahoma 74354
  (918) 542-1445

For information about previously recorded interviews, using equipment for interviews, and preserving information:
  Meghan Dorey, Archivist
  Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archives
  Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
  PO Box 1326
  202 S Eight Tribes Trail
  Miami, Oklahoma 74355
  (918) 542-1445 ext. 1305
  Fax: (918) 542-7260
  Email: archives@miamination.com

For information about how you can donate to the Miami University collection, or to learn about items in the collection:
  Janet Stuckey
  Myaamia Collection
  Miami University Library Special Collections
  Oxford, Ohio 45056
  (513) 529-3324
  Email: stuckejh@muohio.edu
For more information about ethnography and ethnographic methods, or to learn about other Myaamia Project and Miami Nation programs and resources, consider the following:

Kutsche, Paul. 1998. *Field Ethnography: a manual for doing cultural anthropology*. Prentice Hall. This book contains five field assignments in increasing difficulty for students of cultural anthropology. At the end of each section the author includes examples of work done by his previous students. Easy to read with exciting and educational exercises, this book is a great tool for those interested in practicing different ethnographic methods.

LeCompte, Margaret Diane and Jean Schensul. 1999. *Ethnographer’s Toolkit*. AltaMira Press. This series of seven brief books walks a novice ethnographer through the multiple, complex steps of doing ethnographic research. The books are simple and enjoyable to read. They include case studies, checklists, key points to remember and additional resources to use.


Visit the Myaamia Project website to learn about what other projects they are currently involved in: http://www.myaamiaprocess.com/

Visit the Miami Nation website to learn about community events, to contact Tribal Offices, and to access other useful information: http://www.miamination.com/