

# ITI FABVSSA

## Guide to using time at home to record oral family histories



Oral histories, or histories that are told through people's memories and life stories, have long been a part of Choctaw life. Before we developed a written version of our Choctaw language, we used oral histories to teach younger generations about our ancestors, philosophies of life, and values as Choctaw people. Oral histories told throughout the 1800s and 1900s that were written down have become valuable resources for learning about our past and how Choctaws experienced important moments in history. Since many people are spending more time at home, this is a great opportunity to record and write down your own family histories and stories.

This is a guide for conducting your own oral histories with members of your immediate household. This can be the start of a family project that you pass on to others in your family. To abide by social distancing guidelines, you can also use this guide to talk to people over the phone. Once everything is over, you can also use this guide with anyone. Kids can ask grandparents or grandparents can interview kids, whatever you want. Our ancestors knew that everyone has knowledge, so you don't have to limit who you ask. Children and younger generations also have knowledge to share.

If you'd like to save your interview, you can use a voice recording app on your phone. Just open the app and tap record. When you're done, tap the record button again. By recording your interview, you can go back and replay it for family members who were not there. After you are done, you can also use the recording to transcribe your interview as a document, print out the transcript and save it in a binder for your family to have. You would also have the file to share via email with other family members! Please make sure to ask the person you interviewed for their permission to share their interview with anyone.

Word processing document programs: Google Docs (free, need Gmail account), Microsoft Word, Office 365.

### INTERVIEWER TIPS:

#### Use these questions as guide; you don't need to ask every single question.

- Skip around with the questions. Ask the questions that you know the person you're interviewing can answer.
- Treat this as a conversation. You can ask these questions while baking cookies or gardening in your yard together if you want.
- Add your own questions; ask follow-up questions.
- Take breaks, conduct multiple sessions.
- It's okay if people don't have answers for a question. Sometimes people need time to think. You can always come back to the topic at a later time.

- Ask your interviewee if they have old photographs or keepsakes somewhere in the house that they want to tell you about. These items can help start a conversation or jog some memories. After the interview, you can store these pictures or items together with the copies of the interview after you transcribe and print them out.
- Have fun!
- If you have any questions or would like to share your interviews and have them archived with Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation, please contact [meganb@choctawnation.com](mailto:meganb@choctawnation.com).

When and where were you born?

Who are your parents?

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Did anyone else live with you growing up?

Do you have any nicknames? How did you get it?

What was your family like?

Who was an older person that you liked to spend time with when you were a kid? What made them special to you? Can you share some of your favorite memories?

What was an important teacher for you when you were growing up? (This can be an actual teacher, an elder, a neighbor, a parent or sibling – whoever you can consider someone who taught you a lot during your childhood.)

What kind of activities or chores did you do when you were growing up?

How would you describe yourself as a child?

What are some of your favorite memories from your childhood? Who did you spend time with when you were growing up?

Who were some of your childhood friends?

Who were some elders that you knew growing up?

What were some stories that elders shared when you were younger?

What were some of your favorite foods growing up? Who cooked it?

Can you describe your childhood home? Did you live in more than one place?

Who were your neighbors? What did they do?

Where did you go to high school? What are some of your favorite high school memories?

Who were some of your friends in high school? What are some of your favorite stories with them?

What was your first job?

Of all the jobs you've had, which one was your favorite and why?

What do you do for a living now?

What are some things you've learned from working?

What are the places that you've lived over the course of your life? Which place was your favorite and why?

[If married] How did you meet your partner? What are some of your favorite stories involving them?

[If they have children] How has being a parent changed you? What are some of your favorite stories with your children?

[If living in 101/2 counties] What changes have you seen in Choctaw Nation over the years?

What are some of your favorite family memories?

What did you want to be when you grew up and how was that journey?

What are some events in Choctaw Nation history that you have lived through?

Are you involved with any Choctaw cultural activities now? If yes, what made you interested in doing that?

How did you learn to [Choctaw language/art/craft that someone does here]? Who taught you?

What are some of the hardest things about doing [Choctaw language/art/craft that someone does.]?

What are some Choctaw traditions that you have passed down or encouraged others to do in your family?

What does being Choctaw mean to you?