FIRST NATIONS MEDIA ARCHIVES

Developing a Cultural Custodianship Plan and a Collection Management Plan

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

In the management of First Nations media archives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and Law are the guiding principles.

Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are essential cultural authorities at the centre of all decision making associated with management of the archives.

SECTION 1 CULTURAL CUSTODIANSHIP: GET CULTURAL PERMISSION AND BUILD CULTURAL TRUST

Principle: The Archive needs to be developed and operated according to Law.

In this section

Reading:
Planning for Cultural Custodianship

Action:
Develop and Implement a Cultural Custodianship Action Plan

1.1   Planning for Cultural Custodianship

Cultural custodianship lies at the heart of the Archive at all stages of its development of operation. The media objects in the Archive represent First Nations cultural laws and protocols as they apply within the Nation and Nations represented in the media. Production, viewing and listening to the Archive's media objects is bound by those laws and protocols.

Before any work on the archive commences, the cultural custodians relevant to the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property represented in the archive need to be brought together to work through the why's and wherefores' of the Archive.

Importantly this work flows through to the basic information needed for a Collection Management Plan. The shape and content of the discussion will be guided by local cultural approaches. However some points to think about for the discussion could include:

- Who is the Archive for?
- Who needs to be in charge of the Archive? For example, would it be useful to have an Archive coordinator with archiving skills working with an Archive Cultural Coordinator who oversights the cultural work of the Archive.

- Who needs to be in a cultural consultation group to give cultural help and advice when needed?

- Is the Archive in a culturally appropriate location, building or part of a building?

- What are the Laws that apply to the content. For example Sorry, Men's Only, Women's Only, Senior Law Men Only, Senior Women Only, Culturally Sensitive, Open for First Nations, Open for non-First Nations. Each local Nation will have its own way of looking at this.

- Who can work in the Archive and can they work with all or some of the media?

- Can "outsiders" access any or all of it? What about non-First Nations people – some of it, none of it?

- Physical layout – men's and women's separate spaces needed? Sorry viewing space needed?

- What are the "big" content groups that could help arrange content and making the Archive suitable for First Nations' ways of knowing. For example, Family, Law, Country, Men's, Women's.

- Can some media go online? If so, what media content is suitable for being online.

- Who can sort out any cultural disputes about use of the Archive.

Your Notes:

Action 1 Planning Template: Develop and Implement a Cultural Custodianship Action Plan

Action	Your Plan/Approach/Thoughts
Work out some initial questions relevant to your Archive (as a starting point only)	
Bring cultural custodians together and refine and adapt questions	
Record decisions/thoughts/ principles	

SECTION 2   DEVELOP A COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PLAN

> **Principle: The Archive's development and operation needs to be clear to community and to the organisation's staff in order to maintain trust and strengthen the Archive's operation.**

In this section

Readings:
- Why a Collection Management Plan is useful.
- What should be in the Plan.

Action:
- Develop a Collection Management Plan

2.1   Why a Collection Management Plan is Useful: some key questions a Plan can address

Are all our media objects Archive objects?

A Collection Management Plan describes what is considered as an Archive object (either analogue and/or digital) and what the administration and management are for preserving and providing access to those objects. Preserving archive objects securely into the future uses a lot of resources, so having a plan for what is going to be preserved into the future and what is just for the now, is vital.

It is tempting to include all the media your organisation has produced and/or collected over the years in your Archive. However, not all media is equal. You may have hundreds and hundreds of digital photos taken of the one event, all showing much the same content. Do you need them all? You will have to store them and catalogue them if you say yes. That may be a good decision on the basis of a family history approach for future generations, but it is helpful to have a plan for such decisions so that proper management of the photographs can take place.

Why is our Archive significant and is it important to fund it?

The Collection Management Plan is also an important document for describing the history of the Archive and its importance to the organisation and its community. The Plan establishes the significance of the Archive, and can be a support for funding applications.

How should we best look after our Archive?

A Collection Management Plan should set out the scope and policies of the Archive. Information collected in the Cultural Custodianship discussion phase is directly relevant to the Content Management Plan. In essence those discussions are the policies that will help guide the work of the Archive and build community trust and confidence in the operation of the Archive.

For analogue objects, that are highly sensitive but need to be digitised to preserve them, a Collection Management Plan will help sort of the decision about whether such media needs to be digitised in-house and with what staff. If in-house is the decision, then you will have a justification for the resourcing needed for the digitisation equipment, space, and skills training.

Who can use our Archive?

A Collection Management Plan also sets out who the Archive is for, and under what conditions it can be access. For example, if a non-community, non-First Nations person turns up at your Archive asking to see the media, the Collection Management Plan is the official guide to support staff with access requests.

What the Plan can't do

The Collection Management Plan will be at a big picture level and won't give all the answers to every little decision that is needed in the day to day operation of the Archive but it will provide some basic guidelines to help the organisation manage and preserve the Archive.

2.2   What goes into a Collection Management Plan

In this Manual, we recommend ten (10) basic sections for your Collection Management Plan. The Plan can be as simple or as detailed as suits your Archive and your organisation. You don't need to have all the sections if they are not relevant to your Archive.

The Plan can have a preamble with more details about the Archive's organisation, the Archive address, key contacts, the language groups and Nations associated with the Archive, cultural acknowledgements and more.

The Plan should be dated and reviewed from time to time, with each version of the Plan having a set time span. A Collection Management Plan is a living document and will change over time. Ideally you would want to have a Plan that could cover a 3-5 year period.

Collaboration and consultation

A Collection Management Plan is not written in isolation by a single staff member. It is a document produced through consultation with the Cultural Custodian group, relevant community members, the Board, and the organisation's staff.

Give it the time it deserves

Development of a Collection Management Plan creates awareness about the issues associated with managing an Archive, builds trust, engagement and support, and in many cases builds pride in the skills and resilience of the organisation in producing media over many years.

It is important to give time to the development of the Plan to ensure that there is widespread support for the work involved in the development of the Plan. Archive work can be demanding, resource-intensive and time-consuming, with the work not just for the current generation but also for the generations to come. Spending time at this stage will help with progressing the work of Archive development more effectively.

You may not be able to complete the whole Collection Management Plan as a "step" before you do anything else. It's more likely that you will develop it as you go along. The different sections can be used as kind of Archive development work plan. For example:

Recommended parts for your Collection Management Plan are:

1. The History of the Archive
2. What is Held in the Archive
3. The Size of the Collection
4. What Isn't Kept in the Archive
5. How Cultural Content in the Archive is Managed
6. Who Can the Archive and Conditions of Access
7. How the Content in the Archive is Recorded, Stored and Made Available
8. Who the Archive Staff Are
9. What Archive Plans and Policies are Place
10. Challenges (optional)
11. Archive Partners (optional)

The Collection Management Plan is written up as you work through developing your Archive. It's not necessary or possible to get it all done at the start before you start working with the Archive. You'll keep on coming back to it as you learn more about the Archive and decide on how you'll manage it.

- Parts 1, 5, 6 and 8 might be completed following the Cultural Custodian stage.
- Part 7 might be completed after the Platform Selection stage
- Parts 2 – 4 might be completed after the Inventory stage
- Part 9 would be completed as you roll out each policy area.

Your Notes:

SECTION 3   COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

PART 1 THE HISTORY OF OUR ARCHIVE	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: Your Archive probably grew organically over time simply by storing analogue and digital media that you have produced, and in some cases have had donated to you, or that you have purchased. By setting out a short history of how you came to call this collection of media the Archive you will get a sense of what is significant about your Archive.	Our Archive started in 1985 when we began producing video for our local BRACS TV station and storing VHS tapes of the productions we put to air. The videos were used for broadcast. Copies were also made and sold to community members. The Archive started as a cupboard that we stored the VHS videos in, and as it grew bigger we moved it into a room of its own. In the late 1990s the media went digital and we began to store productions on DVDs and CDs, and then onto digital drives. In 1995 a large donation of photographs of ceremony from the 1940s was donated. This has become a very important collection for cultural and family history purposes. BRACS was an important program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island self-determination and self-representation. Our Archive represents the outcomes of the program from its beginnings to current times where our organisation is also producing for online content as well as regional and national TV and radio.
PART 2 WHAT WE HOLD IN OUR ARCHIVE	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: This part sets out your "policy" on what is considered an Archive object. It can de as detailed or as simple as you like. It will help sort out - through collaboration with your cultural custodians and community – what are the major media items you want to store and preserve for the future. This stage is a very important "sorting" point. It provides the opportunity to ask the question about	Our Archive contains analogue and digital media objects produced by our organisation from 1985 and added to continuously through our media productions activities. Since 1998 our media objects are digital. The media items we preserve and maintain in the Archive are: • Final cuts of all productions (video and audio) no matter the topic. • Final versions of all music tracks and albums. • Log files of all radio shows.

whether you will "save" everything no matter what, or whether you will make some selection decisions about what is important to preserve.

Analogue objects are going to deteriorate and analogue media players are going to become increasingly difficult to source beyond 2025. Digitisation is a long process. Is every analogue object important enough to preserve?

Digital objects need storage space, maintenance of the drive storage, back up, and viewing functionality. Is every digital media file important enough to take up long term storage? It is also important to make decisions on what "versions" of digital media you are preserving – full resolution/uncompressed plus lower quality versions, or just full resolution/uncompressed versions.

This can be a "backwards and forwards" stage, so give it time. You can look at it, by thinking about it in "topic" terms. For example, all Jukurrpa, ceremony, and stories from old people that have been edited into single productions will be preserved. Plus anything that shows the history of our organisation, and the history of our communities. Or you might think about in "object" terms. For example, production final cuts, 20 representative photos of each Sports Weekend or community event, log files of all "to-air" radio shows.

- For community and sports events: a variable number of representative photos as selected by our archive staff in consultation with our Board and cultural custodian group.
- In the case of rough cuts and rushes – only media assessed as culturally and linguistically significant content by our archive staff in consultation with our Board and cultural custodian group.

Our Archive also contains:

- A small amount of donated media, most commonly photos, with content relevant to our media areas as set out above.
- Some purchased productions from other First Nations media producers, primarily used for training purposes.

Our Archive has an active repatriation program, and whilst we have not been able to secure the return of the original media, some collecting agencies have provided digital access copies which we maintain and preserve. Our Archive recognises the ICIP rights of the knowledge and law holders represented in the media.

In the case of the donated, purchased and repatriated media, the copyright of the media lies with other persons and organisations, whilst the copyright of all other media lies with our organisation.

The first 100 productions we produced are stored at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) for preservation purposes and are not part of the NFSA media access program, nor are NFSA staff permitted to access the media. Digital access copies of those productions are kept by our Archive.

Due to the nature of First Nations media organisations, the majority of the Archive will be media objects produced by the organisation. However, also give some time to considering what media objects you will accept if donated – for example old photos from non-First Nations people who have worked or lived in community. If you have developed a partnership with another organisation to store analogue media objects in archival storage conditions, this is the place to say it.	
PART 3 THE SIZE OF OUR ARCHIVE COLLECTION	**An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)**
What goes here: This is where you add numbers to complement the information in Part 2. Breakdown the collection into analogue and digital numbers split across media types. This will help with identifying to some degree the extent of work needed for work such as digitisation, as well as estimate the digital storage space you will need. (See later in this Manual for an estimator). There is no real need to add the number of items into the section, but make sure you record it on a template somewhere as the size of the Archive is a critical issue in storage and digitisation planning.	Our Archive Collection comprises: **Analogue media** 125 VHS tapes 45 SVHS tapes. 350 music audiocassettes 110 audio recordings on cassettes 1020 colour and black and white photos. **Digital media as at June 2019** 1010 video productions as digital files 500 digital access files of the video productions 373 DVDs - Over 10,000 digital images 560 music tracks as digital files - Over 1,000 hours of radio show log files

	• 145 music CDs • 325 audio recordings of interviews as digital files
PART 4 WHAT ISN'T KEPT IN OUR ARCHIVE	**An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)**
What goes here: This is a straightforward part, and essentially describes what hasn't been included in Part 2. You can choose to leave it out, but it might be useful should there be a need to specifically name something for management or technical purposes.	Betacam and Umatic versions of our early productions are not held in the Archive due to a lack of players. They are stored through a formal agreement at the NFSA. The agreement restricts access to the media to anyone other than the persons agreed to by our Cultural Custodian group.
PART 5 HOW CULTURAL CONTENT IN MEDIA OBJECTS IS MANAGED BY OUR ARCHIVE	**An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)**
What goes here: This part will be informed by the Cultural Custodian consultation and its outcomes. Information in this part includes information about: • The labels for tagging cultural content - open, sorry, restricted women's, restricted men's, etc • Who makes those decisions • How consultation is managed • How cultural complaints are addressed It also sets out the principles relevant to Indigenous and Cultural Intellectual Property.	The media objects in our Archive are managed according to the Laws of our communities. The content of the media objects in our Archive are Indigenous and Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP). The copyright of the media objects as published objects lies with the production company or person of any given media as set out in the Copyright Act. No media objects will be made available for broadcast or publishing by third parties without consultation with ICIP owners. In consultation with the Archive's Cultural Custodians, all media objects are to be tagged in the inventory and/or cataloguing system with cultural viewing restrictions as follows:

If considered important, it may be useful to set out the conditions for digitisation of culturally restricted analogue media objects.	**Open**: Can be viewed by any First Nations or non-First Nations person without any restrictions **Warning**: Open media but First Nations people should exercise care in viewing or listening in case of deceased content that has not yet been notified to the Archive. In the case of deceased content, people are advised to contact the Archive Coordinators on ## #### #### **Sorry**: Media that contains known deceased content and that has not been released for Warning viewing by cultural custodians and/or family. Viewing and listening needs approval from the Archive Coordinators or family. **Restricted Women's**: Media that can only be viewed by the women's group(s) approved by the cultural custodians. **Restricted Men's:** Media that can only be viewed by the men's group(s) approved by the cultural custodians **Restricted Sensitive:** Media that can only be viewed upon permission from the Archive Coordinators (who in turn consult with the Cultural Custodians). Viewing or listening arrangements by community members must be managed according to the media tag. Culturally restricted media objects that require off-site digitisation will be taken off-country only with the permission of the relevant law and knowledge holders. Where required due to the sensitivity and importance of the content, law and knowledge holders may be approved to accompany the media objects to ensure its cultural safety. Within the Archive there are to be protocols for which staff can handle and/or view media. The Archive Coordinators will assign staff to handling media objects according to the cultural position of the staff member as guided by the Cultural Custodians group.

PART 6 WHO CAN USE OUR ARCHIVE AND THE CONDITIONS OF ACCESS	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: Who views and listens to Archive objects is a critical aspect of proper cultural management of media objects of course. In part this is managed through the media tags set out through the Part 4 process. However, there will be requests for special access at times and it is useful to set out access guidelines for categories of users.	Viewing of and listening permissions for Archive media objects will generally be managed through media tagging to restrict access as needed. Community access to the Archive is available in the Viewing and Listening Space. Community members are not permitted to access the Archive storage spaces without the Archive Coordinators permission. In relation to specialised access requests from ***non-First Nations persons*** to visit our physical Archive the following arrangements apply: **Persons other than researchers** • Entry to the physical Archive is not permitted. • Listening to and viewing of media on our online platforms is only permissible for media objects tagged as Open. Our online platforms must have viewing/listening restrictions. **Researchers** • Written/emailed application to the organisation is required, setting out reasons, duration, and content being sought. • Any access granted must be within conditions set out in the approval. • An access fee may be charged. **Filmmakers, broadcasters, etc requests for footage** • Written/emailed application to the organisation is required, setting out footage sought. • Any provision of footage must be within conditions set out in the approval and will be priced according to industry standards as well as any negotiated fee for the relevant cultural custodians.

PART 7 HOW WE RECORD WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVE, STORE IT AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: The tools and software used for recording what is in the Archive and making it available, need to be appropriate to your staff skills base and the expectations of your community for access and cultural management. In addition, the Collection Management Plan provides an opportunity to make decisions on whether now or in the future you want to be able to share records with other Archives you approve for sharing. This doesn't mean that you need to share the media of course but you may choose to do so for some media. This can be useful when neighbouring Archives have common language groups and Nations. If your Archive wants to share records now or in the future the tools you choose need to use "archive industry standard" fields and ways of describing content. Preservation for the future also means that both analogue and digital media need to be properly stored. The Collection Management Plan is a useful stage to address these matters.	Our Archive will be developed as far as possible according to archive cataloguing standards and according to our cultural access protocols. Our cataloguing and access platforms: • Ensure that our cultural access protocols are embedded in cataloguing and community access platforms as the main priority. • Enable implementation of the First Nations Media Australia metadata profiles for Video, Audio, Still Images and Music. • Ensure that for the metadata fields relevant to subjects, languages, and places, AIATSIS and AustLang vocabularies are used, complemented by our own terms where those terms aren't appropriate or accommodated within the AIATSIS and AustLang vocabularies. Accordingly the: • Cataloguing software we use is <name of software> • Community access software we use is <name of software> • The subject thesaurus we use is the AIATSIS Subject Pathway. • The place thesaurus we use is the AIATSIS Place Pathway. • The language and nation thesaurus we use is AustLang. **Community access** The media we use for community access are: • **For digitised and born digital media**: Compressed file versions • **For analogue media**: access is only through permission of the Archive Coordinators using safe viewing and listening methods.

	Preservation
	• **For digitised and born digital media**: Uncompressed files are not available for community access. They are stored and maintained using the <name of the digital storage solution>. Download of the digital preservation files is only with the permission of the Archive Coordinators. **For analogue media**: Storage is in the temperature and dust controlled Archive Vault. Access to the Vault is only with permission of the Archive Coordinators. The first 100 analogue media objects produced by our organisation are store at the NFSA.
PART 8 WHO OUR ARCHIVE STAFF ARE	**An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)**
What goes here: This part is *not* about setting out the names of people. Instead it is for setting out the general principles for staffing and may identify key positions. As for other parts it can be as detailed or as simple as needed.	Our Archive will employ two Archive Coordinators – one for women's side and one for men's side. The Cultural Custodians group, along with the organisation's senior management will have a role in approving the persons filling these roles. The Archive Coordinators will work with senior management in identifying appropriate First Nations persons for Archive roles according to skills as well as cultural attributes. Non-First Nations staff may work in the Archive under the control of the Archive Coordinators with regard to cultural matters.

PART 9 WHAT ARCHIVE PLANS AND POLICIES WE HAVE IN PLACE	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: The Collection Management Plan can't set out everything. This part is to provide links and references to other documents that guide the management and operation of the Archive.	Our Archive will have and regularly review the following Archive policies and plans: • Cataloguing Platforms and Standards • Conservation Plan • Digital Storage Plan • Digitisation Plan • Disaster Management • Disposal Policy • Donation Management • Staffing Policies and Plans will be developed by the Archive Coordinators in consultation with the Cultural Custodians group and senior management, and will be approved by the Board.
PART 10 (Optional) OUR CHALLENGES	
What goes here: This optional part may be useful for setting out plans and programs for addressing weaknesses and gaps, or realising opportunities, In the management and operation of the Archive. It can support forward thinking for funding as well as building suitable partnerships.	Our Archive has three key challenges: **Storage of analogue media**. We lack dust and temperature controlled storage. **Analogue media players**. Our analogue media players are failing and replacements are difficult to obtain. **Bandwidth**. Lack of sufficient bandwidth is compromising uploads of uncompressed digital media files.

PART 11 (Optional) OUR ARCHIVE PARTNERS	An example of what this might include (not an actual Archive)
What goes here: This part may be useful for documenting organisations with whom your Archive is doing collaborative Archive work, and may set out the type and extent of collaboration. This can be useful for transparency with the Cultural Custodians group and community members.	Our Archive partners are: **Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS):** provision of analogue media objects handling and conservation advice and support under the control of the Archive Coordinators. **National Film and Sound Archive:** The first 100 productions we produced are stored at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) for preservation purposes and are not part of the NFSA media access program, nor are NFSA staff permitted to access the media.