

# MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



*Serving those who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas*

## Learning from American Indian Oral Traditions

*By Briana L. Diaz, member of Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and historian in the NSDAR (Nat'l Society Daughters of the American Revolution) Department of Archives and History*

Oral tradition is the oldest type of historical inquiry. We don't know exactly when humans first began to communicate their knowledge of the past, but we believe they did so thousands of years ago, before they learned to read and write. For indigenous people, oral tradition is a living historical record that has been vital to preserving their cultural and family histories.

Though hundreds of American Indian tribal nations in the United States have their own language and culture, they share an emphasis on basing their native culture on oral traditions. Teaching stories to a younger generation has been a widely accepted practice among American Indians because of a mutual belief

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## Beginning Genealogy: Easy as 1, 2, 3

*Brenda Leyndyke,*

*Michigan Genealogical Society*

Researching one's family history can be an exciting way to discover more about yourself and your family. If you take time and start with a few simple practices, you will be well on your way to successful research.

Brenda Leyndyke, Genealogist and Blogger, and Corresponding Secretary of the Michigan Genealogical Society, provides tips on getting started. *See p. 3.*



*Courtesy photo, Escanaba High School seniors spend time with a Northwoods Place Assisted Living home resident. The senior English students took part in a special project that allowed them to interview and create biographies about a local senior citizen. Students, shown from left with an unidentified Northwoods resident, are Kassie Holsten, Veronica Williams, Courage Krueger, Zach Lancour, and Walker Villeneuve.*

## Writing Project Pairs Students with Elderly

*Haley Gustafson, Staff Writer, Daily Press, Escanaba*

Senior English students at Escanaba High School took part in a unique project last fall that benefitted both the high school seniors and senior citizens in the community. The project, "Senior vs. Senior," allowed the young and elderly to come together to learn about each other and have an "authentic writing experience," according Tammy Wiles, English teacher. Students in her class, along with those in classes of Lauren Bishop and Mary DeMeres, interviewed senior residents at Northwoods Place Assisted Living in Escanaba.

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## About the Michigan Oral History Association

### Mission

The mission of the Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) is to provide effective cooperation and communication among persons, programs, and institutions concerned with the techniques, uses, and promotion of oral history in Michigan. Based on the foundation of the Michigan Oral History Council organized in 1979, the name of the non-profit corporation was changed to Michigan Oral History Association in 1994.

### Who We Are

MOHA serves people interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas. MOHA promotes and educates about oral history, as a resource for capturing on electronic media, attitudes and emotions not otherwise preserved. The pool of presenters includes experienced oral history practitioners, archivists, database managers, video producers, authors, professional transcribers, journalists and teachers. Presenters participate in history-related conference sessions, conduct workshops, and serve as facilitators for state and regional forums.

**Request a Workshop!** Tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience! Common topics presented: the importance of oral histories, how to organize a project, how to conduct oral histories, technology, forms to use, best practices, and archiving your oral histories. For help planning a workshop, contact Geneva Kebler Wiskemann at (517) 321-1746 or [workshops@MichiganOHA.org](mailto:workshops@MichiganOHA.org).

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### How Can MOHA Help You?

Workshops, information, advice and resources are available to both beginning and experienced oral historians. Forums provide exchange with others who may have similar problems, obstacles, and opportunities. Established or in-progress oral history projects can benefit from MOHA's ability to promote and publicize initiatives and resources.

### Become a Member!

As a member, you will receive:

- The MOHA Newsletter
- Mentoring and assistance with your oral history project
- Opportunities to participate in local and statewide conferences and workshops
- News of MOHA publications and other related resources
- Updates on oral history innovations and current projects in the state
- Opportunity to join a MOHA committee

### Membership Dues:

Individual:	\$25
Institutional:	\$50
Patron:	\$50
Sponsor:	\$100
Student:	\$15

*Send to: MOHA,  
5580 W. State Rd., Lansing MI 48906-9325.*

**OHA Conference Dates Extended --** Due to the high number of submissions, the 2018 Annual Meeting will be held October 10 through the morning of Sunday, October 14. Don't forget your passport! Information about the meeting- including where to stay, what to eat and do, and how to get there- can be found on our [website](http://www.oralhistory.org), [www.oralhistory.org](http://www.oralhistory.org).

The 2018 Annual Meeting International, Presenter, and Non-Presenter scholarship applications are open. The deadline for International and Presenter scholarships is April 20; deadline for Non-Presenter scholarships is May 15. The OHA gives out more than \$10,000 in scholarships each year.

The 2018 Call for Posters is now open! The submission portal can be found [here](#). The deadline for posters is July 13, but submissions will be reviewed and accepted on a rolling basis.

## Beginning Genealogy: Easy as 1, 2, 3

### 1. Start with yourself and work backwards, one generation at a time.

Gather documents and records about yourself. Many genealogists start with finding birth and marriage documents for themselves and their children, if applicable. Researching in a family group keeps one from getting overwhelmed with information. Next, do the same for your parents, then grandparents, and so on, adding death records as you find them. Birth, marriage and death records are the minimum that you will want to find. For beginners, these are the big three. Use pedigree charts and family group sheets to keep your information organized. Many are available online. Family Tree Magazine has many free forms. (<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/freeforms/basicforms/>) Lastly, keep track of where you found the information. These sources will be helpful in the future and make your research credible.

### 2. Get it while you can!

Unfortunately, we don't live forever and neither do our ancestors. Take advantage of the time you have with your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives and gather time sensitive material. Ask questions. Who has the family bible? Who has scrapbooks of family information? Who in the family is interested in family history? Take time to talk to your aging relatives. They have wonderful stories to tell. You might find the one piece of information you need to fill in your research gaps. Take good notes or audio/video tape your conversations, save emails and letters. Your smart phone or a good portable scanner can capture photographs and other family ephemera. Add the information you gathered to your pedigree charts and family group sheets.

### 3. Start your research.

The information you have collected about your family will give you clues where to look for more information. This is the time to start looking for records, online and onsite at research locations. You will be tempted to tackle all the death certificates on [seekingmichigan.org](http://seekingmichigan.org) at once but starting with one or two families at a time is more manageable. This allows you to take good notes and document source information. Census records (1790-1940) are available online and a good first record to look for. If you think researching family history is something you would like to explore further and plan on taking your research back many generations, a good software program is your next step. To see what features are available on these programs look at

<http://www.toptenreviews.com/software/home/best-genealogy-software/>

Researching your family history will reward you in ways you can't imagine. The excitement of finding your ancestors will motivate you to keep looking for more. Just remember not everything is online. You will need to visit libraries, archives, courthouses, cemeteries, churches, and other repositories.

One last tip, join your local genealogical society. Your society is a great place to learn about records, resources, research practices, and more. Following these tips will make your family history journey easy as 1, 2, 3.

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### National Genealogical Society 2018 Family History Conference - Explore Your Ancestors' Paths to the Past: May 2-5, Grand Rapids

The conference program will focus on ancestors' migration of Americans moving west and immigrants coming from overseas through Canada to settle and develop the Midwest, with an emphasis on the states that border the Great Lakes. Lectures will enhance your proficiency as a researcher and your methodological and analytic skills. Presentations will broaden your understanding about your ancestors' ethnicity, occupation, religion, military experience, economic status, and associations, which will also help provide background for family oral histories. 3

[registration@ngsgenealogy.org](mailto:registration@ngsgenealogy.org).

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that knowledge is something to be shared and not owned by one person. Elders are highly esteemed and recognized as the “keepers of history,” sharing stories, memories and traditions with the next generation.

Storytelling is not the only method of retaining family history; a wide variety of oral traditions, including eyewitness accounts, poems, songs, choreography, speeches, and instances of spoken word rituals and traditions, contribute to the collective identity of a particular tribe.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most academics researching indigenous people did not accept oral history as a reliable historical record. American Indians were viewed as a primitive people who had no historical sense to explain their own tribal history. Fortunately, a change in the scholarly community’s perspective during the 1960s and 1970s opened up a growing respect for cultural diversity. Today, archival institutions view oral history as a primary source that supplements their collections.

Ready to record your own family’s oral history? See below for ways to start collecting stories and uncovering genealogical information. But more important than confirming details of your family tree, you’ll be able to develop a stronger bond with relatives and make memories to share with the next generation.

## 7 Tips for Oral History Interviews

1 – Schedule a time to speak with older family members, perhaps at a family reunion or during the holidays.

2 – Prepare a list of questions to help begin the conversation, but be open to the talk going in different and unplanned directions. Ask about the origin of family names, ancestors’ homes, customs of the time period, how one met his or her spouse, habits, distinctive dress or childhood hobbies.

3 - Though a pencil and paper are all the tools that are required, it’s also a good idea to record the conversation. Take pictures, too. You’ll always treasure a voice recording and images of a love one.

4 - Look through family memorabilia and photo albums together as you chat. These items will trigger memories.

5 - Be a good listener. Don’t interject a lot of your own stories, unless you bring one up to spark a conversation.

6 - Don’t think of it as a formal interview; think of it as a chance to spend quality family time together.

7 - Consider technology aids, such as StoryWorth ([www.storyworth.com](http://www.storyworth.com)), a website that helps people collect family stories. When you sign up, the site sends weekly emailed story prompts – interesting, out-of-the-ordinary questions – and your loved one writes or records the answers. At the end of the year, the stories will be bound in a hardcover book.

Wayne State University National Digital Stewardship Alliance  
Student Chapter’s 4th Colloquium

### **"Digital Preservation at Your Institution: Challenges, Projects, and Collaboration"**

April 27, 2018, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Purdy Kresge Library, 5265 Cass Ave, Detroit, MI 48202

Looking for students, alumni, and professionals to speak or present a poster about digital preservation projects, specifically, the challenges they faced and whether any collaboration occurred. Also speakers to present research, case studies, and approaches to digital preservation. Questions and registration at [wsundsa@gmail.com](mailto:wsundsa@gmail.com). <https://wsustudentndsa.wordpress.com/>

### **Personal Stores of Immigration**

*Tuesday, April 17, 12:30 pm  
Delta Township District Library and  
Capital Area District Libraries.*

Listen to personal and family stories of immigration from a panel of area immigrants. Hear why they came to America and what life has been like since their arrival.



## Officers

### President, Jim Cameron

Social Studies Consultant for the Michigan Department of Education. Jim previously served as President of MOHA for eight years. After serving on the National Council for History Education Board for two terms he was appointed Interim Executive Director. Jim presented on a variety of topics at over 50 Teaching American History colloquia in 22 different states. In 2010 Cameron earned the Gilder Lehrman Teacher of the Year Award for Michigan, following 40 years of teaching. Other history activities include, Co-Creator of Historical Society of Michigan's Center for Teaching Michigan History, HSM board member, chair of HSM's Education and Conference Committee, and co-chair of the Local History Conference. Jim Cameron's book, "Voices over the Valley, An Oral History of Saline Valley Farms," earned HSM'S Award of Merit in 2005.

### Vice President, Michael Laney

Media Digitization & Metadata Specialist, Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University. Michael holds a Master of Arts in Medieval Studies from Fordham University and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Mississippi. He works on retrospective digitization of a variety of formats at the Voice Library including cassettes, transcription discs, and reel-to-reel tapes and has been involved in recording oral histories and oral interviews for the MSU Faculty Emeriti Association Oral History Project and the African Studies Interview Series.

### Secretary, Geneva Kebler Wiskemann

Founder of the Michigan Oral History Council (parent title of MOHA), former MOHA President and long-time Secretary and newsletter production, she preserves the history of MOHA. She commits all MOHA records to the Walter P. Reuther Library of Wayne State University. She maintains the headquarters of MOHA, and serves the Education Committee by conducting workshops, chairing conferences, lecturing, and responding to queries.

### Treasurer, Brad Jarvis

Associate Professor, History, Saginaw Valley State University. Research interests focus on colonial and early national history of Great Lakes including Michigan as territory. His "The Brothertown Nation of Indians: Land Ownership & Nationalism in Early America, 1740-1840" examines origins & experiences of Native community. He created a Public History minor at SVSU to introduce students to cultural resources management, museum studies, archives management, historic preservation, and oral history. He has worked closely with the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History, the Public Libraries of Saginaw, and the Bay County Historical Society on various local history and archaeology projects, many of which have involved active student participation.

## Board Members

### Newsletter Editor, Marci Cameron

Retired as Program Director, Michigan Department of Community Health, and life-long career in staff development and writing in long-term care, gerontology, and dementia care. Formerly instructor in Health Care Management at Concordia University and Spring Arbor University. Curriculum writer, senior newspaper editor and staff newsletter editor.

### Web Master, Tim Streasick

Information Resources Assistant, Dudenstadt Center, University of Michigan Library Operations Group. Tim has followed a lifelong passion for public history through several positions, from volunteering at his hometown heritage museum in North Branch, MI to serving as the student archivist for the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, NE.

### Camron Michael Amin

Professor, University of Michigan-Dearborn. Joined the faculty in 1997, Camron currently

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## MOHA Board Members

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serves as the History Discipline Representative, Coordinator of the Middle East Studies Certificate Program, CASL Representative of the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects Governing Board, Principal Investigator for the Michigan Iranian American Oral History Project and Program Chair for the 2018 Association for Iranian Studies Conference.

### **Tammy Barnes**

Material Culture Manager, Kalamazoo Valley Museum. Tammy oversees the collection and preservation of the Museum's oral history collections. She has worked in public history for over 20 years and holds an MA in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program. She has directed several oral history projects including one centered on Coldwater's Yemeni population. While working in New Jersey, she directed two projects related to Salem County's African American History, one of which was given an Award of Merit by the American Association of State and Local History.

### **William R. Gulley**

Bill has been a member of MOHA since 1990, and has served as membership committee chairperson and Treasurer since 1992. He shares his expertise as an oral history practitioner and project manager in MOHA workshops. Bill joined the staff of the Walter P. Reuther Library (WPRL), Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, in 1989 and spent ten years as Archivist for three major labor unions. His service included LAN supervisor/systems administrator for the WPRL specializing in developing databases for the physical and intellectual control of holdings. He partnered with Ronee Francis in developing the Michigan Oral History database sponsored by MOHA and the WPRL. Currently he contributes a rich mix of knowledge and experience to the City of Detroit.

*MOHA Board Member Information*

*Continued in Summer 2018*



### **Black Voices in the Copper Country**

*Derhun Sanders poses with MOHA Board member Lindsay Hiltunen at the Michigan Tech Archives after participating in the Black Voices oral history project in 2017. Sanders is a member of the Board of Trustees of Michigan Technological University as well as an alumnus.*

The Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections will be collecting oral histories for the Black Voices in the Copper Country project in summer and fall 2018. The Black Voices oral history project is part of an award-winning research project to investigate the social and cultural history of the Upper Peninsula and Michigan Tech. In addition, University Archivist Lindsay Hiltunen will be presenting on the Black Voices oral history project as well as methodology and best practices for collecting underrepresented voices through oral history at the National Council on Public History annual meeting in Las Vegas, April 18-21. If you are interested in the project, please contact the Michigan Tech Archives at (906) 487-2505 or by emailing [copper@mtu.edu](mailto:copper@mtu.edu).

## Escanaba Seniors

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“It sparked a lot of conversation and relationships with the residents themselves, said Wiles. “They weren’t writing for me, they were writing for the resident.”

The project coincided with the senior English students reading the novel, “The Life We Bury,” by Allen Eskens. The novel showcases a story where the main character interviews a nursing home resident for a college writing assignment.

Wiles explained that sometimes teenagers can be caught up in technology and not have quality one-on-one conversations with each other and others around them. Having the opportunity to sit down with someone they don’t know and have a genuine conversation with them was an experience both the students and seniors truly enjoyed, she added.

Before sitting down with the senior citizens, students were given a card with a brief description of who they would be talking to including their hobbies, if they have any grandchildren, and other facts to help spur questions and conversations. The seniors in high school then hit the research, figuring out exactly how to put together an oral history piece.

Following the first sit down with their respective residents, the students wrote summaries from the notes they had taken during the 40-minute interviews. The summaries were then compiled into a

*“I never realized how interesting it is to hear about the lives of elders,” said high school senior Carlie Mattonen. “I have a tremendous amount of respect for the residents and staff at Northwoods.”*

biography about the resident. Wiles explained that the three teachers and Northwoods Place employees Gale DeShambo and Lisa Hurkman worked to organize and assign students to residents to be interviewed.

Not only was the experience a valuable interaction, it also helped prepare the high school seniors for future college writing courses they may encounter, added Wiles.

At the conclusion of the project, Northwoods Place held a closing party for residents, the students, and anyone else interested in attending. During the party the students read aloud their biographies they had written to the residents. Some residents learned things about fellow residents they didn’t know, adding it helped bond some of the residents.

Escanaba High School senior Carlie Mattonen said the opportunity to speak with residents at the assisted living home was life changing. “I never realized how interesting it is to hear about the lives of elders,” she said.

Jesse Schafer, an Escanaba High School senior, said she wishes the class had more time to spend with senior citizens. “It was a great experience and a lot of fun,” said Schafer.

**Promote Your Project!  
Submit newsletter or website  
features, ideas, information,  
and news to:  
[newsletter@michiganoha.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganoha.org).**

***MOHA membership dues now due!  
Please consider renewing  
to keep getting news and to  
promote your project!***

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### **Annual Midwestern History Conference June 6, 2018, Grand Rapids, Michigan**

The Midwestern History Association (MHA) and the Hauenstein Center at Grand Valley State University will hold a conference that continues a discussion designed to spark and sustain a revival of Midwestern studies in American historiography. To become a member of MHA, contact Michael Skaggs at [skaggs@michaela@gmail.com](mailto:skaggs@michaela@gmail.com).



**MOHA Board of Directors**

*From left: Martha Bloomfield (guest), Melanie Shell-Weiss, William Winkel, Michael Laney, Camron Michael Amin, Tim Gleisner, Marci Cameron, William Gulley, Rick Peiffer, Sherry Tuffin (guest), Jim Cameron, Geneva Kebler Wiskemann, Brad Jarvis. Missing: Tammy Barnes Apmann, Lindsay Hiltunen, Jordan Karlis, John Revitte, Karen Schaumann-Beltran, Jane Karoline Vieth. Biographical information on MOHA Board members begin on p. 5. Photograph by Margaret Hehr*

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