



Oral History Interview Guideline

INTERVIEWEE'S HOME

Step by step guideline on how to conduct an oral history interview at the interviewee's home. **Double click on the link below to view the interview checklist and print a copy to take with you to the interview.**

[Oral History Interview Checklist Interviewee's Home](#)

Preparing for the interview:

- Locate an individual who has knowledge of local histories within Charlotte County and inquire if they would like to participate in an Oral History Interview.
- Decide what type of interview you need to conduct (Example: Location, Life Story, Historical Moment they witnessed, etc.)
- Set up a time, date to meet. If possible, sit down and do research on your interviewee ahead of time. When you reach out to make the appointment try and engage in casual conversation with them which may give you leads for the interview questions.
- Create a script. **Double click on the link below for tips on formulating questions and creating a script.**

[How to Formulate Questions and Create a Script](#)

- Send a copy of the script along with a copy of the "Oral History Interview Release" form to the subject via mail or email. This allows the interviewee to be prepared with responses and possible supporting

documentation as well as help them decide on what type of recordings, if any, they may agree to for the interview. **Double click on the link below to view, fill-out and/or print our release form.**

[Oral History Interview Release](#)

Setting up:

- Keep in mind the interviewee is volunteering to help you with oral histories so remember to show them respect. You may even know them quite well, but it is still a formal interview, and it is important to act professionally. Make sure to arrive on time, dress appropriately and be prepared with any information, items and/or equipment you may need. (Example: recorder, notebook and/or handwritten notes form, questions, SD cards, etc.) **Double click on the link below to view and print a “Handwritten Notes Form.”**

[Oral History Interview – Handwritten Notes](#)

- If the interviewee offers, take the time to have coffee/tea, sit back and engage in casual conversation. This will allow the interviewee to relax and become more comfortable before the actual interview begins.
- Always allow the interviewee to show you where they would like to sit and conduct the interview. Make sure there is a comfortable distance between the two of you while remaining within 2.5 meters of each other. Sitting too far apart may cause you to raise your voice, lose eye contact and/or affect the quality of your recording.
- Place your audio recorder on a flat surface in between you and the interviewee. If you're recording video, mount the camera on a tripod and set it up to one side to make it less conspicuous while still capturing as much as the interviewees face as possible. You also want to tape them against a plain backdrop in a well-lit room. Make sure the

light shines at them from the front (**Do Not** record them with their back to a window). Beware of things nearby that may spoil your recording.

(Example: background noise, cell phones, lawnmowers, fans, etc.)

Remember to turn off cell phones and if possible close windows and doors. Evaluate the equipment before starting the interview to ensure it is in working condition.

- Before beginning the formal interview ask the interviewee if they have any questions. You should have already conversed with the interviewee before the day of the interview, but it is important to make sure they understand the purpose of the interview. They must also give their permission to obtain any recordings and they must agree to how the recordings will be used in the future and sign the release form.
- Reassure the interviewee that they are in control of the process and do not have to talk about anything they don't want to.

Conducting the interview:

- Once you are both comfortable and the steps above have been completed, start your recording, and begin the interview.
- The first step of the interview is the introduction. Clearly state your name, the interviewee's name, the location of the interview, the date, and the purpose of the interview. (Example: This is Kelly McLean interviewing Jane Doe at Charlotte County Archives in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick on January 10, 2022. The purpose of this interview is to conduct oral histories collections/research for the Canada New Horizons for Seniors Program. Providing this information at the beginning of the recording allows anyone listening in the future to understand why the interview was conducted and how dependable the information is.

- Begin the interview with simple biographical questions to make the interviewee comfortable and to help get the conversation flowing. Topics like where they went to school, what they remember of the town back when, what historical events do they remember being present for and how did they feel about those events they witnessed. These questions will also help to provide context.
- Move on to more in depth and open-ended questions. These should be who, what, when, why and how questions that encourage explanations instead of one-word answers. This technique will help you get the most information out of your interviewee including their personal feelings and experiences. Since these questions can result in long answers make sure to ask them one at a time to prevent overwhelming the Interviewee.
- Do not be afraid to go off script. Allow the conversation to flow and direct your questions to where you feel you are getting the best feedback from the interviewee. No interview ever really goes according to plan. You must be able to question topics that come up unexpectedly and/or change the order of your questions when needed. You can always return to your script later.
- Do not interrupt the interviewee when they are speaking. You do not want to stop their train of thought and miss key information. Using your notebook, write down key points of interest, comments, and/or questions you want to revisit and wait for a natural break in the conversation to bring them up again.
- Ask for the spelling of names for people and places when needed. This will help ensure your information is accurate.
- Take the time to explain any visual clues or gestures. If they have any photographs or documents note which one, they are referring to. This will help ensure anyone listening in the future understands exactly

what that interviewee is describing and stops valuable information from getting lost.

- Your job as the interviewer is to be a careful listener and observer so you should speak as little as possible when the interview is taking place. Try not to talk about yourself while the recorder is rolling and show the interviewee that you are listening using your body language. Make sure to sit up straight, maintain eye contact, smile, and nod whenever it is appropriate to do so. The interviewee is more likely to share their story with you if they feel you are interested in what they are speaking about.
- Be impartial and non-judgmental. If you disagree with the interviewee's point of view, make sure to be respectful of their opinion and do not challenge it. Allow them to finish their thoughts and if they pause to reflect or think of what they want to say next make sure to give them the time they need to collect their thoughts and then continue.
- Do not feel bad if you forget any questions you wanted to ask. It is okay to take time during the interview to look at your notes and gaze over your prepared questions.

Wrapping things up:

- Always be respectful of the interviewee's time. If they asked to finish at a specific time, keep an eye on the clock. If you run out of time, check with the interviewee if they are comfortable continuing. If there is no set end time, pay attention to their body language. If they seem to be getting tired or the interview has slowed down and come to a natural conclusion, politely bring it to an end. The interview will not be productive if either the interviewer or the interviewee is too tired. You can always schedule a follow up interview if you need to.

- Try your best to end the interview on a positive note and allow the interviewee to have the last word. A wide range of topics will have been covered during the interview and asking the interviewee if they have any questions for you before you leave allows them to pause and reflect on what they have talked about with you and gives them a chance to bring up something they may have overlooked or had not talked about yet.
- Once you are finished with the interview, turn off the recorder/video camera and put it away safely. Make sure you have collected the signed release form from the interviewee and thank the interviewee for their time. Tidy up leaving the interview space exactly as you found it. If you can offer to send them a digital copy of the interview after you have transferred it to your computer.
- Scan any supporting documentation including your notes and the waiver to a digital file. We also have provided a “Collections Template” you can use to upload all your information into one document before submitting. You will need to upload all mp3 files and mp4 files separately. **Double click on links below to view and/or fill-out the “Collections Template.” Double click on the “Uploading Media” link for instructions on uploading mp3/mp4 files to your computer or laptop.**

[How to Transfer Sound from a Voice Recorder to the Computer](#)

[How to Transfer video from a Camcorder to the Computer and a USB Memory Stick](#)

(Collections Template did not upload to google docs very well)

- Submit your findings to the Charlotte County Archives.

Submitting Oral Histories

There are two options for people to submit their oral histories to Charlotte County Archives:

1. Mail a USB drive (or drop off in person) to the Charlotte County Archives at 123 Frederick Street St. Andrews E5B 1Z1 [We also accept CDs/DVDs]
2. Email – for large files uploaded to a cloud (google drive, one drive, etc.) Send link to contact@ccarchives.ca

Equipment List

- Notebook or Handwritten Notes Form with multiple pens/pencils
- Script/Questions
- Release Form
- Computer/laptop
- USB 2.0 A-Male to Micro B Cable
- Micro SD Card 128GB

With Permission from Interviewee

- Audio Recorder with tripod and power cord.
- Video Recorder with tripod and power cord.
- Smartphone with Portable Cellphone Camera Tripod and charging wire.