Using Oral History

Focus
Oral history serves as an exciting process designed to increase student involvement and improve student insight into historical experiences. It involves students directly in a method of historical inquiry, which includes the organization and presentation of data directly from another person. Oral history is an effective tool that requires students to become active participants in their own learning process. It invites inquiry, stimulates discussion, and transforms abstract concepts into concrete reality.

Rationale
Oral history is a process that aids in the reconstruction of the past and in preserving and documenting culture. It is an extension of the art of storytelling. In this sense, each of us has an oral history - an account of where we come from and how we got to be who we are. Communities, likewise, each have an oral history. So, too, do nations, families, and human organizations of every sort.

Oral history serves us in many ways. It can inspire us with stories of exemplary lives or caution us with tales of human weakness and wickedness. Oral history can inform and educate us by providing the context and perspective that allows us to make thoughtful decisions about the future. Moreover, oral history has the power to delight and enrich us, enlarging and intensifying the experience of being alive!

Purpose
- Serves as a link from the immediate present to the immediate past in a very understandable and human way.
- Fills an information gap when less and less information and reflections are recorded in written form.
- Provides a natural opportunity to obtain information related to ordinary people.
- Provides an opportunity to "experience" history firsthand
- Places local history within the overall context of Canadian history
- Helps students understand all phases of designing, implementing, and completing an activity.
- Increases understanding of a specific historical event
- Chronicles the traditional skills and values of many different groups
- Affirms community and common purpose, employs evaluation/reflecton
- Nurtures mutual appreciation of schools and communities
- Produces a source of pride and identity and develops a sense of relativism
- Creates understanding that bridges generations
- Tries to capture in sufficient detail meaningful characteristics of a past that might otherwise be lost

Learning Objectives
Students will:
- Demonstrate the techniques of recording oral history
- Discern how point of view influences and effects historical understanding
- Learn about the experiences of some modern immigrants
- Evaluate selected experiences of modern and early immigrant experiences
- Demonstrate the literacy skills required to identify and analyze visual, oral, and written primary sources
• Develop language abilities, critical thinking skills and comprehension, and the understanding of community and self
**Language Arts**

Students will:
- Identify the central idea, purpose, or theme of a work and connect it to the theme of an oral history.
- Gather and organize information from primary and secondary sources
- Incorporate different genres of writing throughout the project
- Use standard conventions of writing to revise and edit their work
- Demonstrate appropriate speaking and listening skills

**Social Studies**

Students will:
- Use historical thinking, especially how it relates to chronology and cause and effect
- Engage in historical study through research and other forms of investigation
- Be able to compare their primary source information with literature and additional research information
- Study concepts related to Canadian ideals and how diversity has added to that perspective
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rights of citizens and civic involvement
- Study the role of geographic and cultural perspectives on the lives of individuals

**Technology**

Students will:
- Recognize technology as a means of creativity and problem solving
- Become active participants in our technological world
- Identify the purposes of communication
- Create a product based on their oral history investigation

**Why Have Students Conduct an Oral History Project?**

An oral history project attempts to preserve a small segment of a relatively recent historical period as viewed through the eyes, experiences, and memories of people who lived during that time. Capturing their experiences and memories is invaluable. Over a period of time, memories can fade and those feelings or emotions associated with the events can easily be lost or altered by time.

Oral history projects add to the collective knowledge of local and national history, due to the fact that such projects document citizen's participation and memories concerning a specific event or time period. Students begin to understand that Canadian history is not simply a series of isolated events, but rather it is composed of life experiences and memories of Canadians just like themselves.
**Conducting Oral History in the Practice of Teaching**

Oral history is a natural teaching method for the classroom. Students who normally expect tedium and irrelevancy of history learning are taken with the immediacy of personal accounts of past events. Students want to be knowledgeable when talking to interviewees, so research and data gathering is no longer a conflicted issue.

To use oral history properly, one must understand its strengths and weaknesses. Good oral histories provide background information, personal insights, or anecdotes rarely found in official documents. These contributions, together with oral history’s ability to capture and preserve information that may not otherwise be saved, illustrate some benefits of the technique.

Most of oral history's deficiencies are attributable to human faults. Like all historical sources, interviews contain personal biases, but these biases may themselves constitute important data for the historian's consideration. Interviewees may also be unwilling to honestly discuss mistakes or errors even years after the fact. A potentially greater problem is the inability of some interviewees to provide accurate accounts because of the limitations of human memory. This is a special concern when recounting traumatic events or actions that took place years before. As time increases between an experience and its recounting, individuals tend to condense the sequence of events and omit critical actions and judgments. Although, one should consider the elapsed time when weighing oral history materials, a long duration does not automatically diminish the value of an interview. In spite of the limitations of oral history, a properly conducted interview can be a previous resource and a special means of preserving the past.

**Instructional Arrangements**

Three types of organization are most often used in classroom oral history projects. Individual

- **Project:**
  - Excellent for self-motivated and highly capable students
  - Requires student to be proficient with all processes and skills of project
  - Student is graded on own work and does not have to rely on other individuals

- **Small Groups:**
  - Effective for less confident/able students, allows each to accept certain responsibilities or parts of the project
  - Allows highly capable students to pool their research
  - Each member is dependant on the follow through of the other group members
  - Assign and grade each student on specific responsibilities/tasks of project

- **Entire Class Project:**
  - Works well if one major topic is going to be investigated
  - Beneficial for a media presentation/publication
  - Each student can assume a specific task e.g. research, interviewing, etc
o Allows each student to use his or her expertise

o Student does not get to experience all of the processes or an oral history project

o Each member is dependant on the follow through of the other group members

o Backup/assistant for each major job may provide a failsafe approach for getting tasks completed accurately and on time

o Specific classroom situation/objectives will determine which organization is more appropriate

What to Teach Students Before Sending Them on an Interview

- The background and purpose of oral history
- The techniques of oral history interviewing and question development
- The methods of finding oral history interviewees
- The methods of researching a topic
- An in-depth review of the topic being studied
- Interview paperwork and documents
- The use of equipment
- How to recognize and collect supplementary documents/photographs

Participant Selection
Students need to be aware of the dynamics of age and time as they select a historical period. Student must remember that the potential pool of participants can be affected by the topic chosen. The level of recollective ability and historical accuracy can dramatically be affected by the age of the participants being interviewed. Therefore, the selection of participants is a critical component for an effective oral history project.

Students will also discover that some participants are simple better interviewees than others. Students usually approach relatives or friends as their first potential interviewees and then expand their pool of people to be interviewed.

How Many People Should Each Student Interview?
The time devoted to the project is a major factor, the following suggestions might provide some guidance:

- **Short-Term Project:**
  - Several mini interviews, consisting of a few select questions
  - Give students the opportunity to compare/contrast information required from the interviews and/or primary/secondary sources

- **Family Project:**
  - 2-3 generations or 2-3 family members provide different viewpoints and perspectives
• **Thematic Project:**
  - 2 interviews often provide sufficient information and differing points of view

• **Biographical Project:**
  - Oral History Methodology

An oral history project can be as simple as a student interviewing one person, writing the responses of the participant, and reporting those survey responses to the class. Another project could involve audio or videotaping of the participant and the student composing a written account of the dialogue. But a more sophisticated and encompassing oral history project could involve the entire class during a semester or school year. The class would conduct taped interviews throughout the school year, type the dialogue of the interviews, and print the results in a book or magazine format. The culmination of the year’s project would be to publish the interviews and make the books available to interviewees, students, libraries and interested individuals in the community.

**Process of Conducting an Oral History Project**
The oral history project is a process-oriented activity. Students are responsible for the entire project. It is imperative that students have adequate background knowledge of the historical topic and the time period before interviewing the participants. Good content knowledge will enhance their understanding of the historical topic or era and vastly improve their questioning skills; in turn, they will have a better understanding of the person being interviewed.

Students must choose the interview instrument focusing upon questions that will elicit much more information than merely yes/no answers. Practice interviews must be conducted to test the interview instrument, which allows students to practice their interview skills and insures the validity of the questions and answers. Students will learn that some questions simply do not ask what was intended.

Students select their own participants to be interviewed and set up an interview time, which helps to enhance their organizational skills. Interviews can be conducted during school time or on the student's time, whatever is convenient for both student and the participant. It is imperative that the student obtain from the interviewee a signed release form giving the class and the school the right to publish the oral interview. This is important because of the legalities involved in publishing an interview.

All interviews are done with audio/video tape, and the students make typewritten transcripts from the recordings. This element of the process takes a considerable amount of time. Students proofread their own material, as well as other students' material, to ensure spelling accuracy, historical accuracy, and common formatting.

**Timeline:**

- **September:**
  - Introduction of Project and Investigation of Event
  - Choose Interview Instrument

- **October-March:**
  - Interviewing of Participants
  - Transcribing of Tapes
  - Typing of Rough Draft

- **April:**
Proofreading and Finalization of Document or Book

- **May-June:**
  - Final Copies to Printer and Binder

**Evaluating Project to Develop a Better Program**

- Keep a diary/log of the project's strengths/weaknesses. Note where more structure was needed, ways to improve the training, or where students needed more assistance, etc.

- Have students evaluate the project. Have them explain what they liked, didn't like, and what they felt they learned. The student evaluation can be written/oral and accomplished individually or in a group setting.

- A review of your goals/objectives or learning opportunities that were not planned but were successful should be noted and incorporated in the future.

**Storing Materials**

- The school library, a nearby public library, or a local college library
- A local historical society, archive, or museum
- A community center

**You must consider:**

- A dry/safe place with a moderate temperature
- A policy for cataloguing
- The need for copies of tapes, photos, materials, etc

**Convincing Administration the Worth of an Oral History Project**

- Present the administration with a detailed written proposal, which includes the stated objectives of the project and methods of evaluation
- Demonstrate how the project supports/augments the required curriculum
- Show how the project teaches skill development
- Collect and share research studies/journal articles which explain the rationale for a project of your type
- Cite local/national project examples e.g. Foxfire Project
- Explain how an oral history project can be used to benefit the school's public relations image
- Show how the proposed project can support current educational mandates such as writing across the curriculum and computer literacy
Oral History Project: Guidelines for Recording an Interview

Oral history interviews can bring history to life. It can be a very satisfying project for both those interviewed and the interviewers. Preparation before the interview will help make your project more fun for you, the interviewer, and the person you interview.

1. Set up a time and place to meet with your interview subject.

2. Know how to use your equipment. Practice recording a conversation with a friend or family member so that you are comfortable with the process. Speaking clearly and precisely helps. Make sure the volume/sound level is O.K.

3. Write up or use a list of questions to ask your interview subject. Use questions that require more than a yes/no answer. E.g. What was the neighbourhood like when you were growing up?

4. Start with general questions and then look for specific information. E.g. How did the war affect your life?

5. When it's time to interview the subject, make sure you are there promptly. Bring a blank tape/video. Bring extra batteries. And don't forget your list of questions. Always treat the person you are interviewing politely and with respect. Speak clearly. Do a practice question to make sure the tape/video recorder is working.

6. Always start the tape/video by stating your name, your subject's name, the time, and the date into the recorder. Don't forget to label the tape/video on the outside as well.

7. Understand that your list of questions is a guide for you to follow. Sometimes the person being interviewed has a special story he or she would like to tell. Ask directly. E.g. Do you have a special story you would like to have recorded? Would you share it with me? Be prepared for the unexpected!

8. Keep your recording session to about 30-40 minutes. It can be very tiring for you and the other person you are interviewing.

9. Make sure you thank your subject when you are finished. Remember, you could not do the project without their cooperation.

10. Send a follow up letter or note to the individual you interviewed and thank them for the experience.

Adapted Source: Hometown History Activity Booklet

Fish Bowls and Bloopers:

Oral History in the Classroom

The interview is the highlight of an oral history project for many students. To strengthen their ability to conduct an interview in the field successfully, students should have multiple opportunities to explore the interview process. Students afforded a chance to practice, discuss, observe, and model interviews bring confidence and sensitivity to the actual interview. The following sample activities are just a few ways that the classroom can provide a forum for developing good interviewing techniques.

Fish Bowl Interviews

Fish bowl interviews take place when the teacher interviews a guest on the topic under investigation in front of the entire class as a way to model the process. This allows students to observe an interview in progress and give feedback. The teacher and guest should sit either in
front of the class or in the middle of a circle of students, facing each other while being tape recorded. The teacher should use this opportunity to model the kind of interview she/he expects from students.

Prior to the interview, the teacher should explain what he/she wants the students to observe; the teacher could also brainstorm with them and uncover what they would like to learn from the interview. After the interview, the teacher should allow ample time for a discussion and review of the interview. The issues and questions raised in this forum provide teachers with an opportunity to address the concerns students as they envision themselves as the interviewers. Many teachers incorporate additional writing assignments; after the interview students could write about one of the following:

Describe examples from the interview that did or did not meet the guidelines you have been learning for good interviewing.

1. What did you learn about your topic from this interview that you probably would not have learned from a newspaper or textbook
2. Now that you have seen one, describe how you imagine you would feel conducting an oral history interview.
3. Write about something the interviewee said that stood out for you
4. Write one or several questions that you would have asked the guest if you had been the interviewer
5. Write a list of suggestions to the teacher about how to improve her/his interview techniques
6. Describe what would have been the hardest part for you if you had been the interviewer
7. List questions you have about conducting an interview
8. Write a thank you note to your guest describing what you learned from the interview and asking any questions you still have
9. What are three questions used in this interview that you would like to use in yours. Why?

**Role Playing**
Role playing a variety of interview scenarios is also helpful. One can do this over time as part of a series of classes (e.g., ten minutes of role playing per class) or as an entire class. A couple of examples are:

1. Students role play the first two minutes of the interview process (arriving, greetings, finding a place to set up equipment, warm up, first questions)
2. Students role play a 2-3 minute series of interview questions and answers focusing on a particular characteristic of good interviewing, e.g. active listening, ability to ask follow-up questions, sensitivity.

After each role play, the class gives the performers feedback about what went well, what they might improve, what was missing, etc. Bloopers

This is another form of role playing that students enjoy. Pairs of students receive an index card identifying one rule for or characteristic of a good interview. Students, in pairs, get five to seven minutes to create a scenario that will demonstrate a violation of the assigned rule. The student
pairs take turns enacting their scenarios in front of the class. One student plays the role of interviewer and the other, the narrator. The class guesses which interview rule has been violated and the enactors tell them if they are correct. In these engaging performances, students observe or enact both “bloopers” and consequences including: beginning the interview abruptly, asking questions out of sequence, being rude, forgetting batteries, and making an awkward closing. Students “see” the implications of being or failing to be thoughtful interviewers.

**Paired Interviewing**

Interviewing each other in class as part of a paired activity before they go out to do their taped interview is quite helpful to many students. The practice interview can be short; ten minute activities in class in which each member of the pair has five minutes to practice with the other, followed by a brief discussion in class of how it felt, what was hard, and what was easy. Even short practices can begin to build familiarity with the process. In addition, these short interviews stimulate a lot of discussion; students with reluctance or concerns often are willing to share their experiences as they “debrief” after these classroom sessions.

**Invented Transcripts**

Reading invented transcripts of interviews is an activity that works well after students have been introduced to the characteristics of a good interview. Students can identify what good or bad interview characteristics the transcripts contain. This works as a whole class or small group activity. A few sample assignments used with invented transcripts are:

1. All students receive copies of the invented transcripts. Two students, one as narrator and one as interviewer, read the interview out loud. As they watch, students check off each instance of bad interview practice. At the end of the reading, teacher facilitates a discussion of student choices.

2. Class reads one or two interviews and inserts follow-up questions wherever students feel they are missing. A discussion of individual choices could further clarify the need for, and the characteristics of, follow-up questions.

3. Class reads an interview silently checking off each place where it feels the interviewer failed to follow good interview strategies. Class then discusses its choices and identifies which interview guidelines it felt were overlooked.

4. Class reads an interview making a list of which interview strategies are used in the interview, citing examples.
- Schedule appointments.
- Obtain signed release agreement at first interview.
- Tape-record interviews.
- Get interviews transcribed.
- Review transcript; then get narrator to review.
- Deposit corrected transcripts, tapes, and release agreements in the appropriate library, archives, or historical society.

The One-Minute Guide to Oral History Interviewing

- Ensure that equipment is functioning properly.
- Label tapes with names interviewer, narrator, date, tape number.
- Take outline, photos, clippings to interview.
- Obtain signature on release agreement.
- Develop rapport but remain neutral.
- Ask who, what, where, when, why, how.
- Remain polite but firmly in control.
- Listen carefully--and pursue new topics.
- Use silence.
- Ask for examples and anecdotes as illustrations.

http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/BANC/
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Oral History Questions

- What is your full name and why were you named it?
- Were you named after somebody else?
- Did you have a nickname as you were growing up?
- If you did, what was it and why did they call you that?
- Have you had other nicknames as an adult?
- What do family members call you now?
- Where were you born and when?
• Do you remember hearing your grandparents describe their lives? What did they say?
• Do you remember your great-grandparents? What do you know about them?
• Who was the oldest person you can remember in your family as a child? What do you remember about them?
• Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics?
• Was there a chore you really hated doing as a child?
• What would you consider to be the most important inventions that have been made during your lifetime?
• How is the world now different from what it was like when you were a child?
• What kinds of books did you like to read?
• Do you remember having a favourites nursery rhyme or bedtime story? What was it?
• Do you ever remember not having enough food to eat because times were hard for your family?
• What were your favourites toys and what were they like?
• What were your favourites childhood games?
• What were your schools like?
• How did you get to school?
• What was your favourites subject in school and why?
• What subject in school was always the easiest for you?
• What was your least favourites subject in school and why?
• Who was your favourites teacher and why were they special?
• How do your fellow classmates from school remember you best?
• What school activities and sports did you participate in?
• Did you and your friends have a special hang-out where you liked to spend time? Where was it and what did you do there?
• Were you ever given any special awards for your studies or school activities?
• How many years of education have you completed?
• Do you have a college degree? If so, what was your field of study?
• Did you get good grades?
• Did you like school?
• What did you like the most and the least about it?
• What did you usually wear to school? Describe it.
• Were there any fads during your youth that you remember vividly?
• How old were you when you started dating?
• Do you remember your first date? Describe the circumstances.
• Name a good friend that you have known for the longest period of time? How many years have you been friends?
• Has there ever been anyone in your life that you would consider to be your kindred spirit or soul mate? If so, who were they and why did you feel a special bond to them?
• How did you meet the person that you would later marry? Describe them?
• Do you remember where you went on the first date with your spouse?
• How long did you know them before you got married?
• Describe your wedding proposal.
• When and where did you get married?
• Describe your wedding ceremony. Who was there?
• Did you have a honeymoon? If so, where did you go?
• How would you describe your spouse? What do (did) you admire most about them?
• How long have you been married (or were you married)?
• What wise advice would you give to a grandchild on their wedding day?
• How did you find out that you were going to be a parent for the first time?
• How many children did you have all together?
• What were their names, birthdates and birthplaces?
• Do you remember anything that your children did when they were small that really amazed you?
• What is one of the most unusual things that one of your children did regularly when they were small?
• What was the funniest thing you can remember that one of your children said or did?
• If you had it to do all over again, would you change the way you raised your family? How?
• What did you find most difficult about raising children?
• What did you find most rewarding about being a parent?
• Did you spoil any of your children? How?
• Were you a strict or lenient parent?
• Did you find that you had to treat each of your children differently? If so, why?
• How did you first hear that you were a grandparent and how did you feel about it?
• What advice do you have for your children and grandchildren?
• As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
• What was your first job?
• What kinds of jobs have you had?
• How did you decide on your career?
• Did you make enough money to live comfortably?
• How long did you have to work each day at your job?
• How old were you when you retired?
• What were the hardest choices that you ever had to make? Do you feel like you made the right choices?
• Who was the person that had the most positive influence on your life? Who were they and what did they do?
• Is there a person that really changed the course of your life by something that they did?
• Who were they and what did they do?
• Do you remember someone saying something to you that had a big impact on how you lived your life? What was it?
• How would you describe yourself politically?
• Are you Conservative or Liberal and why?
• What wars have been fought during your lifetime? How did you feel about them?
• If you served in the military, when and where did you serve and what were your duties?
• If you served in the military, were you ever injured in the line of duty? What were the circumstances and what were your injuries?
• What U.S. President have you admired the most and why?
• As you see it, what are the biggest problems that face our nation and how do you think they could be solved?
• How tall are you?
• What color was your hair as a young child and then as an adult?
• What color are your eyes?
• Where have you lived as an adult? List the places and the years that you lived there.
• Why are you living where you are today?
• Do you wish you lived somewhere else (If so, where would it be)?
• Describe your general health.
• What major illnesses or health problems do you remember having?
• Do you have any health problems that are considered hereditary in nature? If so, what are they?
• What do you do regularly for exercise?
• Do you have any bad habits now or in the past? What were they?
• Have you ever been the victim of a crime? What happened?
• Have you ever been in a serious accident?
• Has anyone ever saved your life? Describe.
• Have you ever saved anyone else's life? Describe.
• Have you ever been hospitalized? If so, what for?
• Have you ever had surgery? If so, what for?
• If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?
• Have you ever had an experience that you would consider to be super-natural or psychic? Did you ever know something was going to happen before it actually did? What was it?
• What do you usually dream about?
• What church, if any, do you attend regularly?
• Describe your religious beliefs.
• Do you believe in an after life?
• What was the most stressful experience that you ever lived through? What helped you get through it?
• What is the scariest thing that has ever happened to you personally?
• What kinds of musical instrument(s) have you learned to play?
• Would you consider yourself creative?
• What things have you made that others have enjoyed?
• How would you describe your sense of humor?
• What is the funniest practical joke you ever played on anyone?
• What activities have you especially enjoyed as an adult?
• What are your hobbies?
• What did you like to do when you were not working?
• What is the most amazing thing that has ever happened to you?
• What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?
• Have you ever met any famous people? Describe what happened.
• What organizations and groups have you belonged to?
• Have you ever won any special awards or prizes as an adult? What were they for?
• Describe a time and place when you remember feeling truly at peace and happy to be alive.
• Where were you and what were you doing?
• What is the most beautiful place you have ever visited and what was it like?
• What is the longest trip that you have ever gone on? Where did you go?
• What has been your favourite vacation? Where did you go and why was it special?
• What was the favourite place you ever visited and what was it like?
• What pets have you had?
• Do you have a favourite story about a pet? What is it?
• Is there anything you have always wanted to do, but haven’t?

Favourites
• What is your favourite style of music?
• What is your favourite musical instrument?
• Who is your favourite musical group?
• What is your favourite song?
• Who is your favourite singer?
• Who is your favourite movie star?
• What is your favourite movie?
• Who is your favourite artist?
• What is your favourite painting?
• Who is your favourite poet?
• What is your favourite poem?
• What is your favourites TV program?
• Who is your favourite author?
• What is your favourite book?
• What is your favourite season?
• What is your favourite tree?
• What is your favourite flower?
• What is your favourite holiday?
• What is your favourite color?
• What is your favourites sport?
• Who is your favourite athlete?
• What is your favourite animal?
• What is your favourite meal?
• What is your favourite fruit?
• What is your favourite vegetable?
• What is your favourite candy?
• What is your favourite cookie?
• What is your favourite drink?
• What is your favourite restaurant?
• What is your favourite flavor of ice cream?
• What is your favourite board game?
• What is your favourite card game?

IF YOU HAD TO PICK A LABEL FOR YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS (your spouse, children, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts & uncles, cousins), WHO BEST FITS THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTIONS? The best cook; The hardest-worker; the quietest; the best memory; the best gardener; the funniest; the best-looking; the animal lover; the most politically-active; the most mischievous; the calmest; the most athletic; the most intelligent; the most educated; the best career; the most creative; the wildest lifestyle; the most sociable; the biggest tease; the best housekeeper; the most reclusive; the most colorful; the most relaxed; the most frugal; the most generous; the tallest; the shortest; the best story-teller

Source: http://www.rootsweb.com/~genepool/oralhist.htm

Specific Oral History Questions

Immigration:
• Who was the first ancestor in your family to immigrate? When?
• Was there a specific reason why your ancestors immigrated?
• How and where did they get the money to travel?
• When your ancestors immigrated, did they do so with other relatives? Who were they?
• Who received the relatives when they first arrived in this country?
• Do you know the name of the ship and the port of entry?
• Do you know if your immigrant ancestors were naturalized? If so, by what court and when?
• Do you know the names of the cities or towns in the U.S. to which your relatives immigrated?

**Life in the New World:**
1. What occupations did your immigrant ancestors have when they first arrived?
2. Did they belong to organizations, churches, or other groups?
3. Did they live in other towns or cities in North America?
4. Was there a cousins club or family circle?
5. Were there special family traditions that have been handed down?
6. Were there family recipes?
7. Were any heirlooms brought along with your family?

**Oral History Interviews - Documents to ask about**
1. Family personal records, letters, etc.
2. Family bible
3. Wills, Deed, etc.
4. Certificates, Diplomas, Awards, etc.
5. Photographs
6. Books of Remembrance
7. Diaries, Family Genealogies, Family Histories, etc.
8. Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Records
9. Newspaper clippings
10. Military Records
11. Immigration Records
12. Passports
13. Cemetery and Funeral Home Records
14. Court Records

**Source:** Montana Heritage Project
Oral History in the Classroom: Getting Started
http://www.edheritage.org/tools/oralhis2.htm
Lesson 1: Settlement Oral Histories
(This fits with the Women of Aspenland)
Students explore the experiences of individual's through their personal stories.
(Adapted from The New Americans Teacher Guide)
Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts
Grade Levels: 3-5, 7, 10
Time Frame: 2-3 weeks, 3-4 hours class time, 7-8 hours homework

Students will need at least two to three weeks preparation on their own. They will need at least one week to locate the person and set up preliminary questions, get some pre-reading on interview techniques, arrange for the time and location with the interviewee, etc.; a second week to do the actual interview itself; and a third week for the transcription and writing. You will also want to build in some time during each week to address issues or problems students may be having. Make sure they are on schedule and meeting deadlines, and are prepared for the interview, etc.

Materials Needed:
- Guidelines for Oral History Interviews Student Workbook: History Channel
- Oral History Project Guidelines
- Oral History Project: Guidelines for Recording an Interview
- Guiding Questions For Oral History Interviews
- Interview tracking sheet
- Sharing Oral histories Worksheet
- Journal Entry Worksheet
- Reflection Questions

Learning Objectives:
Students will:
1. Understand changes in the workplace and the economy in Canada and in their local communities
2. Understand the influences on settlement patterns
3. Understand how recent settlement and migration patterns impacted social and political issues
4. Understand major contemporary social issues and the groups involved (e.g. multiculturalism, racism)
5. Know a variety of forms of diversity in Canadian society (e.g., regional, linguistic, socio-economic)
6. Use a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, phone directories, maps, and the Internet)
7. Organize information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways (e.g., timelines, outlines, notes, graphic representations)
Procedure:
Have students read an example of an oral history online at "Alberta Home, Home at the Plains"  
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/Pasttopresent/

1. Click on Sitemap and go to Black Settlement and Chinese Settlement for Oral History Interviews
2. Have students note the style of the writing and how the writer attempts to maintain the voice of the person he interviews.
3. Suggestion: You choose the passage and share it with the class so that everyone is reading the same example; you can point out specifics and demonstrate how it is a useful model for them.
4. Help students identify who they would like to interview; give them ideas where they can find people to interview (e.g., adult ed/ESL classes, churches, immigrant relief organizations, friends, etc.). You should specifically name some organizations in the community that would help them locate an interviewee.
5. For homework, ask students to find an interview subject. Ask them to talk to this person to determine if they are willing to do the interview. Students then should write a paragraph explaining who their person is and why that person is a good choice.
6. Discuss the kinds of questions that are most appropriate for eliciting narrative-type answers (namely open-ended questions). Give a copy of Guiding Questions For Oral History Interviews to students.
7. It might also help if the students look at an example of a finished interview and work backward to identify the questions likely to have been asked to get a particular response.
8. For homework, students should select and finalize their list of questions.
9. In class, provide time for students to research the country of origin for the person they are interviewing. From this research, they should be able to add some additional questions to their original list.

Project: Guidelines for Recording an Interview.
1. Have students conduct their settlement oral history project.
2. Have students bring in a portion of their interview with questions and answers. Show students how they may need to edit the original words to make answers flow together. Discuss what elements of conversation to maintain (such as informal English, pause words) and to what degree these should be maintained. Discuss the value of keeping some words from the first language if the interview is conducted in a language other than English.

Writer's Workshop:
1. A couple of days before the final oral histories are due, conduct a writer's session: where you arrange your students in groups of four or five and have them read each other's work.
2. As a part of this workshop, you should encourage your students to provide constructive criticism to each paper once they are done reading it.

3. You should ask them pay special attention to grammatical errors. Students should be encouraged to give each other ideas on how to improve the flow and content of each interview.

4. Have students share their completed oral histories.

5. Review the sharing oral histories and journal entry worksheets.

6. After students complete the quick write, use this as a basis for a whole class discussion where students brainstorm generalizations about immigration that can be leaned from the interviews.

7. Have students complete a reflective journal as a homework assignment on "How the experience of conducting an oral history interview and hearing the interviews of other students has reshaped my ideas about the experience of settlement."

8. The following day, have students work in partner pairs and share their homework journals with one another. Pairs can share important or new insights with the class in a final whole class discussion.

9. Students could publish these oral histories in book form and host an evening where they invite the subject of their oral histories to hear them read from the oral histories.

10. Students could also publish the oral histories on a Web site. Students could include pictures of the subject of their interview or photographs from that person's settlement experience.

11. Have each student each write a brief thank you to the interviewee for his or her contributions to their oral history projects. In the letter, students should mention at least one positive thing they learned from the interviewee that has enlarged their understanding of the experience of settlement.