

INTERVIEWER'S INSTRUCTION MANUAL



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE**

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWERS' INSTRUCTION MANUAL

The process of collecting oral history can be conceptualized in sequential fashion as a series of discrete steps. If all our interviewers follow this, and use this manual as a guide in their preparation for, and collection of, oral history, our program will be well on its way.

STEP ONE:

Contact the informant and arrange for (a) a preliminary interview (if possible) or (b) a meeting of sufficient length to allow for an introductory session and a formal, taped interview. Check your own work schedule and provide alternate meeting times as possibilities (this also makes it possible to arrange a second time if either the interviewer or informant is unable to attend the pre-arranged meeting).

STEP TWO:

In preparation for the interview, the interviewers should learn as much as possible about the informant. If you are aware that the person is particularly knowledgeable about specific topics, some background research into those topics should be undertaken in advance.

Before conducting interviews with leaders, extensive research into manuscript collections, published works, memoirs and other traditional historical sources should be undertaken.

In conducting research with grassroots people, few written sources are normally available. The interviewer should, nevertheless, familiarize herself or himself with the subject's community, neighborhood, as well as the social milieu within which he or she functions.

STEP THREE:

Try to conduct a preliminary interview with the subject (wherever possible, prior to the date of the major interview). It is critical that a good rapport be struck with the informant. Rapport could be considered the primary goal of the initial meeting. The contents of the preliminary meeting should include,

- (1) personal introductions and identification with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, with a very brief explanation of the Institute's goals.

(2) Explain how the informant's name was given to the Institute.

(3) Brief description of oral history:

E.G., oral history is collecting information based on the personal experiences of people who are participants in, or witnesses of, past events or circumstances. It is the oldest type of history in the sense that, prior to the written word, the history of a people was preserved by oral tradition. What is new about oral history is the use of the tape recorder and the storage system.

(4) The goal of the Institute's oral history program:

To create a sound archive to be used for the study of the history and culture of Native Peoples in Saskatchewan by systematically developing a collection of audio-taped interviews with Metis and Non-Status Indian narrators.

(5) Tell the informant that the tapes will be preserved at the Library of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and that people will be able to listen to them.

(6) Tell the informant that he/she will be asked to sign a release form at the end of the interview.

(7) Obtain a brief biographical sketch from the informant. Follow this format as closely as possible:

- (a) date of birth
- (b) place of birth
- (c) ethnicity of parents (be specific)

Mother, (e.g., German-Irish, on father's side; Chipewyan on mother's side)

Father, (Chipewyan and Cree on father's side; French and Cree on mother's side)

- (d) occupation of father and mother
- (e) number of sibs (and gender, e.g., three boys; five girls)
- (f) birth order of narrator (e.g., fourth born in a family of eight)
- (g) school-leaving age and final grade completed

- (h) jobs held in chronological sequence
 - (i) communities lived in (in chronological sequence)
- (8) Ask informant to identify subjects or persons he/she feels particularly interested in or has vivid memories of, and would like to discuss. Jot these down in a note pad. Emphasize the importance of special topics to the goals of the project. Suggest some topics as examples.

Examples:

- Metis leaders
 - memories of political organizations
 - personal involvement in political organizations
 - major historical events
 - collective land ownership (e.g., Lebret Farm, Bell Farm)
 - exodus from Lestock to Green Lake
 - arts, crafts, recreation
 - legends and folk stories
- (9) Ask informant to identify subjects or persons he/she does not wish to discuss during the actual interview.

NOTE: Do not allow the preliminary meeting to develop into a formal interview. The narrator should not be asked to recount detailed stories until the formal interview takes place.

STEP FOUR:

The next step is the interview itself. Select a place in which the narrator can feel at ease. Cold, large empty rooms are not suitable. The narrator is most likely to feel comfortable in familiar surroundings, such as a livingroom.

SOME HINTS:

Make certain the equipment is in proper working order. Use electricity wherever possible, but always have a supply of dry cell batteries on hand.

Avoid distractions, e.g., squeaky furniture, air-conditioners, grandfather clocks, telephone ringing, or even interruptions.

Sit directly opposite the informant in order that eye contact can be maintained.

Cushion the microphone to avoid static and echo effects.

The narrator and the interviewer should be equidistant from the microphone, and as close as possible to the microphone without creating proximal discomfort. This helps eliminate extraneous sounds on the audio tape.

In order that the interview be easily identified, it should contain a formal introduction such as: "Today is June 15, 1983. The following is an interview with Mrs. Ruby Bellerose, at her home in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. Mrs. Bellerose has lived in Duck Lake for thirty years, and, in addition to answering our standardized autobiographical questions, she will be discussing relations between the Metis in the Duck Lake area and the Indian and Metis population."

Refer to Appendix "A" for some specific suggestions on interviewing techniques.

STANDARDIZED QUESTIONS

In order for our collection to be useful to researchers, it is important that we develop some standardized data from all of our subjects. The following topics should be covered with all informants:

(1) Recollections of community life

Description of Communities

Name of Town(s)

Size of Town(s)

Ethnic Composition (proportion of Metis to Non-Metis)

Sense of Acceptance as (1) an individual and (2) a Metis in the relevant community(ies)

Memories of Racial Discrimination

Names of Metis Leaders in Community(ies)

NOTE: If highly transient (that is, lived in many towns), focus on community of longest residence and explain feelings about, and descriptions of, transiency itself.

(2) Religion

- Church Affiliation
- Consistency of Church attendance (is church attendance a life-long thing? Did it break off at a certain point? Why?)
- Belief in Indian Religion
- Self-perceptions of commitment

(3) Schooling

- Identify Schools and Description of Schools (one-room? number of children in school? etc.)
- Sense of Belonging/Not Belonging in School Setting
- Enjoyment of School (Academic? Social? Athletic?)
- Feelings of Achievement/Failure
- Perceptions of Teachers
- Perceived Discrimination (examples)
- School-leaving Age and Grade (reasons?)

(4) Informal Education

- Ask the question: "Other than your teachers in school, what people do you remember as having taught you what has been most important to you in your life?"

And also, "What did they teach you?"

(5) Making a Living

- Type of Work and Skills (include full-time homemaking and parenting)
- High Points/Low Points of Work History (include homemaking and parenting)
- Periods of Unemployment
- Effects of Unemployment on Personal and Family Life
- Examples of Discrimination on-the-job
- Ask: "If you could start all over again, what kind of job(s) would you like to have?"

(6) Memories of Community Life as an Adult

Question: "In your memory, in your adult life, what were some of the most important aspects of community life for Metis people? --things that were different than in the white community...most enjoyable?"

(7) "Troubles" with (Non-Metis) Society

Question: "Do you feel that, as a Metis person, you have ever been unjustly treated by any of the following:

- the school
- businesses
- welfare
- other government agencies
- the police and the courts

Describe these injustices

SPECIAL TOPICS

Carefully explore the topic(s) pre-chosen by the narrator as being of special interest to the writing of Metis history.

STEP FIVE:

To help with the processing stage of the oral history program, the interviewer will have to complete specific forms which will be stored in the stockroom (remember to take them along to the interview with you). The following forms must be filled out:

- (1) Tape or box of identification labels
- (2) The release form
- (3) Visitation report
- (4) Material submission receipt form
- (5) The interview summary

TAPE OR BOX IDENTIFICATION LABELS

Tapes should be labeled prior to the recording session in order to prevent confusion and mistaken identities. The tape itself should be identified on the reel or cassette in the event that containers are misplaced. If cassettes are used, note the names of the informant and the interviewer and, if applicable, also identify the title of the oral history project theme with which it corresponds. If you are using a reel-to-reel tape, apply an adhesive strip on the tape providing the information.

THE RELEASE FORM

The release form must be signed by the informant and the interviewer. The release form states that the informant understands the terms under which the interview took place and agrees that, in surrendering the recording of the interview to the Institute, it will be used according to those terms. The interviewee should be informed of the purposes of the interview's use and its place of deposit prior to the taping. The release form should be signed after the interview is completed.

The informant may wish to place certain restrictions on the interview. The form has a place for the statement of these restrictions. State the restrictions clearly and concisely and fill the appropriate blanks in prior to the signing.

Some examples of the types of restrictions include:

- (1) This interview may be used only with my written permission.
- (2) This interview will be used only on the premises of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and may be copied, quoted or broadcast only with my written permission.
- (3) This interview may not be made available to anyone without my permission until _____, after which it may be made
(date or [or X years] after my death),
available for all purposes.

VISITATION REPORT

The visitation report is the form used by the Institute's Sound Archives Programme to compile information about each interview. It also provides a

cross-check on the interview itself to correct for misleading statements, confusion, or memory lapses. The form is a formal schedule for completing the information referred to above in "Step Three", item (7).

MATERIAL SUBMISSION RECEIPT FORM

This form is used when material other than sound recordings is loaned or donated for copying. Written materials such as published sources, diaries, correspondence, personal records, as well as photographs and the actual tapes should be carefully identified. If a photograph is submitted, it should be carefully packaged. For both photographs and artifacts, get as much possible information to identify the item.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

The summary of an interview is almost as valuable as the interview itself. The summary should be written with considerable effort. Be concise, but explain clearly what is happening on the tape. The Summary Form is usually the first source of access information (after the Visitation Report) available to the researcher; it is therefore, important to outline the tape's content in a clear manner. The Interview Summary is the researcher's guide to the specific contents of the interview.

Note the following:

- Identify the title of the oral history project (if applicable), and the informant's name.
- Give the date of the interview.
- Indicate each new topic on the tape and describe it with phrases or full sentences. The goal is to give the researcher a good idea of what to look for at a given point on the tape.
- At the beginning of each subject, indicate the time in minutes of each subject.
- Include names, places.

APPENDICES

- A. Interviewing Suggestions
- B. Forms to be Completed
 - (1) Tape Identification Labels
 - (2) Release Form
 - (3) Visitation Report
 - (4) Material Submission Receipt Form
 - (5) Interview Summary

APPENDIX "A"

INTERVIEWING SUGGESTIONS

Appendix "A": Interviewing Suggestions

The oral history interviewing technique is basic to human discourse; it has been described as the conversation of an inquisitive, attentive, and empathic listener. As Davis et al have commented:

...the best oral historians have a natural and uncomplicated interviewing style. They exhibit interest in the subject, they are patient, they listen carefully and thoughtfully, and they formulate questions that are concise, simple and straightforward.*

The interviewer must strive to create an atmosphere that encourages trust and comfort in the narrator - enough comfort that the narrator is willing to work at stretching his/her memory and to discuss sensitive issues of a (sometimes) personal nature.

The interviewer's paramount objective is to help the narrator reconstruct his/her personal history with as much accuracy and vivid detail as possible. But the interview process is more than simply making the narrator comfortable and asking questions. The interview is a serious job, not an opportunity for an enjoyable "heart-to-heart" discussion.

Avoid too many vocal acknowledgements such as "uh-huh," "oh", "yeah", or "really!" This can be avoided by a nodding of the head or smiling. An experienced interviewer will listen carefully and make notes during the interview.

Make sure to monitor the tape recorder constantly to ensure that it is continually functioning.

Never try to change the opinion of the subject, argue or interpret matters as he/she envisions them. Keep the questions concise and uncomplicated, making sure that it is the narrator, not the interviewer, whose voice dominates the tape recording.

*Cullom, Davis et al. Oral History: From Tape to Type. Chicago, American American Library Association, 1975.

Here's some additional suggestions:

- 1) Ask provocative questions - Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- 2) Employ "cues" or "hints." Ask about specific events or experiences.
- 3) Use props. Refer to family scrapbooks, photographs, newspaper clipping, heirlooms, artifacts and maps as stimulants to recollection.
- 4) Arouse emotions. Ask narrator to recall his/her feelings about important personal experiences. "How did you feel about being the only Metis in a completely white community?"
- 5) Encourage the narrator to reconstruct conversations that were part of past experiences.
- 6) Ask for full descriptions. Keep in mind that the interview is for a broad audience. Many people won't understand the context being presented. So ask for explanations of customs, circumstances, cultural and social practices and for full description of environments and physical objects.
- 7) Be patient. An occupational hazard among interviewers is impatience. Many persons feel uncomfortable after several seconds of silence. This is something to learn to handle. You should remember that the narrator may be stretching a memory back fifty years; he/she cannot be expected to recapture and narrate such distant experiences fluently. Give the subject a chance to reflect and probe. Give yourself at least 10 seconds before you break the silence with a new question.

APPENDIX "B-1"

TAPE IDENTIFICATION LABELS

EXAMPLES OF TAPE IDENTIFICATION LABELS

1	No. Cassettes No.	Sujets/Subjects	John W. LaRogue "Lestock Exodus to Green Lake"
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>		
	Coffret No. Cabinet No.	Interviewer: Wesley Budd July 16, 1983 Etiquette de Cassette	A 30 Cassette Label

Proper cassette label.

<p>John W. LaRogue</p> <hr/> <p>"Lestock Exodus to Green Lake"</p> <hr/> <p>Interviewed by:</p> <hr/> <p>Wesley Budd</p> <hr/> <p>July 16, 1983</p> <hr/> <p>Tape Speed: 3 3/4 ips</p> <hr/> <p>Time: 55 min.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>									
<p>RECORDING BOTH DIRECTIONS</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> </tr> </table>									
<p style="font-size: small;">NOTICE</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Magnetic Audio/Video Products Division 3M</p>									

Box label from reel-to-reel tape.

APPENDIX "B-2"

RELEASE FORM

RELEASE FORM FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

NAME OF PERSON INTERVIEWED: _____

"I hereby agree that the tape recording(s) conducted with me on _____, by _____
(date) (person conducting the interview)
shall become the property of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies, and shall be available for listening, reproduction, quotation, citation and all other research purposes, including broadcasting rights where applicable, in accordance with the regulations which may have heretofore been or which may hereinafter be established by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies or its successors for the use of materials in its possession; subject, however, to such restrictions as may be specified below."

(It is understood that unless otherwise indicated, restrictions apply during during my lifetime only.)

RESTRICTIONS: _____

SIGNED: _____
(Person being interviewed) (Date) (Address)

Understood and agreed to: _____
(Interviewer) (Date)

(Gabriel Dumont Institute Representative) (Date)

APPENDIX "B-3"

VISITATION REPORT

ORAL HISTORY VISITATION REPORT

PART I:

Informant: _____
(Surname) (Given Names)

Address at time of Interview: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Ethnicity of Parents:

Mother: _____
(Father's Side)

_____ (Mother's Side)

Father: _____
(Father's Side)

_____ (Mother's Side)

Occupation(s) of Father:

Occupation(s) of Mother:

Size of Family of Origin:

Total: _____ Brothers: _____ Sisters: _____

Size of Family of Orientation:

1st Spouse: _____ 2nd Spouse: _____
(Number of Children) (Number of Children)

Other: (Comments) _____

School-leaving Age of Narrator: _____

Final Grade Completed: _____

Jobs Held in Chronological Sequence:*

(Most Recent Job)

Note: Include length of time at each job, if possible.

Name of Spouse(s): _____

Date of Birth of Spouse(s): _____

(Name; date)

_____/_____

(Name; date)

(Name; date)

Ethnic Identity of Spouse(s): _____

Special Themes of Interest to Informant:

Themes or Topics the Narrator Does Not Wish to Discuss:

PART II:

Interviewer: _____
(Surname) (Given Names)

Title of Oral History Project (if applicable):

Date of Interview: _____

Others Present: _____

Length of Interview: _____ Number of Tapes: _____

Photo of Informant: Yes ___ No ___ _____

Description of Other Material (if any): _____

Technical Quality: Excellent _____ Fair _____ Poor _____

Other Observations:

Date of Deposit: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____

APPENDIX "B-4"

MATERIALS SUBMISSION RECEIPT FORM

Materials Submission Receipt Form:

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research acknowledges with thanks the receipt of the following materials:

A. WRITTEN MATERIAL	NO. OF DOCUMENTS	NO. OF PAGES	LANGUAGE MAT. IS IN	MAT. AVAIL.		NAME/ADDRESS OF LENDER
				DON.	LOAN	
B. PHOTOGRAPHS	NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS					
C. TAPES			INTERVIEW LOG FORM NUMBER			

D. Other: (Momentos, Artifacts, etc.)

NAME OF RESEARCHER: _____ DATE OF SUBMISSION: _____

SIGNATURE OF DONER: _____

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE OF NATIVE STUDIES & APPLIED RESEARCH

Materials Submission Receipt Form:

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research acknowledges with thanks the receipt of the following materials:



A. WRITTEN MATERIAL	NO. OF DOCUMENTS	NO. OF PAGES	LANGUAGE MAT. IS IN	MAT. AVAIL.		NAME/ADDRESS OF LENDER
				DON.	LOAN	
B. PHOTOGRAPHS	NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS					
C. TAPES			INTERVIEW LOG FORM NUMBER			

D. Other: (Momentos, Artifacts, etc.)

NAME OF RESEARCHER: _____ DATE OF SUBMISSION: _____

SIGNATURE OF DONER: _____

APPENDIX "B-5"

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL LARRY DUMONT

Date of Interview: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

- 0 - 4 mn. Daniel Larry Dumont; born January 3, 1912, in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. Moved to Saskatoon at age 12 with family. Father worked as farm labourer in Fort Qu'Appelle, became "CN" worker in Saskatoon.
- 4 - 8 mn. Life in Fort Qu'Appelle, School Recollections, friends, sports involved in. Sense of Metis identity. Living conditions during 1920's. Move to Saskatoon.
- 8 - 11 mn. Hardships of Depression. Father could not find work on farms because of impoverished, drought-struck farmers. Father's luck to land job with "CN".
- 11 - 16 mn. Talks of family life. Father permissive disciplinarian; mother much more strict. Playing with "Whites" and Indian children no problem until he reached age of 10. Brothers and sisters also had both Indian and white friends as well as Metis.
- 16 - 19 mn. Discussion of involvement with Metis Society of Saskatchewan after presentations by MSS organizer, Joe Ross and Joe LaRocque. First Saskatoon meeting with MSS discussed, January 26, 1933, in Ukranian Orthodox Hall.

ETC.

ETC.

ETC.