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## Canadian History 621A Oral History Project

Assignment Type: Major

Due Date: Friday, May 22, 2009 (Phase 1) and May 25 & 26, 2009 (Phase 2)

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Part of the reason that Aboriginal history is so fascinating is because much of it has NOT been written down. In fact, much Aboriginal history has been shared in the oral tradition. The stories, legends, and histories have been shared by community elders with their families and communities with the understanding that descendants will continue to do the same. Oral history is a lost art and one which we are going to re-discover.

This is your opportunity to share with your classmates some of the events in Canadian history which interest you and which are outside the mainstream history offered by history books. Think of some of the Canadian stories that you'd like to further investigate. This is your opportunity to do so only - this time - you'll be doing it by researching these stories and telling them as stories in the Aboriginal tradition.

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### Phase One - Personal Interview

**Due: May 22, 2009**

- In order to obtain a better understanding of the techniques involved in the oral history tradition, each of you will have the opportunity to see it in action. To achieve this, each student will conduct a one-on-one interview with an elder (at least 65 years old) in your family or your community. The subject matter is up to you. Here's what to do:
- Choose two events from Canadian and world history and then interview an elder in regarding these events. You are required to ask at least seven questions of this elder. You must provide a transcript of this exchange (written, audio, or video). This process allows you to record the oral history from an actual person who has lived through historical times for his/her perspective. For some tips on planning your interview, see the attached **Appendix A**. To avoid transcribing your interview after the fact, students are encouraged to tape the interview (audio or video) and then submit for assessment.

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### Phase Two - Oral History Presentations

**Due: May 25/26, 2009**

1. Browse the CBC Archives, Historica, and other Canadian news/history sites and discover an event which you feel is worthy of further investigation. Make the event relevant/interesting to you. Keep track of your research into the event.
2. Keep a bibliography of your research sources in a References page. You may use any sources you wish during research, including books, magazines, the Internet, CD-ROM, more personal interviews, etc. You must conduct much of your research on your own time. Computer lab time will not be sufficient.
3. When you feel you have a good grasp of the event you've chosen, you will construct **an oral presentation** which summarizes the event as a first-person **story** (told from the perspective of a person who was actually there; using 'I' and 'we') of approximately 3-4 minutes. Remember, in order to make the information relevant and exciting, you will relate the details of the event as a story - not as a history lecture. Some hints and rules:
  - Most of the topics include real people. Use these people as the focus of your story and describe their reactions to the events taking place (*for example, Robert Borden and his experiences with the Union Government and the Imperial War Cabinet, including assaulting Boy George as told in a narrative*).
  - You will present your oral histories without total reliance on notes/text. The 3-4 minutes should be a well-told and entertaining story that you know from memory since you have such a deep understanding of the event. You will be permitted bulleted cue cards/speeches but no prepared speeches.
  - To supplement each story, each student will be asked to prepare a multimedia presentation which contains **only** images to support/characterize the events. There will be **no text** on these slides - only **pictures** to emphasize the details in your stories (limit of 10 slides per presentation). You will be given the magic clicker for your speech.
  - We will hold a lethal lottery to determine presentation order. You will present either May 25 or May 26.
  - Look at this website to get some hints on presenting oral histories. The site is full of very good links which you **should use** in order to help you plan and present your project. <http://www.aresearchguide.com/3tips.html>

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### To Be Submitted

1. Sometime before lunch on your presentation date, you should indicate where Coffin can find your multimedia portion (student account, thumb drive, cd or dvd, etc) so that it will be ready when the class begins.
2. A formal References page, created during researching using a citation-generating website.
3. After your speech, please submit cue cards or bulleted list (if one was used).

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### Assessment

Each student shall be provided with an assessment rubric (see reverse). Please read the criteria carefully before preparation.

Good luck and remember: if you have any questions, just ask (or e-mail) and I'll be happy to help!

## Canadian History 621A Oral History Assessment

Please pay close attention to the assessment scheme when planning and conducting your oral history personal interviews and when creating your Oral History Project speech/multimedia presentation.

Oral History Project Assessment - Personal Interview	
Interviewee and Content	
④	Interviewee was well-chosen and the content researched was appropriate.
③	Interviewee and the content researched were somewhat appropriate.
②	Interviewee and/or the content researched was inappropriate.
①	Interviewee had little content knowledge and was not appropriate.
Questioning and Background Knowledge	
④	Questioning demonstrated outstanding background knowledge and research.
③	Questioning demonstrated competent background knowledge and research.
②	Questioning demonstrated little background knowledge and weak research.
①	Poor questioning due to poor research and a weak content knowledge.
Effectiveness of Questions	
④	Effective questions were sufficiently open ended to draw out the interviewee.
③	Competent questions were mostly open ended to draw out the interviewee.
②	Questions were not effective and failed to draw out the interviewee.
①	Questions were not effective. Most were close ended leading to non-response.
Transcripts - Record of Conversation	
④	Record of conversation is clear and well-documented (print, audio, video).
③	Record of conversation is mostly clear and accurate.
②	Record of conversation is unclear which detracts from its effectiveness.
①	Record of transcript contains errors, omissions, and is mostly unclear.
Preparation	
④	Student notes regarding events/facts were complete and submitted.
③	Student notes regarding events/facts were mostly complete and submitted.
②	Student notes re: events/facts only partially completed and submitted.
①	Inadequate notes re: events/facts and/or notes not submitted.
<b>Final Score</b>	
/20	

Oral History Project Assessment - In-Class Oral History Presentation				
Section One - Oral History Component (Note: Some categories are double-weighted)	④	③	②	①
Accurate dates, details, anecdotes throughout presentation. (x2)				
Research is evident and balanced and pervades speech. (x2)				
Speech flowed well without pauses/prompts (x2)				
Broad historical background established through speech.				
Speech offers in-depth analysis and interpretation of event.				
Photo choice displays analysis and interpretation of event.				
<b>Length Requirement: No points awarded, but they may be deducted!</b>				-
<b>Final Score</b>				/36

Oral History Project Personal Interview	/20
Oral History Project In-Class Oral History Presentation	/36
<b>Oral History Project Final Score</b>	<b>/56</b>

## Appendix A - Planning an Oral History Interview

This portion of the Oral History Project is true oral history: an interview that records a person's recollection of events, experiences, reactions, and thoughts about an event or an era in the history of Canada in his/her lifetime. By discovering how these national events affected their lives and livelihoods, these versions of oral history add that special personal extension to our study of the past. In fact, obtaining a person recollection of events helps to make history more relevant.

Conducting oral history interviews is using a primary source for research (someone who actually lived through the event/era). You may be surprised with the collection of information (and personal wisdom) that can be gained from members of your family and community into major events of Canada's (and the world's) past. The following guidelines will help you to get organized before beginning your personal interview.

### Background Preparation

Choose your interview subject. When choosing, be sure to consider the following:

- How much time should I allocate to this interview?
- Would my choice of interviewee be willing to participate in this interview (and be possibly audio or videotaped)?
- What information can I retrieve from a personal interview with this person?
- Think about how you will record your interview subject's responses. It is highly suggested to use a tape recorder/video recorder and get permission to record your interviews.

### Planning the Interview

- Write an introduction to your interview. Introduce yourself if necessary, and include an explanation of this project and its purpose.
- Write some easy warm-up questions to make both you and your subject comfortable. The questions are general and might include questions about the person's age, place of birth, family members, or occupation.
- Write at least ten questions to help you get stories/details/recollections/reflections about the event or time period you are studying. If you wish, you can share these questions with classmates in order to build up a storehouse of appropriate interview questions.
- Prepare some follow-up questions. The intention of these questions is to help you to clarify and expand upon the information gained from your interview. A good interviewer will anticipate some responses (remember that you have already done a little bit of background reading and have some knowledge of the subject matter in question).

### Conducting the Interview

- Make an appointment with your subject be sure to arrive on time.
- If you use a tape/video recorder, be sure to ask your subject's permission and advise him/her that it will be shared with your teacher. If your subject does not agree to be taped in this manner, respect his/her wishes and have a pen and paper prepared.
- Be sure to bring these notes to help you guide the interview.
- Be aware that your subject may wander off with an interesting story during your conversation. Continue with it as long as it adds to your understanding of the topic. Often, this will lead the interview into very interesting areas that enhance the experience for both parties. If this is not the case, find an appropriate pause to politely return to your list of questions.
- When your interview is completed, remind your subject that you will be using the information for a class project. Ask your subject how he or she would like to be referred to in the report or if he or she wishes to remain anonymous.
- As a final phase, be sure to write your subject a thank-you letter and ask him/her if he or she would like a copy of the transcript.

By following the guidelines above, you should be assured of a positive and valuable oral history experience. Be aware that not every interview subject will be the same. Some will have wonderful stories and others may not. The mark of a good interviewer is to elicit the wonderful stories from the subject - no matter how reluctant!