

Student Handout: How to Conduct an Interview

Generating Interview Questions:

It is important to prepare interview questions in advance in order to ensure that your key questions are addressed. At the same time, a good interviewer will also ask follow-up questions in order to acquire greater depth and subtlety from the interviewee. There are different types of interview questions:

1. Closed-ended questions require a simple answer (what is your name?), or a selection from a few set answers. Closed-ended questions are handy when you are interviewing a lot of people and want to easily compare their answers.
2. Open-ended questions require the person being interviewed to explain in some detail. Open-ended questions are helpful when you want to discover more depth or complexity. You might ask them as follow-up questions to things people have said earlier in an interview.

Activity: Interviews

Read and label each question below in the blank provided. For closed-ended questions, write "C," and for open-ended questions, write "O." (Adapted from NWT Heritage Fairs Teacher Manual https://www.pwnhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/nwt_heritage_fairs_teacher_manual.pdf):

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | 1. What was it like when you went fishing as a child compared to now? |
| _____ | 2. When were you born? |
| _____ | 3. You said earlier that knowledge from our ancestors informs how we should act on the land today. Can you tell me what you mean and provide an example? |
| _____ | 4. Would you tell me about your memories of hunting caribou with your uncle? |
| _____ | 5. Do you like dry meat? |

Prepare a list of 5-7 interview questions that help you understand sustainability and fish harvest, including:

- values/traditions/practices that contribute to sustainability
- examples of sustainable fish harvest and/or ecotourism
- inhibitors to sustainable practices

Your questions should be specific to the interviewee and your specific community. Before the interview, be sure to write these questions clearly and with space to jot notes during the interview.

Best Practices for Interviews:

Willingness to be interviewed shows great generosity. By agreeing to an interview, a person expresses willingness to share personal experiences, perspectives, and stories. It is imperative that interviewers respect this generosity by maintaining professionalism and ethics in managing both the interview proper and the information that is shared. The experience should be positive for both you (the interviewer) and the interviewee!

Read through the following checklist and practice with a partner before conducting your formal interview. You will want to be familiar with the interview process, so that your formal interview goes smoothly. Even if you are using technology to record the interview, it is a good idea to practice notetaking during the interview in order to capture your own thoughts and responses.

Keep these best practices in mind when you're conducting interviews for your project:

1. Locate a quiet place to set up and test the recorder.
2. If the person being interviewed is more comfortable in another language, then ensure you've planned for a translator.
3. Introduce yourself.
4. Begin by recording the person's name, the date of interview, and the location.
5. Explain the purpose of the interview and how you will use the information.
6. Have them sign a release form.
7. If you are using a tape recorder, pause early-on in the interview to check that your recorder is working.
8. Do more listening than talking.
9. Take necessary notes in your Journal. Ask for clarification of special language and terms.
10. Take pictures of the interviewee.
11. If you take pictures, have the interviewee sign a photo release form.
12. Write follow-up notes about your impressions, ideas, and questions you still need to ask.
13. If you recorded the interview, start transcribing as soon as possible. Sometimes you won't be able to hear answers from the tape, and it's better to transcribe while you can still remember the conversation.
14. Analyze your findings to identify the important points. Decide if any follow-up is needed.
15. Send your Interviewee a thank-you note.

Interview the Elder(s) or community member(s) using the students' interview guide. Students should take notes during the interview on a blank piece of paper. Following the interview, have students invite their interviewee(s) to the class Youth Knowledge Fair so that the knowledge holder can see the outcome of the interview.

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