CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Keep the following tips in mind before you leave for the interview and use this sheet if necessary while you are conducting the interview.

**Tip 1.** Before going to the interview, double-check that you have everything that you will need.
- Interview questions
- Tape recorder, the power cord, and extra batteries
- Cassette tapes (at least two 90-minute tapes)
- Interview Consent Form
- Paper and pen

Optional but recommended to bring:
- Back-up tape recorder
- Extension cord
- Camera

- A friend or partner so that one person can focus on making sure the technology is working. (Note: Of course you should always bring another person if you are going to the home of someone you do not know.)

**Tip 2.** When you meet the person you will be interviewing, introduce yourself and thank the person for agreeing to do the interview.

**Tip 3.** When you are ready to start the interview, MAKE SURE THE TAPE RECORDER IS TURNED ON AND THE TAPE IS RUNNING! It is a good idea to check all aspects of the tape recording by doing a sample run and a playback to check for volume.

**Tip 4.** Start the interview by saying, “I am talking with __________________, who is going to be sharing his/her expertise of (immigration to the central Wisconsin area). First, we will get some background information.”

**Tip 5.** Continue by asking background questions such as name, age, and place of birth. These will provide valuable information, but it will also serve as a warm-up for the next phase of the interview.

**Tip 6.** Next, begin to ask some of the open-ended questions that you prepared for the interview. Ask the person to tell his/her story.

**Tip 7.** Take your time and get a detailed response. Keep in mind that when you are interviewing that it’s better to get a “complete” response to a question than to rush through all of the questions.

Some helpful phrases to use include:
- “Can you tell me more about ...?”
- “Could you give me an example of ...?”
- “Why (was it a difficult time) ...?”
- Ask follow-up questions, such as “Can you tell me more about that?”

**Tip 8.** Listen carefully while the person is answering. You may need to “jump around” with the questions you ask instead of going in the exact order that you have them. Be flexible. You may learn about some things you had not anticipated, but new ideas and perspectives can also take your research project to interesting places.

**Tip 9.** If the person gets too far off the topic, try to refocus by asking one of the questions you have prepared, or say something like, “That is really interesting. Let’s get back to, for example, how you came to the United States.”

**Tip 10.** Be respectful and polite at all times during the interview, and be sensitive to the person whom you are interviewing. It is not appropriate to disagree with the person you are interviewing. The person may say something that is not historically accurate, or something offensive to you. Again, remain nonjudgmental during the interview.

**Tip 11.** Inquire about additional materials such as photographs, scrapbooks, clippings, letters, or diaries, that the interviewee might be willing to share with you for your History Day research.