



### **Oral History Interview Tips:**

- 1.** Make the interviewee feel comfortable and at ease. Consider giving a very short background of your study, and let him or her know you are interested in what they may or may not be able to add. Example: "In class, we just learned about the Japanese Internment, and have been studying about the courts and our government related to this time in history. We are conducting an interview to see what other people have learned on this same topic at different times in their lives." (*In other words – this isn't a test for the interviewee*)
- 2.** Check all technology in advance and make sure it is in working order. Be sure the interviewee is comfortable with the technology. If not, take a few notes on their responses instead of using technology.
- 3.** Be very respectful of the interviewee's feelings. Often people feel like they need to have the "right" answer. Many times there is not one correct answer, and other times there are reasons the person may not have a comment or an answer to questions. All of this information adds to the story the Oral Historian is learning about.
- 4.** Be sure to ask open-ended questions. If the answer is "no", or "yes", be sure to ask the interviewee to please explain, give examples, or tell you more.
- 5.** Hold the interview in a location where there will not be interruptions or noises that might take away from your time together.
- 6.** Let the interviewee do the talking! Your purpose for the interview is to gather information on a topic and hopefully learn more about this person's point of view. Be careful not to "correct", interrupt, or finish the information for them.
- 7.** Be polite! Thank the interviewee in advance for letting you interview them and make them feel comfortable. Thank the interviewee again for taking the time to share with you.
- 8.** Finish by asking the interviewee if they have any questions he or she would like to ask you. If they do ask questions, this is the correct time for you to share some of your knowledge and explain even more about your unit of study!

**Note:** It is fun to group students into 8 groups and have them perform “Bloopers”. They read their assigned interview “tip”, and then perform a quick interview together, making the mistake that the “tip” is trying to prevent. The class tries to guess which tip they are addressing. The “performers” then tell the class the importance of the correct way to address the “tip” during an interview.