

NORTHWEST FOLKLIFE'S

LIVING LEGACIES

----- TOOLKIT -----



LIVING LEGACIES INTERVIEWS: CULTIVATING COMMUNITY STORIES



As Northwest Folklife looks towards our 50th Anniversary in 2021, we seek to center and celebrate the people who make our work possible. In honor of the Living Legacies among us, we are dedicating 2020 to identifying and amplifying the everyday heroes and culture bearers in our region. We are calling on you to join us in documenting and uplifting untold stories from your own community to preserve and pass on to the next generation.

Northwest Folklife's Living Legacies Toolkit offers tips and resources for collecting and sharing the stories, memories, and traditions of your family, neighbors, and broader community.

THIS TOOLKIT INCLUDES:

1.

An overview for
hosting Living
Legacy Interviews

2.

Recording
resources and
documentation tips

3.

A list of sample
questions to get
you started

OVERVIEW OF LIVING LEGACIES INTERVIEWS



Why is capturing our stories important?



Culture lives through 'Folklife'—the everyday and intimate creativity that all of us share and pass onto the next generation. This is why your stories and the stories of the people around you are unique, valuable treasures. These Living Legacies connect us to our roots, bridge generations, and supply us with a foundation for our future. By collecting, preserving, and sharing these stories, we help strengthen the cultural fabric that enriches lives and holds communities together. By amplifying the Culture Bearers among us, we empower ourselves and the future of our own Folklife.

Everyone has a story to tell.

Culture bearers can be found everywhere—in community gathering spaces, schools, local businesses, and within your own family. Friends, mentors, neighbors, relatives, teachers, and more all have stories that bear culture and transmit Folklife. Whether the topic is customs and beliefs, food and cuisine, music and dance, stories and song, or even just memories of days passed, these voices of community embody Living Legacies and deserve to be honored.

HOW DO I DOCUMENT MY INTERVIEW?

1.

Take photos and video.

2.

Take notes.

3.

Use an audio recording device or app.

You don't need special equipment to host a Living Legacy Interview. Most smartphones have built-in photo, video, and audio capabilities, and there are many free, easy-to-use apps you can download to help capture, edit, and share your stories.

RECORDING RESOURCES & DOCUMENTATION TIPS

Before the Interview

- ◆ Contact your Culture Bearer to let them know you want to document and share their Living Legacy. Then schedule a time and place for the interview.
- ◆ Choose a comfortable, controlled space to host your interview, away from noises, even if in a controlled environment (a clock ticking, refrigerator kicking on, birds outside, etc.). Make sure there will be a place to sit, a surface to write, and a quiet environment to record free from distractions.
- ◆ Conduct some initial research to collect background information. The more you know about your Culture Bearer, the better you can provide unique questions and clear direction for the interview. Accessible research tools include the internet, family members, or the library.
- ◆ Practice interviewing with a friend or family member to work out any issues with using the equipment and to feel confident that it will work as expected.
- ◆ Come prepared. Be sure to bring a pen and paper, fully charged recording gear (whether it's your phone or other device), and enough memory on your device (or an external hard drive) to capture the full length of your interview. Whatever means of documentation you choose, make sure you are comfortable using it!

----- During the Interview -----

- ◆ Place the recording device or your smartphone within easy reach. A good guideline is to position the microphone 6–10 inches away from the speaker's mouth.
- ◆ Do a test recording to make sure your set-up captures both your voices—the questions and answers—clearly. Make any necessary adjustments to placement and controls to optimize clarity before you begin the interview.
- ◆ Listen if there is a good opportunity for a follow-up question or if there is something you don't understand. Be sure to ask and clarify.
- ◆ Make use of any visual materials whenever possible. Old photographs, family photo albums, scrapbooks, letters, birth certificates, heirlooms, artwork, and mementos help stimulate memories and add interest and variety to video.
- ◆ Note the timestamp for specific questions, answers, or key moments while you go. This will help your post-interview process to easily find specific quotes or highlights.

----- After the Interview -----

- ◆ Make notes about the interview while it is still fresh in your mind including impressions, observations, themes, and any ideas for follow-up.
- ◆ Summarize the general contents of the recording and transcribe, word for word, any useful direct quotes and highlights for later in your notes.
- ◆ Make sure your files are named and stored in an organized manner. We recommend uploading interviews to Google Drive, Dropbox, or another free online cloud storage service for back-up, remote access, and easy sharing later.
- ◆ Follow up with your Culture Bearer about how best to preserve and honor their stories. Ask if there are any parts of the interview they wish to keep private, and make sure to get permission before sharing interview content publicly.
- ◆ See the list of resources on the following page for audio and video editing tips and tools.



POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



There are no right or wrong questions to ask, but if you need some help getting started, choose a few questions from each category below. You can begin by asking your Culture Bearer their name and if there are any stories about its origin.

1.

Reflecting on the Past

When and where were you born? How did you, your family, or your ancestors arrive to the Northwest, and what was that journey like? What historical events affected your family and community?

2.

Connecting through People and Places

What adults and mentors were important to you growing up, and what skills or lessons did they teach you? What were the gathering places in your community and why were they important?

3.

Sharing and Celebrating Traditions

What recipes, crafts, songs, stories, or customs have been passed down from generation to generation in your family? Describe the artistic, cultural, or family traditions you take most pride in practicing.

4.

Transmitting the Legacy

Why is it important to transmit/pass on your culture, stories and traditions? How do you pass on your traditions? How do you see these traditions evolving? What do you want future generations to know?

SHARE YOUR STORY WITH NORTHWEST FOLKLIFE'S LIVING LEGACIES

As Northwest Folklife builds a retrospective for our 50th anniversary, it is YOUR stories and community's legacies that we want to center and amplify!

Share with the Greater Pacific Northwest Community:

1. Upload highlights of your story, photos, and recordings to: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Soundcloud
 - a. **Note:** If you upload your story to YouTube, please title your video "NWFL Living Legacies:(Your Title)"
 - b. **Note:** Please make sure your post is public so we are able to view and re-share your story.
2. Use the Hashtag [#NWFLlivinglegacies](#) and tag Northwest Folklife ([@nwfolklife](#))
3. We will be sharing some of your stories through our social media platforms!



SHARE WITH NORTHWEST FOLKLIFE



Want to submit a quote or highlight from your story for Northwest Folklife's collection? Fill out this form [HERE](#). For stories documented through audio and video, please submit excerpts that are 5–10 minutes in length.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- ◆ [Best Free Voice Recording Apps for smartphones](#)
- ◆ [Best Practices for Making Audio Recordings](#)
- ◆ [Video Editing Software Suggestion and Examples](#)
- ◆ [Wa Na Wari's Central District Oral History Studio](#)
- ◆ [Oral History Release Forms](#)



INSPIRATION & EXAMPLES



- ◆ [Shelf Life Community Stories Project](#)
- ◆ [Many Paths, Many Voices: Oral Histories from the UW Special Collections](#)
- ◆ [Principles of Fieldwork and Archiving](#)
- ◆ [The Third Thirty: A Community Oral History Project](#)



ADAPTED FROM



- ◆ [Washington State Parks Folk & Traditional Arts Program](#)
- ◆ ["Telling Our Stories Toolkit", Oregon Folklife Network, 2018](#)
- ◆ [The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide](#)