

## INTERVIEWING TIPS FORM

Before beginning an interview, always take time to get acquainted with the person you are about to interview. Getting acquainted takes a lot of time, and the more acquainted the interview and interviewee become, the better the interview. Interviewing a traditional person may require hours, days, or weeks of getting acquainted beforehand, but it is necessary to respect the pace of the traditional person. This will help both people feel more comfortable about the interviewing situation. Since the interviewee will be doing most of the talking once the interview gets underway, you should probably begin by telling him or her something about yourself. You may wish to adapt the following format for your own purposes:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_

I represent the \_\_\_\_\_(program/school). (You may want to tell the person about your program or school; some of the duties or responsibilities you have, as a student or teacher; and about the Indian students or other students you work with.)

I am a \_\_\_\_\_(name of tribe/band if American Indian). I have\_\_\_\_\_children/brothers or sisters, and live in \_\_\_\_\_(city or town).

Becoming more aware of another culture is important to me as a student/teacher. I need to ask you if it is all right if I include your name on any information that is used for lesson plans or a report in class. (If the person is reluctant to have his or her name used, assure him or her that you will indicate on the lesson plan or report that this was an interview done with a local person from the \_\_\_\_\_[tribe/clan/band] and not mention a name.) The person being interviewed can provide personal biographical data: name, tribe/band, age, etc.

On the following pages are several sample interview formats. Each contains a series of questions you may wish to use or consult in conducting interviews with Indian people. These are merely suggestions to help you get started. You may well want to add some questions, omit some, or just plain do it your own way. Follow your interests and use your best judgment.

(Modified from *Handbook for Cultural Curriculum Developers – Making Education Relevant for Contemporary Youth*, July 1998, American Indian Institute College of Continuing Education, University of Oklahoma.)

**Interview Topic: Growing Up as an American Indian**

**Interviewer:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Interviewee:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Location:**\_\_\_\_\_

**1. Biographical data:**

**What is your name?**

**Where and when were you born (birthdate)?**

**What is your tribe/band?**

**2. Are you a member of a clan? If so, what is it?**

**3. Do you have a name given by your tribe? If possible, could you please share it with me and tell me what it means?**  
**(Keep in mind that some tribes do not exchange that information with non-Indians readily.)**

**4. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so, please tell me about them and what they were like when all of you were growing up?**

**5. Please tell me a little about the adults in your family, about the people who were important in bringing you up.**

6. What do you feel are/were the most important things you were taught as a child by your parents or grandparents?
7. What were some of the “Indian ways” that you remember being taught as a child?
8. In what ways do American Indian parents today teach their children “Indian ways”? Do you think this is important?
9. What were you like as a child? Did you have a nickname? What games did you like to play? What did you especially like doing?
10. Please describe one of the happiest times you remember having when you were a child.
11. Can you remember a traditional Indian/tribal/band story that your parents or grandparents told you as a child? What was it?
12. When you were young, how did the image of Indians portrayed by movies or books influence the way you thought about yourself?
13. What is the most important thing about your Indian heritage that you can teach your own children and other Indian children?
14. What words of wisdom could you give young Indian people who are growing up today?

**Interview Topic: Going to School**

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Biographical data:**  
**What is your name?**  
  
**Where and when were you born (birthdate)?**  
  
**What is your tribe/band?**
2. **Are you a member of a clan? If so, what is it?**
3. **Do you have an Indian name? If possible, could you please share it with me and tell me what it means? (Keep in mind that some tribal members do not share this information with non-Indians.)**
4. **What schools did you attend when you were growing up? Where were they located?**
5. **Do you mind describing these schools?**
6. **How was school for you? What did you like best about school? Least?**

7.     **What kind of student were you? Please explain.**
  
8.     **Which of your teachers do you remember with great fondness? What was it about them that made them “good” teachers to you?**
  
9.     **What language was spoken in your home when you were growing up?**  
**When did you learn English/French? What about your tribal/band language?**
  
10.    **Do you have any regrets as you think back to your days in school? Please explain.**
  
11.    **Compare the education you received at school to the education you received from life.**
  
12.    **Did you ever learn about Indian culture and tribes/bands in school? How do you feel about this? If Indian culture classes were taught, what was the most valuable thing you discovered?**
  
13.    **What advice would you give to Indian children and young people who are attending school today?**