

Senior Citizen's Interview

Summary

As students learn about everyday life in Winnipeg's past, they can make this study more personally relevant and exciting by interviewing parents, grandparents, and possibly their great-grandparents. A simple preparatory discussion, an interview worksheet completed as independent work, and individual follow-up, allow students to place their family and community's history in the context of a broader state history.

Objectives

- Students will learn and improve their interview skills.
- Students will gain information through interview skills.
- Students will be able to present explicit reference details as they compare the past and present.

Procedures

1. Determine when during the school year a lesson on family history might be most effective. If the school librarian initiates the lesson, formally or informally, contact teachers to secure this information.
2. Discuss with students their perceptions of how life might have been different for earlier generations of their family members. Begin with the following:
 - Think about the activities that you do during the day, from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep at night. How do you think your grandparents' lives were different when they were growing up?
 - What's it like when all the lights go out?
 - Can you imagine living all the time without electricity or running water?
3. Allow students to offer their own present-day stories as well as their perceptions about life in the past. List their ideas on the chalkboard or on a transparency. After this discussion, distribute the interview worksheets.
4. Read through the interview directions as a group, and ask students if they have any questions. Let them know that if their own grandparents are unavailable, it is acceptable to conduct the interview with older family friends or neighbors.
5. Because some students will need more time to gain access to family members, this lesson works well with a flexible due date.
6. As students share their interview results with the classmates, be sure to have them include the details of life that most surprised them.

Enhancement Activities

Encourage family members of students to come into school and demonstrate skills that were reported during the interview, like wool spinning, knitting, quilting, and ice cream making.