2024 National Order of the Arrow Conference

Session: Oral History Project – Capture Your Lodge's Past

Session Length: 45 minutes

Session Description

Join us for a fascinating look at how to capture your lodge's past. This session will give learners the tools to gather, preserve, and interpret the voices and memories of the past. This hands-on session will provide attendees with best practices and resources for preserving our history.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Participants will understand what "oral history" means and why oral histories are important to our obligation to "observe and preserve" our histories and traditions.

Outcome 2: Participants will have a practical, functional knowledge of how to conduct a short but effective oral history interview.

Outcome 3: Participants will have a practical, functional knowledge of essential technology and data integrity topics related to collecting and preserving oral history interviews.

Theme Connection: Seek New Heights

The theme for this conference is "Seek New Heights", emphasizing the drive for excellence that characterizes the OA and our daily lives. As Arrowmen, we are each uniquely obligated to "observe and preserve" our history and tradition, but many lodges still do not do a great job of preserving their history. This is an opportunity for you to take your local lodge history efforts to new heights and help preserve those stories for future generations of Arrowmen.

Facility and Material Needs

Facility Needs

Is this session remote delegate-compatible? (ie. can the material be engagingly taught via live stream)	Yes.
Does this session need audio/video (AV) capabilities? (ie. projector)	No, but a projector would be helpful to present the slides. A sound system would be helpful if you want to include examples or demonstrations.
Are there any other specific facility needs for this session? (ie. movable chairs, panel-style seating, etc.)	No. This is designed to fit into a typical classroom or lecture hall setting.

Material Needs

Material	Quantity	Source
Projector, screen, HDMI input.	1	Classroom
Power	1	Classroom
"Show & Tell" Equipment	N/A	Instructor

Session Preparation Steps

Step 1: Review this syllabus. There are entire professional and academic fields dedicated to oral histories. Our goal here is not to give a deep, comprehensive knowledge. That could take weeks, months, or even years. Instead, we want to introduce the best "first steps" available to an audience that generally doesn't know how to get started.

Step 2: Review the training slides. Each section should follow the "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them," strategy for public speaking. These slides really provide a framework for the entire session, so let them be your guide!

Step 3: Practice your own oral history interviews, if time allows. This is a discipline that really benefits from repeated practice over a long period of time. You do not need to be an expert in oral history to conduct an effective interview, nor to present this material, but a working knowledge and some basic experience will go a long way.

Additional Staff Members

Trainer Name	Email	Phone #
None.		

Lesson Plan

Introduction **2 minutes**
Slides 1-4

- Take a moment to introduce yourself, give some brief background information, and introduce the objectives for this session.

Section 1 – What is Oral History? **3 minutes**
Slides 5-9

- Briefly review the definition of "oral history' from the Oral History Association.

- Briefly review why oral history is so important. It's because it "fills in the gaps" in our lists of names, dates, and places. It gives the human perspective on history, and it tells us what it was like from the voices of the people who were there.

- Take a moment to review the obligation, then transition to slide 7 to emphasize that, "we are uniquely obligated to observe and preserve our history and traditions."

Section 2 – Getting Started **5 minutes**
Slides 10-18

- Before you can do anything, you have to identify a topic of interest. For your first project, something very specific might be better. A topic that is too broad could lead to a seemingly impossible task if you're not careful. Don't be afraid to be very specific.

- Once you have identified your topic, begin to identify people and/or groups of people that can help you with that topic. If you are studying your lodge history, for example, you can start with lodge chiefs and advisers.

- Once you have identified your first set of interview candidates, start reaching out to them. Introduce yourself, your project, and your objectives, then ask if they would be willing to sit down for a short interview with you.

- If they agree to be a part of your project, you can do a more detailed "pre-interview" meeting. This is where you will finalize the details for your interview (time, place, attendees, etc.) and answer any questions that your interviewee may have. If you are recording remotely, this is also a good time to do a technology test.

- Be mindful of ethical considerations, especially regarding the interviewee and their rights to the interview recording. Under US copyright law, they are a co-creator and are entitled to all of the same rights you are with that recording, including when, where, and how it may be used.

Section 3 – 5 Rules for Great Interviews **15 minutes**

Slides 19-28

- Many people have made lifelong careers out of conducting great interviews. Our goal here is to give them a simple checklist to help get things started. This is arguably the most important part of the session, so don't be afraid to dwell in this section for a bit longer than the others.

- 1 – Do your research. This is obvious to most of us, but you can ask better questions when you know more about your interviewee!

- 2 – Be courteous. This seems obvious, but try to be a good host. Be thoughtful to the interviewee's physical comfort, emotional comfort, etc. Don't overstay your welcome. Don't be hostile to the interviewee. You get the idea.

- 3 – Be genuinely curious. People can tell when you're faking it. If they think you're not into it, you'll get lousy answers. If they can tell that you are interested and excited to hear what they have to say, you will find that they are more willing to go deep into the details.

- 4 – Use active listening. If you've been to NLS, DYLC, NYLT, or Wood Badge, you've learned a bit about active listening. This is where you put those skills to WORK. Just remember to do it quietly, otherwise you'll hear all of your, "mm-hmm", "yeah", and "right" comments on the tape.

- 5 – Ask open-ended questions. In other words, avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." If you start questions with, "Tell me about …" or "What was it like when …" or "How did you feel when …", you're on the right track.

5 minutes

Section 4 – Tech & Equipment

Slides 29-37

- The main take-away here is that "gear" (mics, recorders, etc.) don't really matter if you have some basic control over your environment. Instead, focus on finding and capturing stories from the person you're interviewing.

- Include some photos of different interview setups.

- Equipment only really starts to matter when you lose control over things like background noise and other environmental distractions. The more you lose control, the more you have to pay attention to your equipment and the more you have to know how to use it.

Section 5 – Files Storage & Data Integrity **5 minutes**

Slides 38-43

- Your goal is to have "a place for everything, and everything in its place." Even if all of your personal files are a mess, this is the time where you want to stay organized.

- Name your files AND your directories with as many details as possible.

- Include all of the files for a single interview in one folder. This includes the audio and/or video recordings, transcripts of those recordings, consent & release forms, supporting photos and documents, etc.

- Don't forget to backup your files! You've worked hard to collect these interviews, so do your best to help preserve them. Learn the "3-2-1" rule for data backups and USE IT. Consider contributing your recordings to relevant library and/or research archives, but don't forget to get permission from your interviewee!

5 minutes

Conclusion & Takeaway Challenge

Slides 42-45

- Give a brief summary of the presentation so far, then give the class their takeaway challenge:

- TAKEAWAY CHALLENGE: Grab your notebook and pen and jot down a few ideas for your first oral history project. You could collect memories from this NOAC, for example, or you could collect the history of your ceremony team. You might even jump right into trying to collect your entire lodge history. This part is up to you.

- Once you have the topic, write down five names who you can talk to about that topic. They don't have to be people that you know! Just write down those names, then ask them if they're willing to be a part of your project.

- Finally, interview those who are willing to help! The first few interviews might be difficult, so try to start with people who you know and who you trust, and don't forget that you can always try to go back later and do another interview.

Appendix: Resources and Source Material

Resource	Link
Order of the Arrow, Mission & Purpose	Available online at: https://oa-bsa.org/about/mission-purpose