**HISTOIRES** DE VIE MONTRÉAL
MONTREAL LIFE **STORIES**

# Training Workshop

# September 2011

# Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling

# Concordia University

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present Training kit has evolved along the life of the project itself. It is compiled based upon several key documents such as CURA main protocol, the project's final proposal and its ethics package, all of which are a result of the collaborative efforts, dedication, guidance and leadership of many people since the conception of the project in October 2005. Henry Greenspan, in particular, has greatly influenced and inspired the project's principles and practices through his ongoing support, and conversation with many members of the project including with the project's leader, Steven High.

The present Training kit is the result also of the energetic involvement and teamwork of many staff, community and faculty members. Anna Sheftel, in collaboration with Jessica Silva and Sam Ouen Yem, prepared the initial Psychological Support Guidelines, and she has kept enriching it after each training workshop and group discussion. Afsaneh Hojabri developed General Interview Guidelines, Transcription Guides, and summarized the Ethics Guide based on several sources, a list of which is included in this booklet's bibliography. Ravann Runnath prepared an inclusive Audio and Videography Guide, again based on previous works and relevant resources. Sandra Gasana recently completed a thorough Post-Production Guide in accordance with the project's other guides, and as a ground for many more steps to ensue. Carole Vacher has been instrumental in helping with the continuing edits to the guide.

All the guidelines have gone through several stages of drafts and revisions (and are expected to keep doing so), benefiting from the research, insight, and input of other individuals whose names are not necessarily mentioned here, but to whom the project is most grateful: volunteers, staff members working "behind the scene" on less evident aspects of this booklet, and members of the project's Training Committee. Special gratitude goes to Luis Van Isschot, the project's Coordinator, and Nancy Rebelo whose substantial role within the project make them accountable for always filling a gap, fixing a problem, and taking up a task when most needed.

The CURA Life Stories project has been made possible by the generous financial support of Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Dear Participants,


Welcome to the series of *CURA Life Stories* training workshops, and thank you for your participation. We are pleased to be coordinating these sessions for CURA researchers in what we hope will be two evenings of reflection and discussion about the process of interviewing survivors of war, genocide and other human rights violations.

This core training (divided into two portions, for this round of training) will cover a variety of topics related to the interviewing process. CURA's ethics protocol requires that all interviewers be trained to conduct sensitive and constructive interviews that guide interviewees in the process of remembering. As such, this training aims to get interviewers thinking about how to be sensitive interviewers who are aware of the emotional and psychological needs of participants; it will address ethics procedures, and more subtle questions of ethics and sensitivity.

The working philosophy of *The Life Stories Project* values the idea of "sharing authority" which is intrinsic to the collaborative work of oral history. It requires the cultivation of trust, the development of collaborative relationships, and shared decision-making. These training sessions will provide you with a better understanding of the *Life Stories Project* while giving you the tools to begin this process of "sharing authority".

You can find the schedule of the training sessions on the following page. Throughout these sessions, we hope to encourage reflection and discussion on the workshops' participants and hope to address any concerns you may have in regard to the interview process. We hope that you will find these workshops informative and helpful to you as researchers in the *Life Stories Project.*


Sincerely,


The CURA *Life Stories* Training Committee

Members:
Warren Linds, Chair of the Committee (w.linds@sasktel.net)
Steven High (shigh@alcor.concordia.ca)
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For general information contact the Project's Coordinator, Eve-Lyne Cayouette Ashby at cura@alcor.concordia.ca.

# Training Schedule

<u>Workshop #1</u>

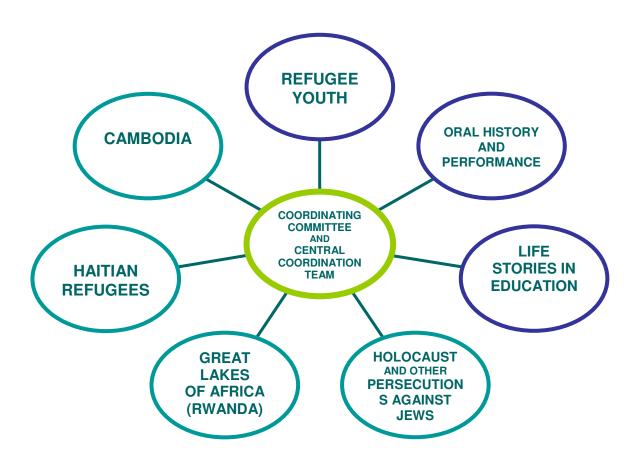**5:30 – 8:30**          Introduction to the Montreal Life Stories project

<u>Workshop #2</u>

**5:30 – 8:30**          Ethics, interviewing techniques and listening to survivors.

## OVERVIEW OF CURA PROJECT PLANS

Each working group has a team of trained interviewers, including several paid interviewers. Other interviewers include university-based researchers, individual co-applicants and CURA staff, who will not be paid. Each interview team designates a team leader. Specialized training may be necessary for team leaders. The number of paid interviewers in each team will depend on the number of interviews being conducted by the working group, depending on their research plans, and overall budget constraints. These groups mostly function autonomously, but coordinate their efforts through meetings between team leaders, the Interview Coordinator and the Project Coordinator. These meetings take place regularly throughout the life of the project.

The project is organized into seven purpose-based working groups comprising university-based researchers and community partners. Each has a designated Interview Team. Four of these working groups (Rwandan, Cambodian, Haitian, Jewish) are organized on the basis of cultural community. The three others, education, performance and refugee youth, are organized along the line of shared methodological approaches and key questions. All seven working groups are engaged in both life history interviewing and in collective storytelling.

REFUGEE YOUTH

CAMBODIA

ORAL HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND CENTRAL COORDINATION TEAM

HAITIAN REFUGEES

LIFE STORIES IN EDUCATION

GREAT LAKES OF AFRICA (RWANDA)

HOLOCAUST AND OTHER PERSECUTIONS AGAINST JEWS

## STEP 1: CORE TRAINING

### 1a. Core Workshops
All interviewers must complete a course of 2 workshops before conducting interviews (the workshops are available in both French and English).

The workshops:
1. Introduction to Montreal Life Stories,
2. Ethics,
3. Interviewing and Listening to Survivors.

### 1b. Selection and Certification
Upon completing the core workshops, potential interviewers will receive formal certification from the project, and their names will be noted in a centrally-managed list.

All potential interviewers must also complete application forms to the Working Group (WG) of their choice, and are evaluated by WG Team Leaders before interviewing starts. These applications are available through the Project Coordinator or Training Coordinators, and are on Basecamp.

The training will conclude with a selection process, whereby trainers, in collaboration with Training Coordinators and Interview Team Leaders, decide whether individuals are prepared to conduct interviews. Trainers and Training Coordinators will raise questions or concerns with Interview Team Leaders as they deem appropriate.

In some cases individuals may be deemed unsuitable for work on the project. In other cases, individuals may be asked to improve specific skills or capacities, or may be asked if they are interested in contributing to the project in other ways. Nobody will be paid for training. Paid interviewers will only sign their contracts once training has been completed, certification awarded, and affiliation with a WG is established.

### 1c. Training Teams
The training team consists of project members with a background in the above-mentioned core skills. We are seeking to have a large pool of capable trainers from diverse background, because training will be happening on a permanent basis for the life of the project and we will always need trainers available to perform this key function.

### 1d. Seminar/Workshop Series
We provide complementary training workshops as a part of a regular seminar/workshop series. This draws upon both people associated with project and outside resource people, as appropriate. The workshop series includes a wide range of themes from workshops on videography, video-editing, and database management to issues related to gender. Through these workshops/seminars project members will have the opportunity to enhance or share their skills, and to promote project-wide discussion.

### 1e. Psychosocial Support
Members of the project who are specialists in issues of psychosocial support have helped determine the content for the training modules, in accordance with our ethics framework.

Strategies and resources for individual and mutual support will be discussed in-depth in the training process.

## STEP 2: INTERVIEWEE RECRUITMENT

2a. Coordination and Decentralization
The project approach is one of coordinated decentralization.  That is to say, each working group is responsible for their own recruitment processes, in accordance with general guidelines that have been developed by the project.  The Project Coordinator and Post-Production Coordinator are responsible for ensuring that working groups receive the support they need throughout this process.

2b. Finding Interviewees
Recruitment may take place in a variety of ways, including through existing networks and word of mouth.  The goals of the working groups are to ensure that interviewees represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds from within the communities involved in the project. We are in the process of developing posters, flyers and a website (including a way to have people volunteer online).  As necessary, prospective interviewees that come forward will be referred to the appropriate working groups.

2c. Keeping Track
The Post-Production Coordinator will maintain a filing system to keep track of interviewees' names and contact information, in addition to all contact between the project and the interviewees.  Separate lists will be maintained by each working group.

## STEP 3: RESEARCH & PREPARATION

3a. Resource Materials
Interviewers will need to have knowledge about the history and culture of the communities they are working with.  Each working group will develop packages of readings 150-200 pages in length, including key articles and book chapters, as well as chronologies, lists of web-based resources and selected bibliographies, or other material as deemed appropriate. These should be seen as resource books and reference guides.

3b. Workshops
Working groups are encouraged to organize additional workshops specific to their needs. These will include specific training on culturally-specific issues or group-specific methodological questions.   These workshops may also provide an opportunity for interviewers to discuss issues with other interview team members (for example to share insight between newly-trained and more experienced interviewers).

## STEP 4: PRE-INTERVIEW PROCESS

The main purpose of this step is for interviewers and interviewees to get to know one another, have a broad-ranging conversation about the interview itself, and build trust.  It is recommended that these session be videotaped, and thus can be considered part of the interviewing process.  Further background information on the project may be provided at this time.  At this time the interviewees will be asked to sign consent forms, and will keep a copy of the consent form (one for project; one for them).

## STEP 5: THE INTERVIEW

### 5a. Deep Interviewing

We intend to spend "real time" with the interviewees - or, at least, as much time as they can spare.  We should definitely be thinking in terms of multiple sessions whenever possible. The average length of time spent with any given interviewee has been estimated at 5 hours, but there is in realty no limit.  The idea is to build relationships that facilitate the exploration of life stories in detail and depth. The interview will take a "life history" approach (broadly chronological: grandparents, parents, childhood, schooling, etc.). The interviewer will follow the lead of the interviewee - thus questions should be open-ended, and follow-up questions may be useful.

### 5b. Two-Person Interview Teams

Interviews will be conducted by two-person interviewer teams - one would take the lead as "interviewer" and the other would act as "videographer" (should video be used).  They could switch roles in subsequent sessions if they choose, and if this is appropriate.  There are many advantages to such an approach.  First, by alternating in these roles the two persons learn from each other.  Second, it allows the interviewer to focus on the interview and not the technology.  Third, it could help widen the circle of support for interviewers and interviewees.  We may try to combine university and community interviewers, but of course this is up to working groups to decide, recognizing that circumstances may vary.

## STEP 6: POST-INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

### 6a. Immediate Feedback to Project

Interviewers will be asked to post a message in a central blog within Basecamp ("Rapport des intervieweurs" section) detailing their initial thoughts and feelings about the interview within 24 hours of each interview session.  The message could be long and detailed, or short. The two interviewers could co-write the email, or write separate emails, as they wish.  What patterns did they see? What stood out?  What would they do differently?  It is important to "reflect" on the interview when it is still fresh.  These brief reports are also a valuable research source for the project. A template/example has been developed and is included in the document entitled "Post-Production Guid".

### 6b. Debriefing Sessions

There will be monthly facilitated debriefing sessions for interviewers at the height of interviewing, (bilingual).  All interviewers are strongly encouraged to attend.  These project-wide meetings, facilitated and videotaped for research purposes, will provide interviewers with the opportunity to interpret what they are hearing and seeing and share their experiences.  Interviewers also have the option of individual consultation with a Training Coordinator or psychologist. All of these conversations are important in our deliberations as to changes we may make to the processes, training needs, etc., and will help create a project-wide conversation.

 6c. Follow-up with Interviewees
Interviewees will receive a thank you card, a DVD or CD-Rom copy, and a chronology of the interview, and a tranbscript in the case of anonymous or third-language interviews, as well as an evaluation form for them to fill out and send back to the project.

## STEP 7: TRANSCRIPTION, TRANSLATION & POST-PRODUCTION STAGES
*Transcription and translation will be done with interviews conducted in languages other than French or English, and confidential interviews. All other interviews will have a chronology.

7a. Chronology
All open acces interviews in English or French will have a chronology which consists of a summary of questions and answers with time codes.

7b. Transcribing
All transcriptions will undergo "authentication" by the interviewees and interviewers to ensure their accuracy.

7c. Transcription Style
After giving a great deal of thought to transcription style guide, we have agreed to use verbatim transcription, where every pause, "um" and "aw" is included.  Interviewers are instructed to make note of visual cues as well.

7d. Translation
Interviews conducted in a third language would need to be translated into either English or French, depending on the wishes of the respective working group. There will be a limited number of paid translators; therefore it would be up to each Working Group to allocate adequate budget, or seek volunteer resources for this purpose. All translations need to be authenticated by the interviewees to ensure their accuracy.

7e. Treatment of  Material
Interviewers will be provided with adequate training with respect to the recording, digitization, rendering and burning of videotaped interviews. They will also be trained in the use of digital video and audio recorders, as well as the use of Adobe Premier Elements video editing software.   Please see "Post-Production Guide" for detailed description and instruction for all the technical stages of post production.

## General Interview Guidelines for CURA Life Stories Project

### Part I. Interview Structure and Procedure

● All interviewers must complete a **training course** of 2 workshops, and be accredited by the Life Stories CURA, before conducting interviews.

● Interviewees will tell their life stories in interview sessions held by two-person interview teams. The interviews will be recorded with digital video, digital audio or by transcription according to participants' wishes. The first person will take the lead as "interviewer" and the other will act as "videographer", should video be used. They could switch roles in subsequent sessions if they choose, and if this is appropriate. Audio-recorded interviews will only need one interviewer present.

● As far as possible, researchers will allow ample time for the interview process and ideally **multiple interviews** will be conducted with each participant, depending on the willingness of the participants and at the researchers' discretion. The main idea is to listen to people as long as they are willing to speak to us. That will sometimes mean a single session, other times it will mean 6-7 sessions. The estimated average contact time is 5 hours.

● Pre-Interview sessions will be held as a part of the interview or a short beginning followed by more in-depth interviews. The purpose of Pre-Interview would be to "break the ice" and start the process of establishing rapport, and to get some basic factual information to work with. More specifically, the Pre-Interview can include the following objectives:

- to meet and establish a rapport with the interviewee
- to explain and discuss the purpose of the project
- to explain issues of confidentiality and the accessibility of the interviews and signed the consent form
- to explain and review psychological-support resources available to the participants
- to review the logistics of the interview
- to encourage participants to bring family photo albums and other items that may help them to remember their pasts.
- to gather basic factual information about the interviewee

● Life story interview session(s) will be the main full session, where the participants share their life stories with us. It can take as long as required - in one or more sitting.

● Possible Follow-up interview session. When and if appropriate, a follow up interview could be scheduled not long after the full interview. The follow up interview could be based on family photo albums, documents, and following up various conversational threads.

● Finally, post interview stages include: a) brief-report/ reflection to be emailed by the interviewee team to a central blog (see below) and b) debriefing meetings, held every 3 weeks during the peak of interviewing. These sessions will be video-recorded.

**Part II. Guiding principles in conducting an ethical and successful interview**

**1**.     **Explain the purpose of the project and the nature of the interview**.  The interviewer must have a clear understanding of the scope and purpose of the project and be able to explain it to the interviewee in the clearest terms. In addition, in order to work as an informed and empathetic interviewer, the interviewer should be fully aware of the historical and social context of the community s/he is working with.

By the time you sit with a participant to conduct your first interview, you have already completed the four core training workshops and have been accredited by the project; nonetheless, when you do sit down for your first session make sure you have a thorough command of all the relevant documents and guiding questions. Be prepared for any questions that the participants might have in addition to what you have already explained to them.  **Practice** the introductory part of the interview with a friend or colleague before conducting your first actual interview. Practicing and exchanging roles with a colleague will help you get a good command of how to set the tone of the interview, what essential pieces of information to include; it will also help you identify any disorienting words or gestures that you might habitually use, or any pieces of information that you might be missing.

You must inform the interviewee at the outset that they are free to answer questions any way they wish and that they may refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time (see Ethics Guide Summary, items 2-5). Make sure you have the consent forms, contact sheets and psych support materials with you.

**2.     Establish a setting based on "sharing authority", throughout the process**. The project's design and ethic is based on the shared authority of the interviewer who brings questions, training and some "distance" and the interviewee, who brings life experience and storytelling. Sharing authority is about cultivating and maintaining a relationship based on trust, respect and collaboration with the participants, and facilitating their participation in research production. To start with, you need to conduct the interviews in an egalitarian and non-hierarchal environment of **mutual respect and trust**.

An interview is successful and meaningful if and only if it is based on a trust relationship between the researcher and the researched. Building trusting relationships takes time and effort. Some individuals have an innate gift of gaining other people's trust and some individuals give their trust easier than the others. You may gain a person's trust but lose it somewhere along the course of the interview sessions. In any case, building a trust relationship, which starts with the first meeting between the two parties, must be considered a conscious and ongoing effort, that involves everyone involved in the process and that is essential for conducting an interview. [As Henry Greenspan points out, an interview involves two persons working hard to understand the life story of a single person].

**3.     Establish a collaborative and interactive environment**. Along the same lines noted above, interviews should be conducted as dialogue in a collaborative environment shared among the interview team and the interviewee.

First, remember that in each interview session, there will be a two-person interview team: the first person will be leading or conducting the interview and the second person will be acting as the videographer (The roles of the two researchers remain the same with the same

participant, when and if there is more than one interview session; however, they could be alternating as the lead between various participants). The two researchers should follow the same guiding principles of sensitivity, attentiveness, etc. even though one person would be more silent than the other.  Be careful not to dominate the sessions, or to alienate the participant, for example, by holding a conversation or making a non-verbal communication among yourselves from which the participant may feel excluded.

Second, generally questions will have two major purposes: to elicit greater descriptive detail from participants and to encourage them to reflect critically upon the past and the present. Ask open-ended questions that encourage participants to respond at length and that help guide participants' narrative, rather than holding "question and answer" session. For instance, rather than ask "did you," "could you," "were you" questions, use such open-ended phrasing as "tell me about," or "please describe."

**4.      Use unstructured and conversational questions**.  A set of chronologically organized "sample life-story interview questions" are developed by the project (see appendix 1). The interviewers should use this sample only as a "road map" in order to try to attain as complete and relevant oral histories as possible. Nevertheless, questions are largely determined by the interview itself and by participants' personalities. As much as possible, questions should give the participants the opportunity to proceed however they choose – they may wish to follow a loose chronology or to discuss themes at length outside of the constraints of a timeline. Participants should also be free to avoid any line of inquiry and if they do not care to elaborate on part of their narrative, or they do not wish to express an opinion on something, no further related questions should be asked.

**5.      Remain "on the road" and close to the research focus**. Being sensitive and responsive to the needs of the participants does not mean losing track of the interview and the train of thought all-together.  The interviewer should be able to control the conversation without being over controlling, discouraging or patronizing; s/he should know where she is going next after asking a particular question without sticking to the same sequence at all costs!

Keep in mind that the project will be examining the **full life history** of the interviewee. This means starting with stories passed down from earlier generations within a family, community; parents' history; childhood. Make sure that the life stories are followed all the way to Montreal and the participant's experience in Montreal. The objective is to examine the entire life's experience and narrative- how it is told, or interpreted by the interviewee.

In order to maintain a balance between being **focused and flexible** you are urged to use the sample questions as a guideline, and develop a "laundry list" of information, opinions and understanding of the events about which you hope to get responses/descriptions from the participants. Once this 'laundry list" is developed, the questions should be more in your head rather than in your hand – avoid reading out from a questionnaire.

**6.      Try to get "personalized", as opposed to "generalized" life stories**. In giving the accounts of past events, sometimes people (especially those who are highly educated or possess key positions within their original or host society) tend to generalize, analyze and view the events in their broadest terms. These reflections could be very interesting and enlightening and should not be prevented or interrupted. Nevertheless, what makes a life

story unique is its **personal touch**. Bear in mind that the focus of this project is on the people involved in certain events, rather than on the events per se.

It takes skills and some practice to "re-direct" a conversation that is going too broad to be called a life story. One effective way would be to trigger the participant's personal life memories. This could be done through incorporation of photographs, material culture and mental mapping into the interview process. In the Pre-interview session, ask participants if they are willing to share family pictures or any material to which they have special attachments in connection to their life story; if so, ask them to bring them along next time. You could ask participants to talk about those materials during the course of the life-history session, or to allocate a third (follow-up) session for using those materials in order to access their personal past memories.  Mental mapping involves the interviewee spatializing memory by sketching out a former neighbourhood, village, or other space "as it was" and then considering changes.

7.      **Remain attentive to the interviewee and be a sensitive and sympathetic listener**. Avoid talking too much, giving comments, or providing the participants with advice. Instead, use non-verbal communication to show your engagement and interest in the conversation. For example, nodding the head approvingly (again, not too much), using hand gestures and maintaining eye contact encourages the interviewee to continue and show them that the interviewer is engaged. Being a good listener also means not interrupting or talking over the interviewee.  If you have a clarifying or follow up question, jot them down while maintaining eye contact, and ask them only when they are finished speaking.

Keep in mind that being sensitive and sympathetic does not mean perceiving survivors of human rights violations as victims, getting carried away or feeling sorry for them; remember that they are usually stronger than you think! Having said that, you should also be on the look out for signs of trauma/that the interviewee is having emotional difficulties with the interviewing process. In such cases, you should alert the organizers and ensure follow-up inquiries with the participants and the psychosocial support resources, as necessary.

8.      **Be attentive to and tolerant of silences, pauses and flow of emotions**.  Silence is an important way of expressing feelings and emotions. It is also an effective way to elicit information from the interviewee, as it allows the interviewee time to think, reflect, and recall memories.  Remain patient and attentive; do not try to resume the conversation, even if there is long pause.

Be prepared for the interviewee to become very emotional at some instances during the course of the interview; remain seated, attentive and sympathetic but avoid providing advice and verbal comfort. Avoid also distracting the participant by making a verbal or otherwise communication among the two members of the interview team. The interview can be stopped only if the interviewee insists; the interviewer should not suggest it.  Be prepared also for some moments during the interview to find yourself very emotional and uncomfortable to continue to listen. This is only human! Do your best to focus on the interviewee and carry on.

9.      **Do not assume that you know what the participants are going to say next,** or that you know what they mean by hinting to a certain memory or event. Taking for granted a respondent's reaction or response to certain event is a dangerous pitfall particularly common

among those interviewers who have an inside knowledge of the community they are working with. Avoid assuming, asking leading questions and putting words in the participant's mouth. Instead, when confronted with an unclear description, ask clarifying or follow-up questions such as "can you elaborate on that?" or "what do mean exactly by that?" It will be the participant's choice to comply or not.

**10.**  **Do not be judgmental, and never argue with the interviewees**. If the participants say something historically incorrect or cannot remember their experience about it, refrain from directly correcting or confronting them. Instead, try to verify the information gently by asking clarifying questions, or to probe deeper in order to trigger the memory.

**11.**  **Remain attentive to the interviewee after the interview is done.**  As a principle, no life history interview should be regarded as a mechanical process of simply eliciting information and running as soon as it is done! For this project in particular, once the interview is completed, the interviewers should remain seated, take some time to thank the participants for their collaboration and offer them additional support, namely a list of local psychological resources should they wish to talk more about their experience.

At this stage, depending on the participant's willingness and at the researcher's discretion, additional, or follow-up interviews could be discussed and scheduled. Even if you do not expect another interview session, ensure the participant that they will be kept posted on the developments and results, and urged them to keep in touch.

**12.**  **Send in your brief report within 24 hours**. Both members of the interview team are required to send an email report of their thoughts within 24 hours of the interview to a central blog. (These reports are valuable research source for the project and it is important to reflect on the interview when it is still fresh) The email could be long and detailed, or short. The two interviewers could co-write the email, or write separate emails, as they wish. Include in your email: what did you find significant/ what stood out (patterns, stories, silences)? What did you learn in terms of interviewing experience? What would you do differently?  If the interviewee opted for confidentiality, make sure that the identity of the interviewee is protected in this email.

**Ethics Guide Summary for CURA Life Stories Project**

**1.      Mitigating harm**

The experience of revisiting the painful experiences of genocide, war and displacement may prove deeply emotional and even psychologically traumatic for participants. Researchers experiences of listening to these stories may also prove painful. The publication, reinterpretation and dissemination of participants' contributions to the project may also prove to be a difficult and upsetting experience. To address this issue, the project will arrange resources for both participants and researchers to have access to the support of social workers, counselors and psychologists (see separate guidance sheet)

In the case of refugee participants, any discrepancy between the life-story narratives provided to researchers and those given to immigration officials may have negative legal consequences. To minimize the risk of legal consequences as a result of providing oral histories, it is essential that researchers help participants make informed decisions about what they choose to disclose and about confidentiality. Similarly, project organisers will ensure that everyone working with confidential material is made fully aware of their responsibilities in this regard.

**2.      Obtaining informed consent**

Informed consent will be obtained in consultation with participants prior to and immediately following the interviews. Interviewers will inform participants of the purpose of the interview, the procedure and participants' options regarding confidentiality and the accessibility of the recording and/or transcript. Participants will be informed of the possible uses of the interview by researchers working under the auspices of this project and that coordinators will have limited control over the use of material by unaffiliated researchers once it has been archived. Although these issues will have been discussed at the pre-interview sessions, they will be addressed in more concrete terms before the interview itself and participants will be asked to sign consent forms. Participants will be given the opportunity to modify the terms of the form after the interview is finished.

Finally it is to be noted that consent forms are right of use agreements, and there is no transfer of copyright.

**3.      Participants' rights and options throughout interview process**

A participant may choose to end the interview at any time and may ask that the recording of the interview be destroyed. This right to discontinue will be discussed with interviewees before the start of the interview and is included on the consent form. Following the interview, participants will be given the opportunity to revue the terms of their participation and make any changes to the consent agreement.

Later requests to alter the interview or the terms under which it will be made available to researchers will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The time during which an interview is being transcribed and prepared for archiving will function as an effective grace period. As a rule, no participant will be able to request confidentiality or restrict accessibility to his or her interview after the interviews have been made available to researchers; such changes will

only be considered in extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, the project's organisers will be unable to control future uses of the material by unaffiliated researchers once it has been archived. In all cases, however, project organisers will work in good faith to ensure that archived materials are used in accordance with the best interests of the participants and within the bounds of the restrictions provided by their consent agreements.

### 4. Researchers responsibility concerning matters of confidentiality

When participants request anonymity, their recorded interviews will be kept secure and will be made available only to the principal investigator, the chair of the relevant working group and approved archivists and transcribers that have agreed, in writing, to protect the identities of the participants involved. Project organisers will ensure that researchers are fully aware of their responsibilities to confidential/anonymous participants.

Theatre workshops and refugee youth projects: Anonymity cannot be offered for these projects, but participants can ask to have their identities protected, through pseudonyms or confidentiality, when work resulting from this research is to be published, produced or performed. When a participant asks that their contribution be made confidential, researchers will work to ensure that such a request is honoured as far as possible.

### 5. Accessibility of the recordings and or transcripts

Participants who provide life-stories will be given a copy of their interview either on DVD or CD and will have the option of reviewing it using facilities at the Concordia Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. Participants will have the same access to the rest of the archive as other researchers. Those participants that are involved in the theatre workshops or the refugee youth projects will have near-total access to research results in that they will help determine the products of the projects themselves.

### 6. "Sharing authority" as the project's central principle

This project is built on the framework "shared authority" (Frisch), and is a collaborative endeavour in every sense and all levels. At the research level, the project is built on the shared authority of the oral history narratives - a collaboration between researcher and researched). Communities are collaborators, and true partners in dialogue, as well as being subjects of the research (the project has developed by a team of 37 participants in the Montreal-area, including 15 community partners representing the city's diverse immigrant communities as well as a range of heritage, human rights, and education agencies).

Furthermore, the project will devise strategies designed to share authority beyond the interview stage, enabling interviewees and community partners to help the project interpret interviews, and to participate in research production.

The project is also an explicitly collaborative one at the level of governance; it is built on a governance structure that maintains parity between university researchers and community representatives at key levels of decision-making. The final decision-making body will be the project assembly composed of all CURA co-applicants.

### 7. Recruitment of interviewees

Closely related to the concept of sharing authority is the importance of recruiting the participants in a variety of different ways. Various points of entry into the collaborating different communities will be sought in order to recruit as wide a spectrum of participants as

possible. The recruitment strategies will include  (1) public service announcements - radio, television, newspapers within the cultural community and beyond, (2) poster and leaflets, (3) work through community groups, (4) information tables, community meetings, etc, (5) word of mouth (or snowball sampling). The interview coordinators in each working group will reflect on the nature of recruitment.

When the prospective interviewees are contacted for arranging a pre-interview, they will be given a brief description of the interview objectives, and procedures.

## Montreal Life Stories Consent Form

**HISTOIRES** DE VIE MONTRÉAL
MONTREAL LIFE **STORIES**

**CONSENT FORM**

I hereby declare that I consent to participate to the *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide, and other Human Rights Violations* research project (named as *Montreal Life Stories* from here on) by 38 researchers under the supervision of Steven High, from Concordia University's History Department (Tel. : 514 848-2424 ext: 2413, shigh@alcor.concordia.ca).

**RESEARCH PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research is to collect and conserve life stories from individuals displaced or otherwise affected by war, genocide or other human rights violations individuals. Those in charge of this project hope to have these life stories known to researchers and the general public in order to create awareness around these issues.

**PROCEDURES:** The interview is held at the interviewee's house, at Concordia University or in any other appropriate location. The interviewers will record the life stories either in video, audio or written form. The interviewee will be free to speak of any aspects of his or her life and can refuse to answer to any question. The interviewee will be encouraged to take all the time necessary and will be free to stop at any time (the interviews usually last about two hours). If needed, subsequent interview sessions can be held.

**RISKS:** Describing difficult experiences can be troubling and traumatizing on an emotional level. If at any time the person being interviewed feels overwhelmed by his or her emotions or if he or she wishes to speak with someone it is possible to refer to the list of resources attached to this document.

**CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION:** Please review the following conditions and options. Do not hesitate to ask questions to your interviewer if need be.

| Read and check both cases | ☐ | I understand that I am free to remove my consent and end my participation at any time without any negative consequences. |
|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | I understand that the recording and/or transcripts of my interview will be kept at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (Concordia University) and by some of *Montreal Life Stories* partner organizations, respecting the conditions cited in this form, and that these documents will be available to researchers and the public, and may eventually be referred to in future publications. |

## PERSONAL IDENTITY, DISSEMINATION AND REPRODUCTION OF THE INTERVIEW

✧ **CHECK ONLY ONE OPTION**: « OPEN PUBLIC ACCESS », « LIMITED ACCESS » OR « ANONYMOUS» ✧

☐ **OPEN PUBLIC ACCESS**
My identity may be revealed in any publication or presentation resulting from this interview. ✧**CHECK ONLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS** ✧

☐ I consent to the dissemination and reproduction of my interview (sound and images) by the members of this research project, through any method and media.
I consent to have my interview available either in totality or in part, on the Internet and/or online databases.

**OR**

☐ I consent that my interview be available to researchers and the public strictly for consultation at the Concordia Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, and at some of *Montreal Life Stories* partner organizations, but the recording will not be transmitted or reproduced in any other way, neither in part or in its totality.

☐ **LIMITED ACCESS**
The recordings will be kept at the Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling and only researchers having signed a confidentiality form will be allowed to consult them.
The researchers using this interview will have access to my identity, but they may not divulge it or make it accessible to anyone. They will speak of me using my initials or an alias.
I choose the following alias: _____

*Histoires de vie des Montréalais déplacés par la guerre, le génocide et autres violations aux droits de la personne*
*Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide and Other Human Rights Violations*

1455, boul. de Maisonneuve Ouest, Montréal (Qc) H3G 1M8 Canada www.histoiresdeviemontreal.ca

HISTOIRES DE VIE MONTRÉAL
MONTREAL LIFE STORIES

**ANONYMOUS**

☐
- My identity will only be known by the interviewer, the videographer, the head researcher and members of the project mandated to process and transcript the recording. No one else will be aware of my identity, unless given my permission.
- The video/audio recording will be kept temporarily under lock and key at the Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. I will receive a copy that I will be able to keep.
- The transcript of the interview will be word to word. I will receive a copy of this transcript so I can revise it and scratch-out all the parts I would wish to suppress (peoples' names, places, dates, other, etc.) I will send back the revised transcript to those in charge of the project.
- At the end of the project (in 2012), my interview's recordings will be destroyed permanently. Only the final version of the transcript will be kept at the Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling and with some of *Montreal Life Stories* partner organizations. This transcript may be reproduced and transmitted in an online database or any other type of publication or public presentation.

Other comments or specific conditions indicated by the interviewee:

_____

_____

_____

I HAVE CLOSELY READ THE PRECEDING TEXT AND I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE AGREEMENT. I FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY CONSENT TO PRATICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

**INTERVIEWEE**

NAME (in block letters) : _____

SIGNATURE : _____ DATE : _____

DATE OF BIRTH (optional) : _____

PLACE OF BIRTH (optional) : _____

POSTAL ADDRESS : _____

_____

PHONE NUMBER : _____

EMAIL ADDRESS (optional) : _____

**INTERVIEWER :**

NAME (in block letters) : _____

SIGNATURE : _____ DATE : _____

**PROJECT DIRECTOR:**          **Steven High**

SIGNATURE : _____ DATE : _____

If you have any questions concerning your rights as participant in this study, please contact Brigitte Des Rosiers, research ethics and conformity agent, Concordia University, at 514-848-2424, extension 7481 or by email at bdesrosi@alcor.concordia.ca.

Histoires de vie des Montréalais déplacés par la guerre, le génocide et autres violations aux droits de la personne
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**Emotional and Psychological Support Guidelines for the Life Stories CURA Project**

**Introduction**

Interviewing and working with people who have fled situations of genocide, war, and other mass violence necessarily involves asking questions and delving into experiences which can be very difficult to recount. For this reason, it is important to be aware that the interview process may have an emotional impact on the interviewee and the interviewer, and to be prepared to be sensitive to this impact no matter how seriously or mildly it presents itself. The availability of psychological support for all project participants and team members is a central principle in the CURA project's ethics protocol, and therefore it is imperative that all interviewers present the various options to all interviewees clearly and with sensitivity.

The interviewer's job is twofold: a) to be sensitive and human during all stages of the interview process, thus providing an informal sort of "emotional support" themselves, and b) to provide our list of resources to the interviewee and to encourage them to make use of these resources should they feel the need. The interviewer's role is not to determine whether or not the person they are interviewing may or may not be exhibiting signs of trauma, but rather it is to make sure that all of our resources available to every interviewee, regardless of what symptoms they do or do not display, and to allow the interviewee to determine their level of need themselves. As the interview process involves engaging and collaborating with the interviewee in the process of collecting their life history in a fairly intimate way, this space should also be conducive to being sensitive and supportive for what may come up emotionally.

The showing of emotional distress during an interview can be a very normal thing. They are, after all, recounting very difficult memories.  Therefore, interviewers should not automatically worry about emotion shown during the interview. While many terms related to post-war psychological distress are thrown around in everyday speech, such as "trauma" and "post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)," these terms can be useful to psychiatric and psychological experts in specific contexts, but they are not particularly useful for interviewers who are more interested in being supportive of all their interviewees regardless of diagnosis. Do not to focus on the question of trauma when dealing with an interviewee's emotional state—it is not your role. Your role is to collect life stories, and to forge a relationship with the interviewee within that context—we are not therapists and we are not talking to interviewees about their stories within the context of helping them heal. While that is a noble pursuit, it is not ours, and our resource list can refer the interviewee to someone more appropriate for such work. Again, our role as interviewers is to be sensitive to the needs of all our interviewees, and it should not matter how "severe" someone's case is; the same standard of sensitivity, support and humanity should be offered to every interviewee. It can be a positive quality for the interviewer to not be a trauma expert—this allows for a more informal support relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which is less heavy and stigmatized, and likely enough for most interviewees.

Another reason to think of this process as one of general emotional support rather than dealing with trauma is that healthy emotional reactions to terrible events may very much overlap symptoms of trauma, such as nightmares, flashbacks, and mood swings. Because some distress is a very human reaction to the interview experience, it is important not to assume that any displays of behaviours such as the above examples are necessarily

"abnormal". Distress exists on a continuum. The interviewee has likely lived with their experiences for a very long time, and as a result, they are likely to go into an interview aware that it may take an emotional toll on them, although the reactions of a person for whom the event in question happened long ago, and for whom it happened more recently, may differ. It is important not to assume that all distress will necessarily require the treatment of professionals: the majority of psychological support should take place within the interview space, through things such as the passing of a tissue, an empathetic nod, and other everyday, human ways in which we show concern and empathy for one another.

If an interviewee does find the process more distressing than they can handle, they will be able to make use of the services that we will offer to them. However, even if we are profoundly concerned for someone's wellbeing, we cannot make the decision to seek help on their behalf. It will always be their choice.

**CURA Protocol for Providing Psychosocial Support**

Before embarking on interviews, all interviewers will be given a list of resources to give to interviewees by their team leader, which will be a combination of psychological counseling options (based out of Concordia's Counseling Services), more culturally specific psychosocial options, as well as other resources, such as the university's ethics officer. The list will be a list of "resources" that is meant to be more general than just psychological resources. The leader of your interview team will be the principal contact for any questions about these resources and referring interviewees to them.

Every step of the process should take place with the context elaborated in the previous section in mind. The protocol for introducing and encouraging the use of these resources is as follows:

1. **Pre-interview:** The first discussion of our resources should happen during the pre-interview, during the discussion of how the project will work, and the ethics. Interviewees must be presented with a list of resources along with their copy of their consent form. The interviewer should explain what the resources are, and should try to do so with sensitivity, emphasizing that this is a service that we offer to all interviewees. Interviewers should keep in mind the cultural contexts in which they are interviewing, and thus the potential taboos around topics of psychological support or distress, and therefore try to present the material in a way that is encouraging rather than alienating.

2. **The Interview:** During the interview, the interviewer should, above all, *listen* to the interviewee. The interview is about collecting a life story, and not about gauging levels of psychological distress. While listening, the interviewer may notice a lot of things in the interviewee's manner of speaking, such as: silences, a lot of jumping around in the narrative, emotional "highs" and "lows" that are sudden and varying, flashbacks or "relivings" of memories. As was stated above, while all of these can be signs of greater distress, they can also be a perfectly "normal" way for the interviewee to process and share their experiences. The interviewer should not jump to the conclusion that any signs of distressed behaviour are an indication of the former, and they should view these in the context of the whole interview. If the interviewer does become concerned that the interviewee is showing signs of

considerable distress during the interview, the interviewer should ask them if they are ok and/or should offer to stop whenever the person would like.

Signs of more serious distress may include someone clearly losing touch with reality, someone trapped in a repetitive narrative with an inability to break out of it, someone emotionally "out of control" (be they feelings of rage, sadness, etc). As even these symptoms are vague, this is again a question of the interviewer listening to their intuition about when a situation is becoming too much, and of offering solutions in normal human ways (such as "do you need a break?" or offering a glass of water, or even to end the interview and continue another time).

Unless the interviewee is clearly become too distressed to function normally, the interviewer's role during the interview should be to be human and supportive, and to respond to any psychological distress that comes up the way they would respond to a friend—through empathy, active listening, and small gestures that help the person feel respected and listened to. This sort of behaviour will likely cover the vast majority of "psych support" that happens in the project.

At the end of the interview, the interviewer should take a few minutes to gently make the transition from the interview back to the present, through small talk and transitional discussion. Do not end the interview abruptly, and especially do not leave immediately.

3. **Immediately after the interview:** While the interviewer writes their 24-hour report, the interviewer can include a short reflection on any distress they witnessed, only if they feel that it is necessary. This is largely a reminder to themselves about whether or not they think it would be helpful to follow up with the person to make sure they're ok.

   The training coordinator and interview team leader for the project will also be checking in with interviewers during this process to make sure they are comfortable with what is happening in the interview, and to discuss strategies for dealing with anything that may be arising.

4. **Follow-up:** Due to the project policy of doing multiple interviews where possible, the interviewer will already likely be having follow-up contact with the interviewee. *If* the interviewer is concerned that the interviewee is experiencing psychological distress, they should use their follow-up contact to also ask how they are coping after the interview, and again offer the available services. The interviewer should try to do so in a timely manner. Again, this step is up to the discretion of the interviewer about that person's needs, and it is a matter of highlighting our services again, but respecting the interviewee's decisions no matter what.

5. **Self-care:** The interviewer should be aware of their own limits. As relationships build between interviewers and interviewees, it is clear that most of the support that the interviewee needs may happen in that space. Nevertheless, interviewers should not feel obligated to play the role of a counselor, and they should refer people to resources where appropriate as opposed to taking the role of support entirely on themselves.

**Support for Interviewers**

The process of interviewing people who have survived mass violence can be taxing on the interviewer as well. It is normal to feel fear during this process, and to have anxiety going into the interview. Some interviewers may have difficulty listening to interviewees because their stories will remind them too closely of their own experiences—others may feel distressed because they are not used to listening to such intense stories. Either way, like in the case of the interviewee, it is normal to have an emotional reaction to the interview process. The best tool for dealing with the emotional consequences of interviewing on this topic is to be self-aware, to know one's own limits, and to be able to identify when the process is becoming too much. Interviewers should also think about what they plan to do after their interviews—should you go back to work immediately, or maybe take some time to go for a coffee, take a walk, relax at home, etc? Coping strategies for processing difficult knowledge can be very simple, but each person should identify what works best for them.

When an interviewer is conducting their first interviews, they will be in contact with the interview and training coordinators regularly, which is a great time to bring up any anxiety which they may have regarding the psychological issues that may be presenting themselves during the interviews. Interviewers should use these opportunities to discuss their concerns and to brainstorm strategies for dealing with them.

Furthermore, the project will hold project-wide regular debriefing meetings, which will be used primarily to discuss the interviews that have been conducted during a given period, as a space in which interviewers can share not only the analytical side of their interviewing experience, but also how it has affected them. Indeed, the discussion of the interviewer's emotional reaction to the interview is useful both for helping the interviewer to debrief and come to terms with their experience, but it can also give insight into the interviewee, and how they have formed their narrative to affect the listener in a certain way. As the "life story" interview is very much based on the relationship that develops between interviewee and interviewer, discussing how we affect each other emotionally is extremely useful.

If the interviewer feels that they need more support than that described above, they will also have the option of seeing a counselor one-on-one.

## Transcription Guide for CURA Life Stories Project

The project will produce verbatim transcription for all the audio/video taped interviews. Verbatim Transcription is a full transcript of everything that is said in the recording that includes the common 'ems' and 'ers', wow's, 'I mean', etc. This style of transcription is judged to the most suitable for producing unified and accurate written records of all the interviews for archive purposes.

When the interview is conducted by a staff member, s/he is required to do the transcription soon after the interview, thereby allowing some time between the interviews and benefiting the opportunity to reflect on the first interview before moving on to the next.

The verbatim transcript will be mailed to the interviewees who will be invited to edit the transcript. This second edited transcript will not replace the first (except in terms of spelling of names and places) but will be added to the file - representing another interpretative space. Eventually, there will also be a separate authentication procedure to ensure some quality control in the transcriptions.

### I. Turning oral speech into written speech
Even thought you know that you are employing the verbatim transcription style, which is the transcription of each and every spoken word and sound, you still need to follow certain ethical and editorial principles in order to produce clear, intelligible and uniform transcripts.

### Technicalities
Transcriptions should be done at Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, using digital transcription equipments. Comfortable headphones are necessary for lengthy transcribing sessions. Transcription can be very time consuming and physically demanding. Make sure your equipment and seating is comfortable to use, and take regular breaks. It is estimated that transcriptions will take 7 hours for each one hour of recorded interview, although this time period would decrease as the project progresses and one's skills of transcription improves.

### Formatting the document
•All transcriptions should be double spaced. Use the same font, size, etc. for all the transcriptions that you will be doing, and follow the following formatting instructions. Eventually, all transcriptions need to be standardised into one single format.

•Start the first page of your document with the same information that you used to label your video or audio tapes; Start it in bold with:
> Name of Project,
> Date of Interview,
> Name of Interviewee, and videographer
> Name of Interviewer, in addition to:
> Interview conducted at: (eg. interview's home)
> Interview starts at:  (e.g. 10: 30 a.m.)

You will be transcribing into the same language spoken during the interview, so there is no need to indicate the language (translation required in cases of a third language)

•The headings on subsequent pages of the transcript should contain the name of the interviewee and date aligned to the left margin and the page number aligned to the right margin as follows:
[name of interviewee]                    [page number]
[date of interview]

•Identify the first two entries of the dialogue with "Question" and "Answer". Thereafter, identify questions and answers simply as Q. and A. Do not tab-indent after the identifier prompt (Q: or A:). Use a single space.

•Do not use indentations or separate any continuous passages of interview into different paragraphs, even if there is a significant pause.

•When changing a tape, insert the following on the left side of the page in **bold** type:
End of Tape [number of tape]
Then proceed to a new page and enter the following before proceeding to transcribe the next tape: Tape [number of tape]

•The end of an interview should be noted in **bold** type: End of interview**.**

## Contents of Interview

Generally, you should include in the transcript exactly what the interviewee said, including grammatical mistakes and false starts. Do not correct interviewees' words or grammar; do not change speech patterns.  Do not change content, intent or put words in the interviewee's mouth, when you are not sure what you are hearing. The following tips will help you do so in a consistent way.

• Use brackets [ ] to insert everything that you as the writer are adding to the text – which you should be doing all along the transcription:
       a.   When you are not sure about spelling of names, regions, use [?]
       b.   If a term is not clear, write so [unclear]
       c.   Add background sounds [phone rings], etc
       d.   Add all the language or visual cues that you judge significant, such as [laughs], [chocked with tear] [long pause] [Coughs]

• Use a standard dictionary nominated by the project to verify the spelling of all geographic locations - regions, cities.

• You should also use punctuation in order to preserve the emphasis of the spoken word (or lack thereof). For example, use three dots …. to indicate incomplete sentences (which could be at the end or beginning of a sentence). When an interviewee recounts a quote of what was said: Place the appropriate open and closed quotation marks (e.g.: …and then I said to him, "What time is it?")

• Spell out numbers one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Likewise, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above.

• Spell out words in full. Abbreviations, however, should be used for these common titles: Mr., Mrs., Dr. But spell out names of currency (dollars, cents, pounds), percent, and number (as in "number 14," not "#14"). Do not use ampersands (&). Spell out the word "and."

**Important additional inserts**

**a. Time indices** or time counts should be used in transcriptions in order to guide the reader/researcher to quickly locate a section on the original tape. Set the counter or timer at zero when you start listening to the tape. Then, every 10-15 minutes, type up the exact time of the record, usually on top of the page, and always as a separate entry.

**b. Abstracts** or summaries are important means of getting an overall picture of the interview and the interviewee without having to go through the whole document. Once the transcription is completed, the transcriber should take some extra time to write down a half page, single space, abstract of the interview. The abstract should contain basic biographical information about the interviewee and the key elements of his/her life history. For example*: Marquise is a 40-year-old woman, born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She came to Montreal in 1989 as a refugee and currently is a Master's student in political science and a part-time teacher in elementary school ....* Add any piece of information you deem significant. At the end of your abstract, allocate a couple of sentences to describe your own impression of the interview and the interviewer. Remember, the text you are producing lacks the life you encountered during the interview. Try to bring some vivid picture of the interview through your description: was the participant at ease, too nervous, possessed strong body language, was the interview's environment frequently disturbed, etc.

**II. Taking Notes during the interview session: You will need to take notes in the following two cases:**
    a.  If a participant opts for complete confidentiality, there will be no transcript. This option is not expected to occur very frequently; nevertheless, when it does occur, it is necessary for the interview team to take some quick notes of the participant's responses. Since it is better for the interviewer to remain fully engaged in the conversation, the person acting otherwise as the videographer could help taking notes. The flurry of notes should be typed up immediately after the interview, while the memory is still fresh and the notes still make sense to the note-taker!
    b.  The interviewer or preferably the person acting as the videographer can choose to jot down significant body language and visual cues during a recorded interview. These notes are particularly helpful for audio-recorded interviews, when the person doing the transcription has no visual aid in remembering those significant cues.

## <u>Videography Guide for CURA Life Stories Project: Ethical and Technical Issues</u>

The interviewees choose, and give their written consent to this effect, as to whether their interviews would be video-taped (recorded on DV cassettes); audio-taped (recorded on High-quality digital audio); or not taped at all, in which case only written notes will be taken. The recording of the interview sessions (pre-interview, life-story, and follow-up interviews) will be started only <u>after</u> the participants' choices are explained to them and the consent form obtained.

All the videotaped interview sessions will be conducted by a team of two researchers: the "interviewer" and the "videographer". The two researchers could switch roles between various interviewees. However, when the interviews are audio-taped, only one researcher is expected to handle the job (below,

The videographer is an integral part of the team and will be working closely - in all respects and at all stages - with the interviewer. The two-team members are strongly urged to meet before their first interview in order to familiarize themselves with the coming interview and to get to know each other, in case they do not already.

Because the two person team will be working together and possibly exchanging roles in various interviews, the General Interview Guide as well as the present Videogrphay Guidelines are equally relevant to <u>both</u> members of any given interview team. Obviously, this guide applies to the cases where the participant has agreed that the interview be recorded by video and has given written consent to this effect.

| Video Equipment Required | Audio Equipment Required |
|---|---|
| ▪ Digital Video Camera transported in a camera bag<br>▪ 2 x camera batteries<br>▪ AC adaptor<br>▪ DC cable<br>▪ AC cable<br>▪ 4 X DVC Digital Video Cassettes<br>▪ Tripod with head | ▪Edirol R09 Digital Audio Recorder<br>▪Memory Card 1 GB<br>▪Power Cable<br>▪Case Recorder |

We have two types of cameras: Panasonic PV-GS25; and Sony DCR-HC96. **For user instruction of cameras, see appendix II.**

## Reserving Equipment

All potential videographers are strongly encouraged to visit the Concordia's Centre for Oral History and make necessary arrangements to borrow digital video camera, examine it at peace and make themselves comfortable with it prior to their first interview.

Make sure you <u>make reservation in advance</u> to borrow equipments by contacting  (514) 848-2424 ext. 5465, or by email: cohds@alcor.concordia.ca. Lending out is first come, first serve basis and the equipments should be returned within 48 hours.

The address and working hours are:
> **Concordia Oral History Research Lab (COHRL)**
> Library Building, Room 1042,
> 1400 de Maisonneuve Blvd W.
>
> Working hours: Monday – Friday: 9:00 am – 5 pm. Call in advance to make sure.

## Before the Interview

▪ Make an arrangement concerning location of interview. Ideally, interviews will be conducted (and videotaped) at the participant's home. If the participant chooses so, it could be done at a designated room at Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, or elsewhere. Make necessary arrangements for booking the room (if at Concordia) email cohds@alcor.concordia.ca to reserve the interview room. If you will conduct it at somewhere else, please visit the place and ask if you are allowed to use audio or video equipments or digital camera at the place.

▪ Meet with your team member anyway prior to the interview to discuss any technical issues that you might need to decide or resolve. This is your opportunity to work out the signals you will use with the interviewer when a tape is ready to be changed (for example, a tap on the shoulder five minutes before the end of each tape).

▪ Make sure to bring along two copies of the consent forms, contact sheets and psych support materials with you for the interview session.

▪ You will be using 60 minute DV tapes. Have a stock of four to five with you, just in case.

## Set up

▪**<u>Avoiding intrusion:</u>** Upon arriving at the participant's home, you should let the participant "host" you; do not dominate or take over the place, for example, by spreading out your equipment all over or inspecting every corner for a suitable setting.

▪**<u>Location:</u>** Work with the participant and the interviewer to find the best location for the interview to be conducted and taped. In so doing, you should be looking,

foremost, for a location that the participant suggests and feels comfortable at. When there are a few options, have the following points when choosing the location:

- Choose a spot that allows for depth, with a glimpse of the participant's home in the background.
- Try not to position the participant against a flat wall,
- Avoid, as much as possible, blazing windows, as your camera cannot handle extreme contrasts.
- If, for whatever reason, the participant is sitting against a wall, try to position a source of light behind their head, so as to distance them or pull them away from that wall.

▪ **Rearranging the setting**: From time to time, you might gently suggest re-arranging a few objects in order to produce an agreeable set up, but never do so without the participant's collaboration and consent. Remember, the key here is striking a balance between getting the best sound and video quality possible without compromising the interview or taking over people's homes.

▪ **Power supply**: Always (if possible) use a power supply. Batteries are not always dependable.

▪ **Making interviewee feel comfortable:** Before starting to record, take a few minutes to explain to the interview and videotaping procedures (even if one of you needs to repeat some parts of the explanation on camera). Most people are not accustomed to being filmed. Make sure the participant is settled and relaxed before starting to roll. One of the objectives of having two-person interview team is to allow the interviewer to focus on the interview and not the technology; do not talk too much about technicalities in front of the participants.

## Taping the Interview

▪As the videographer, your primary responsibility is to do your best to make the interview look and sound as good as possible. Let the interviewer focus on the content, direction and length of the interview for the time being; meanwhile, try to be engaged in the process and provide your partner with feedback afterwards. Remember that you too are required to reflect on the interview and send in your brief report within 24 hours.

▪Like the interviewer, you should be prepared for some moments during the interview to find yourself emotional and uncomfortable to continue to listen. You might feel even more so, because you are not directly engaged in the conversation and taping interviews can be intense and exhausting. So, be aware that getting emotional is only human! Focus on your work and do not interrupt the taping. Be aware also that psycho-support resources are available to the interview team as much as they are available to the participants.

▪Start rolling as soon as the participant is ready. The interviewer starts by stating the name of the project, the interviewee, the interviewer, the videographer and date

(follow the format indicated below for label). This is a measure to standardize all the interviews in case the video tape is separated from the rest of the file. The interviewer then goes on by starting to explain about the project.

▪At the beginning of the interview, start with a wider shot, and then very slowly zoom in to a comfortable close shot. Be sure to avoid extreme close-ups. Once the close shot has been established, do not zoom in or out. The camera should be focused on the interviewee for the entire interview; the interviewer remains off-camera. Excess camera movement also affects the digitizing process by taking up more computer memory.

▪When starting a new tape, have the interviewer wait six to seven seconds before continuing with the interview. Otherwise, the first sentence or question on the tape may be cut off.

▪While speaking, the participant should look at the interviewer, not at the camera.

▪The videographer should sit as close to the lens as possible, at eye level with the camera (camera should not be looking down or up to the interviewee). Because the videographer and the interviewer are in close proximity to the microphone, they need to be aware of the distracting noises caused by rustling papers, jewelry, etc.

▪During the interview do not lean over the interviewer's shoulder and suggest questions. Keep your thoughts to yourself and share them later on.

▪As a non-negotiable rule, the camera must get turned off immediately whenever the participant asks. On the other hand, there may be instances of emotional breakdowns when the participant does not necessarily or directly asks for the camera to be turned off, and therefore it is left to the interview team's discretion to decide. If there are instances of long pauses or silence, the interview and taping should be carried on without interruption.

▪At some point, the participant might be willing to share some photographs or objects of significance to him/her. Be sure to shoot beyond all four edges of the photograph/object and then move in if necessary for details. With participant's consent, these photo/objects need to be scanned and kept in archive as well.

**Easy & important tips to improve the quality of your light and sound**
▪ **LIGHT**: In order to control the white balance most accurately, you need to use the manual (not automatic) white balance feature of your camera. This way, it is you and not your camera who measure the actual lighting. From where the participant is sitting, point to the camera a white sheet of paper or card, thereby reflecting the existing light source (such as room light or sun) off the paper into the camera. While doing so, make sure there is no bright object in the background. You need to reset the white balance each time you move or the lighting changes. The ideal "look" would be as if the person was in live TV.

▪ **SOUND**: As much as possible, choose a location where in the sound is muffled and not echoed. This way the room feels smaller and more intimate and the disturbing noise is minimized. For instance, if the interview is conducted at the participant's home, a bedroom or a room with some cushy, soft objects in it would be better than a kitchen.
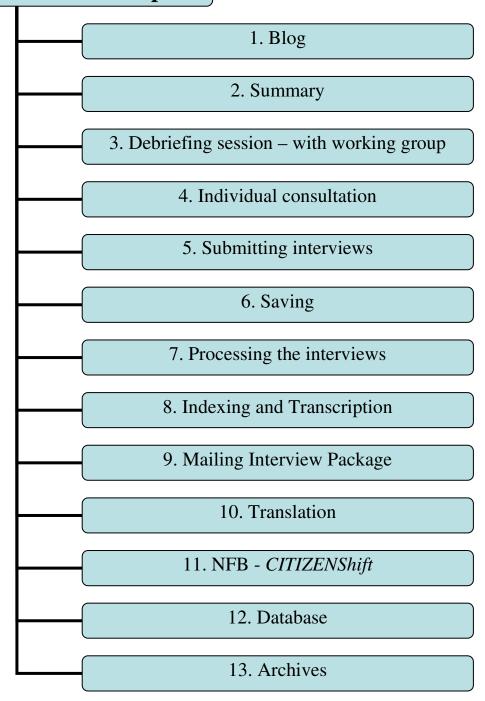
## After the Interview

▪Be sure to punch the safety catch on the DV tapes.

▪ Label each tape and tape case, using the following format. If possible, bundle tapes from each interview together, using rubber bands. Never use adhesive tape to bind the interview tapes together.

---

**Digital Video Cassettes LABEL**
Name of Project:        _____
Date of Interview:      _____
Interviewee:            _____
Interviewer:            _____
Videographer:           _____
Language:               _____

---

▪Stay with the interviewer, and participate in the concluding words of gratitude, and arranging the next session, if applicable.

▪After each interview session, you should return all the equipments and the tapes to the main lab at Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling Lab. Make sure to coordinate the borrowing and returning procedures with COHRL Administrator and the project's coordinator.

▪ Finally, start preparing your brief report to be sent in to a central log (with collaboration of your partner or independently).

**Post-Production Guide for CURA Life Stories Project**

## Our 13 Post-Production Steps

- 1. Blog
- 2. Summary
- 3. Debriefing session – with working group
- 4. Individual consultation
- 5. Submitting interviews
- 6. Saving
- 7. Processing the interviews
- 8. Indexing and Transcription
- 9. Mailing Interview Package
- 10. Translation
- 11. NFB - *CITIZENShift*
- 12. Database
- 13. Archives

# CURA Life Stories Project
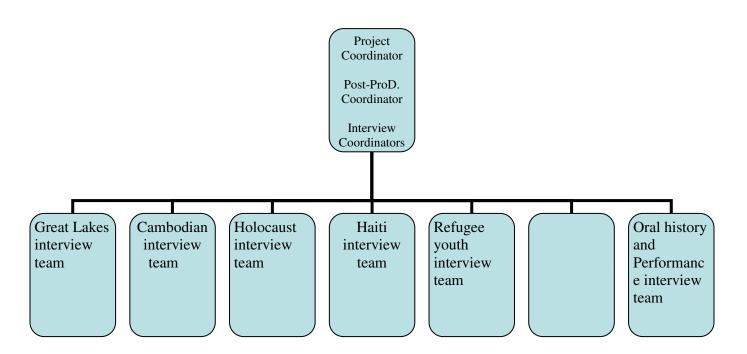
## General Overview

Each working group will have a team of trained and certified interviewers, some of which will be paid. The non-paid interviewers will consist of university researchers, CURA members and volunteers. The number of paid interviewers in each working group will depend on the number of interviews to be conducted, according to the group's research plans and budgetary constraints. Each working group will appoint an interview coordinator. A specialized training session will be developed and presented to the interview coordinators. This session will present the post-production steps developed by the post-production coordinator (entrevue@alcor.concordia.ca ). Each group will work in an independent manner, but they will coordinate their efforts through meetings scheduled by the interview coordinators, the post-production coordinator and the project coordinator.  These meetings will be held throughout the duration of the project.

We envision that there will be seven interview teams; one team for each working group.

```
          ┌─────────────────────┐
          │  Project            │
          │  Coordinator        │
          │                     │
          │  Post-ProD.         │
          │  Coordinator        │
          │                     │
          │  Interview          │
          │  Coordinators       │
          └─────────────────────┘
```

| Great Lakes interview team | Cambodian interview team | Holocaust interview team | Haiti interview team | Refugee youth interview team | | Oral history and Performance interview team |

In this guide you will find a detailed presentation of the different post-production steps necessary to successfully complete and organize the life story interviews that will be conducted by the various working groups. We have numbered the step one to thirteen but they do not necessarily have to be completed in this order. It is, however, important that all the steps be completed in a timely manner.

<center>**CURA Life Stories Project**</center>

<center>**<u>Overview of Post-Production Steps</u>**</center>

**<u>1st Step: BLOG</u>**

Within 24 hours of each interview, interviewers and videographers will be asked to, together or alone, write up a blog. This should detail their initial thoughts and feelings about the interview, provide a description about the context of the interview, and should include information about the interviewee. This blog, provided that the interviewee has not chosen to be anonymous, will be posted on *Basecamp*. Blogs for anonymous interviews are to be typed up and given directly to the post-production coordinator.

**<u>2nd Step: Summary</u>**

Following the last interview session with an interviewee, the interview team (interviewer and videographer) will be asked to compose one summary of approximately half a page. This summary should provide an overview of the interviewee's experience, mentioning in a clear and precise manner the key themes, people mentioned, geographical locations, etc, addressed throughout the interview sessions. These summaries will enable researchers to better identify the interviews that fit their research interests. The summaries will also be posted on *Basecamp*, but again only if they have not chosen to be anonymous. The summaries for anonymous interviews should be typed up and handed directly to the post-production coordinator.

**<u>3rd Step: Debriefing Session</u>**

This will be conducted within the individual working groups.

**<u>4th Step: Individual Consultations</u>**

It is also possible for interviewers to attend individual consultation sessions led by one of the two training coordinators. This consultation could be organized at the request of the interviewer, who would like to discuss certain questions regarding an interview s/he conducted, or at the request of the training coordinators who wish to elaborate certain interview issues and strategies with an interviewer. It is suggested that each interviewer attend an individual consultation within two weeks of their first interview.

The objective of these one-on-one consultation sessions is, first and foremost, to reassure first-time interviewers about their ability to conduct interviews and to identify any additional assistance they may require.

**<u>5ft Step: Submitting Interviews</u>**

Following each interview session, the interview team will be required to submit the interview recording, audio or video, to the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia. They will then have to complete the required information in

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the post-production form, which is available in the green folder at the entrance of the Centre. The interview recording will be forwarded to the post-production coordinator and her team of volunteers and interns.

If the interview team would like to complete the interview processing (capturing, rendering and burning) on their own, they will be assigned a computer on which to do so. They will then have to be sure to indicate on the mini-DV or CD-Rom and in the file created for their interview that the processing of the interview was done by the interview team.

### 6th Step: Saving

- **Video:**
  The post-production coordinator and her team will be responsible for processing and saving video recorded interviews. In the case of video recorded interviews this involves capturing onto the desktop the content recorded on the mini DV. This will be done using an editing software known as Adobe Premiere Elements. The video file will be transferred (in real time) to a folder identified with the name of the interviewer. This folder will be created within the hard drive associated with the working group to which the interview corresponds. In the case of anonymous interviews, the post-production coordinator will have to be present for this step.

- **Audio :**
  The post-production coordinator and her team will be responsible for the processing and saving of audio recorded interviews. For audio recorded interviews, the processing involves transferring the audio file found on the edirol, with the help of a USB cable to a folder identified with the name of the interviewer. This folder will be created within the hard drive associated with the working group to which the interview corresponds. This transfer is quick since the file is already digitized. Immediately following this step the post-production team will burn the audio file onto a CD. In the case of anonymous interviews, the post-production coordinator will have to be present for this step.

### 7th Step: Processing the Interviews

The post-production coordinator and her team of interns and volunteers will be responsible for processing the project's interviews, whether they be anonymous or not, unless an interview team decides to undertake this step on their own.

- **Video:**
  The processing of video recorded interviews corresponds to the steps in Adobe Premiere Elements. After capturing the video file, the next step involves editing out unnecessary sections at the beginning and/or end of the interview. The file will then have to be rendered so that it can be burned onto a DVD. A detailed How-To guide explaining each of these steps is available at the Centre for Oral

History and Digital Storytelling. In the case of anonymous interviews, the post-production coordinator will have to be present for this step.

- **Audio:**
  The processing of audio interviews is much faster and simpler than the processing of video recorded interviews. This consists of simply placing the different files found on the Edirol in chronological order, by listening to them and editing out unnecessary or empty files, and then saving them to the hard drive. Once this is completed the new version of your audio file is ready to be burned. In the case of anonymous interviews, the post-production coordinator will have to be present for this step.

## 8th Step: Indexing and Transcription

- Indexing:
  Paid interviewers will do the indexing for the interviews they conduct, while the other interviewers will have the option of producing their own indexes or having interns or volunteers complete them. An index is a chronological listing of the content of the interview through identified markers. For our project the markers will be linked to each question posed by the interviewer. The purpose indexing is to facilitate the searching and analysis of the interviews.

- Transcription:
  Paid interviewers will complete the transcription of their interviews. Non-paid interviewers could produce their own transcripts or have students, volunteers, or community members produce them. Transcription will be done only for anonymous interviews, audio or video, and for interviews conducted in a language other that French or English.
  A transcript of an interview is a text copy (word for word) of a recorded interview. We have opted for verbatim transcript- every "um" and "aw" is included. The interview coordinator for each group, along with the post-production coordinator are responsible for ensuring that the transcripts are completed as soon as possible, following each interview session. An editorial note must be included at the beginning of each transcript providing some information regarding the context of the interview (where and when it was held, etc.)

- Verification:
  The interview coordinators for each working group will be responsible for the verification of the summaries, indexes, and transcriptions completed for the interviews in his/her interview team. The main goal of this verification process is to ensure, as much as possible, that the spelling of the names, dates, with an emphasis on the names of specific geographical locations are correct. If there are questions you think the interviewee could help clarify, do not hesitate to contact him/her directly. This could save you a great deal of time, especially for names of family members or friends. Once this is done, the interview coordinator will send

a copy of the transcript or chronology, along with the resume, to the interviewee for verification.

Once all the documents are verified and all the names are correct, the documents should be forwarded to the post-production coordinator, for one last round of verification.

## 9th Step: Mailing Package to Interviewee

The post-production coordinator will send each interviewee a package containing:
- A thank you card
- A copy of their interview (DVD or CD-Rom)
- A copy of the index or transcription
- An evaluation form as well as a prepaid envelope

The interviewees will be asked to complete the evaluation form and send it by mail as soon as possible. This form will allow us to determine if the interview sessions went well and to determine if the interviewee would like to continue their participation in the project.

The evaluation forms will be sent to the attention of the lead researcher of the project, Dr. Steven High, at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. A copy of the form will be given to the training coordinators and another copy to the post-production coordinator.

## 10th Step: Translation

The interview coordinators are responsible for coordinating the translation of interviews conducted in languages other than French or English in their working groups. They will have access to a team of translators; some paid and others volunteers, to complete this task.

It is important to remember that the translated version must also undergo verification by the interviewee, who will be contacted by the interview coordinator of the appropriate working group, so as to confirm that the translation respects the original interview.

## 11th Step:CITIZENShift

An agreement was signed between the Life Stories of Montrealers project and CITIZENShift. This agreement stipulates that a folder titled *Life Stories Montreal* will be created on the website of CITIZENShift so as to air segments of certain interviews, edited by the interviewees themselves. Training will be provided to project members by the production team of CITIZENShift. The interviewees will also receive editing training at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. The launch of the official folder on the CITIZENShift website took place in the fall of 2008, at the same time as the launch of the Life Stories project website.

### 12th Step: Database- Stories Matter

**Stories Matter**, an open source software, will serve as a support tool in the construction of the Life Stories database. Stories Matter allows for the collection, management and access to research excerpts from all types of sources. This fall, more in-depth training will be offered to the members of the Life Stories project, but also to researchers interested in learning more about the software.

### 13th Step: Archives

Once all the interviews are conducted and processed, the recordings will be archived on hard drives and on DVDs at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. One copy of each interview will also be given to the documentation centres housed by the community partners of each working group and a copy will also be donated to the National Archives of Quebec located at the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. All documents, photographs and other materials donated will be archived according to the standards of the International Council on Archives.

A copy of each DVD and CD-Rom will also be kept at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia and will be available for researchers and the larger public.

# Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide and Other Human Rights Violations

February 2007

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

In the context of recent tragic events in Rwanda and Darfur, it is arguable that few topics stake a more compelling claim on humanities and social science research than the history of genocide, war and other human rights violations. The unimaginable scope and devastating psychological horror of atrocity crime raise salient questions about the explanatory power, silences, and contested nature of social memory, truth, justice, and reconciliation. Oral history, we believe, has a pivotal role to play in educating ourselves and our communities about the social preconditions, experiences and long-term repercussions of crimes against humanity. Our proposed project, *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide, and other Human Rights Violations/ Histoires de vie des Montréalais déplacés par la guerre, le génocide et autres violations aux droits de la personne*, will use the methodology of oral history to explore the experiences and social memories of Montreal residents displaced by mass violence, ranging from the Holocaust to war and atrocity crime in Rwanda, Cambodia, Latin America, Haiti, and South Asia.

The proposal has been developed by a team of 40 researchers in the Montreal-area, including 18 community partners representing the city's diverse immigrant communities as well as a range of heritage, human rights, arts, and education agencies. Through the evidence of individual witness and community testimony, we intend to address three sets of questions. First, how is large scale violence experienced and remembered by its victims and perpetrators. What does it mean to be a survivor of genocide? What impact does mass violence and displacement have on shaping migrants' social worlds in Montreal and altering the boundaries and meanings of fundamental concepts such as 'home' and 'community'? Second, how do displaced persons (re)compose and narrate their stories in Montreal, Québec, Canada. How do individuals and communities who have sought refuge in new lands construct and transmit their stories to their children and to people outside their social networks? How, when, where, and why are particular stories about mass violence told, and by whom? Third, how can narratives of violence and displacement most effectively be represented and communicated to wider publics in Montreal and elsewhere. How can these stories of trauma, survival and readjustment best be conveyed through photography installations, theatre performances, classroom teaching, on-line education, filmmaking and radio documentaries?

To begin to answer these questions, we will study the narrative structure of life stories, their oral form and the meaning of the words themselves. Putting horrific memories to words is no easy matter; words sometimes do not come easily. Only by deep listening to the provisional, partial and subjective nature of these "recountings" can we begin to understand the meaning and memory of war, genocide and atrocity crime. In listening intently to how refugees speak of their memories, we might better arrive at an understanding of what these experiences meant to

CURA Life Stories Project

them. It may, in fact, be the unfinished and contested nature of these stories that offer us the fullest access to the significance of mass violence.

We believe the core research strategy and methodology of the Life Stories project is ideally suited to the CURA mandate because the idea of "shared authority" is intrinsic to the collaborative work of oral history. The dialogic nature of the interview - researcher's questions and narrator's responses - produces a unique source, the authority of which is derived from the academic "training" and professional "distance" of the university researcher and from the life experience and storytelling of the community narrator. Sharing authority, however, is about much more than sharing training and knowledge; it requires the cultivation of trust, the development of collaborative relationships, and shared decision-making. It cannot be rushed. Communities are collaborators, and true partners in dialogue, as well as being subjects of the research. The project will devise strategies designed to share authority beyond the interview stage, enabling interviewees and community partners to help the project interpret interviews, and to participate in research production and in creative expression. The most significant outcome will be to transform the production of life stories into cultural and historical materials for Montreal's immigrant communities, to preserve within these groups aspects of their history.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION:**

## PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Like most urban centres in Canada, Montreal has a large, diverse immigrant population. In 2001, 25% of the city's residents were foreign-born. A distinguishing feature of Montreal is that a significant proportion of its immigrant population is composed of people displaced by mass violence, ranging from the Holocaust to war and atrocity crime in Rwanda, Cambodia, Latin America, Haiti, and South Asia. Our proposed CURA project, *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide, and other Human Rights Violations/ Histoires de vie des Montréalais déplacés par la guerre, le génocide et autres violations aux droits de la personne*, will use the methodology of oral history to explore survivors' experiences and social memories of trauma and displacement. By conducting life story interviews with 600 residents and by undertaking several collective storytelling initiatives, the project will examine how horrific events in other parts of the world have shaped the lives of individuals and refugee communities in Montreal. This project will make a significant, original contribution to the preservation of historical memory in Canada.

Through the evidence of individual witness and community testimony, we intend to address three sets of questions. First, how is large scale violence experienced and remembered by its victims and perpetrators. What does it mean to be a survivor of genocide? What impact does mass violence and displacement have on shaping migrants' social worlds in Montreal and altering the boundaries and meanings of fundamental concepts such as 'home' and 'community'? Second, how do displaced persons (re)compose and narrate their stories in Montreal, Québec, Canada. How do individuals and communities who have sought refuge in new lands construct and transmit their stories to their children and to people outside their social networks? How, when, where, and why are particular stories about mass violence told, and by whom? Third, how can narratives of violence and displacement most effectively be represented and communicated to wider publics in Montreal and elsewhere. How can these stories of trauma, survival and readjustment best be conveyed through photography installations, theatre performances, classroom teaching, on-line education, filmmaking and radio documentaries?

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# CURA Life Stories Project

To begin to answer these questions, we will study the narrative structure of life stories, their oral form and the meaning of the words themselves. The telling of a story is a dialogical process that is charged, contingent, and reflexive (Pollock). Life story interviews are an especially rich source for understanding the multiple layers of significance and trauma in people's lives. They offer "a means of making sense and interpreting the experience of marginalized peoples and forgotten histories," as well as allowing room to explore the contradictions and relations "between individual memories and testimonies, and the wider public contexts, cultural practices, and forms of representation that shape the possibilities of their telling and their witnessing"(Rogers and Leydesdorff).

The "Life Stories" proposal has been developed by a team of 40 participants in the Montreal-area, including 18 community partners representing the city's diverse immigrant communities as well as a range of heritage, human rights, arts, and education agencies. While the researchers come from a variety of disciplines, the lead academic partner will be the Department of History at Concordia. Eight members of the department are actively involved in the project, including the applicant.  The Department has an international reputation for the study of genocide and human rights and is emerging as a national leader in oral history and digital storytelling. Central to Concordia's position in the field is the *Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies* (*MIGS*). Co-founded in 1986 by Dr. Frank Chalk, *MIGS* has become an internationally recognized centre for research in the field. The Department has also nominated "Life Stories" team member, Erica Lehrer, as its choice for a tier II Canada Research Chair in Genocide Studies. The CURA will likewise benefit from the Department's research infrastructure. Dr. Steven High (CRC in Public History) co-founded the *Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling* in 2005 with Dr. Elena Razlogova after being awarded a $344,000 grant from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. The Centre is equipped with 20 video-editing workstations, a video conference room, an interview studio, and a dedicated oral history training facility equipped with another 16 computers.  All of these facilities will be at the disposal of CURA team members and partners.

## RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

In the context of recent tragic events in Rwanda and Darfur, few topics stake a more compelling claim on humanities and social science research than the history of genocide, war and other human rights violations (Chretien; Hatzfeld; Semujanga; Prunier). Perversely, revelations about the historic effects and patterns of major human rights abuses have become a 'normal' feature of contemporary society. This is reflected, for example, by the evidence emanating from Truth and Reconciliation Committees in countries such as South Africa (Boraine and Scheffer; Ross), Guatemala (Grandin; REHMI), Peru (Milton), and Cambodia (Chan; North; McClellan) as well as war crimes tribunals investigating ethnic cleansing in the Balkans (Hunt). The profoundly disturbing historical reality is that, throughout the 20th century, episodes of genocide and other crimes against humanity have wreaked havoc on peoples and cultures in virtually every region of the world (Chalk and Jonassohn; Phelps). Atrocity crimes – genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity - have inflicted a catastrophic social toll as measured by mass death, injury, material destruction, physical dislocation, and spiritual trauma. The unimaginable scope and devastating psychological horror of genocide, war and other human rights abuses raise salient questions about the explanatory power, silences, and contested nature of social memory, truth, justice, and reconciliation.

**CURA Life Stories Project**

Oral history has a pivotal role to play in educating ourselves and our communities about the social preconditions, experience and long-term repercussions of crimes against humanity. By refracting the study of large scale violence and immigration through the prism of oral history, our project will be able to comparatively assess how mass crimes against humanity affect social development and public memory. Thus the "Life Stories" project will bring a critical research perspective to bear on some of the most troubling realities of the changing global environment.

Oral history projects must work on both factual and narrative planes, as well as on the past and on the present. Memory is "not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings" (Portelli, 1991). The Holocaust, for example, is both an historical event and one that is remembered and conflictually narrated (Portelli, 2003; Bialystok; Helmreich; Peterson). Life stories are therefore living things, always changing. Oral sources tell us "not just what people did, but what they intended to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did" (Portelli, 1991). Yet traumatic memories make the process of remembering and telling more difficult. Cathy Caruth has called trauma a "crisis of witness" (Caruth; see also: Bar-On; Dwork; Grouey; LaCapra; Stone; Boyarin). Audience is a key factor in how stories are told and received. Central American refugees in the Sanctuary Movement used their life stories to educate North Americans about the impact of U.S. foreign policy on their homelands in the 1980s. Refugees learned, through experience, to eliminate any overt political stance and to let their personal life histories speak for themselves (Westerman; see also Nolin).

The telling of a story is inherently performative; hence, oral history and performance enjoy a unique synergy (Frisch, 1990; Boal). While oral historians have spent a great deal of time thinking about how to interpret the spoken word, they have spent far less time thinking about how to read visual cues, gesture and other non-verbal communication; yet stories are told in and with both words and actions. Such an observation infers a need, as researcher Della Pollock points out, for further qualitative study in the area of oral history and performance than currently exists. At the same time, much new research and discussion in community-engaged theatre, communication, and film studies has begun to focus on three key areas: the performative aspects of documentary film; the audio-visual interview as a meeting place between historical documentation, performance, and personal self-creation; and the research process that is inherent in theatrical performance (Linds; Malpede; Schinina; Segall). The convergence of these concerns will be another point of research and discovery for the project. The project draws inspiration from participatory action methodology (Thompson) to involve participants in "self-revelatory" (Emunah) and socially engaged performances by, for, and about their respective communities. Co-creative storytelling is the premise of the other collective initiatives that we are proposing as well.

Beyond the social and political importance of addressing realities of genocide and mass violence in the contemporary world, this project has particular relevance to the formation and expression of Canadian communities. Canada is home to hundreds of thousands of people who have sought refuge from large scale violence and has taken a leading policy role in this area internationally. The collaborative nature and inclusive orientation of this project has the potential to foster productive social and cultural contacts and alliances between diverse refugee communities with similar experiences. Equally important, the project will forge new linkages between displaced people and the larger host communities of Montreal, Quebec and Canada of which they are now part and the process of creating and developing working partnerships

between the academy and community groups will bridge the gap that frequently exists between the two.

In addition to these tangible benefits, the project will contribute significantly to the development of knowledge in Canada by building new, interdisciplinary, university-community research capacities in the fields of oral history, performing arts, and curriculum development. The project will enable research team members to develop new methodological strategies and approaches to issues of displacement and community belonging. The attention devoted to dissemination strategies is focused around curriculum development including, for example, the effective use of new media in different pedagogical contexts.

## RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

A "good interview", wrote psychologist Henry Greenspan, "is a process in which two people work hard to understand the views and experience of one person: the interviewee."  We believe the core research strategy and methodology of the Life Stories project is ideally suited to the CURA mandate because the idea of "shared authority" (Frisch) is intrinsic to the collaborative work of oral history. The dialogic nature of the interview - researcher's questions and narrator's responses - produces a unique source, the authority of which is derived from the academic "training" and professional "distance" of the university researcher and from the life experience and storytelling of the community narrator.  The old distinction between researcher and subject is thus blurred(James; Kerr; Lanman and Wendling; Shopes).

Building on the shared authority of the oral history narratives, our goal is to extend this dialogue outward to include subsequent stages of the research process. Sharing authority is about much more than sharing training and knowledge; it requires the cultivation of trust, the development of collaborative relationships, and shared decision-making. It cannot be rushed. Communities are collaborators, and true partners in dialogue, as well as subjects of the research. The Life Stories CURA will devise strategies designed to share authority beyond the interview stage, enabling interviewees and community partners to help the project interpret interviews, and to participate in research production.

The proposed CURA project strikes a balance between the "breadth" of large-scale interviewing projects and the "depth" of small-scale ones. To that end, the project brought one of the world's leading interviewers of Holocaust survivors to Montreal for our one day workshop held at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre. Henry Greenspan encouraged us to go beyond a single interview in order to engage in "sustained conversations" with refugees living in Montreal. First interviews, he told us, "tend to evoke versions of experience that are 'proven' – ones we already know are tellable by us and hearable by our listeners" (Greenspan). Only by deep listening to the provisional, partial and subjective nature of these "recountings" can we begin to understand the meaning and memory of war, genocide and atrocity crime. In listening intently to how refugees speak of their memories, we might better arrive at an understanding of what these experiences meant to them. Putting horrific memories to words is no easy matter; words sometimes do not come easily. It may, in fact, be the unfinished and contested nature of these stories that offer us the fullest access to the significance of mass violence.

Interviewees, both alone and in groups, will tell their life stories in interviews led by one or two trained team members. As far as possible, researchers will allow ample time for the interview process and multiple interviews will be conducted as a matter of course. Interviews will be recorded with digital video or audio, depending on the wishes of the interviewee.

Participants will be encouraged to bring family photo albums and other items that may help them to remember or communicate their pasts. With their permission, images may be reproduced and archived with the interviews. Interviewers will ask open ended questions (drawn from the project's interview guide) that help guide participants' recollections. While researchers will try to attain comprehensive and relevant oral histories, they will do this with sensitivity to the wishes and needs of the participants. Where the interviewee requests anonymity, special steps will be taken to ensure that their identities are protected.

The experience of revisiting the painful experiences of genocide, war and displacement may prove deeply emotional and even psychologically traumatic for participants. Ethical considerations have therefore been of central concern to team members and partners. Our project's Ethics Committee has undertaken a comprehensive process leading to the submission of a lengthy ethics protocol (including sample consent forms and a life history interview guide) to Concordia University's human research ethics committee (December 2006). The project has benefited enormously from sustained reflection on ethics concerns. In terms of training and the mitigation of harm, we have agreed that all team members will participate in training workshops and seminars before interviewing begins. Interviewers will be taught how to conduct sensitive and constructive interviews that guide participants in the process of remembering. They will also be instructed in the principles and importance of participants' informed consent. In separate seminars co-organized by the working groups and the "community advisory councils" being formed in each immigrant community, researchers will be instructed in the historical and social contexts of participants' experiences in order to work as informed, knowledgeable, and empathetic listeners. Interviewers will also learn to be aware of the emotional and psychological needs of participants and to recognize instances of trauma which may require the services of a counselor. As a result, both participants and interviewers will have access to the culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate support of Concordia Counselling and Psychological Services as well as the assistance of those partners that have expertise in this area. The project will employ a psychologist or counselor on retainer. Additional training will accompany the collective storytelling initiatives being proposed.

One of the dangers of a large-scale project of this kind is that the bulk of the interviewing will be conducted by student research assistants and community members and not project co-applicants. Sometimes faculty members become removed from the research process. We have agreed therefore that every member of the project team (applicant, co-applicants, collaborators, project assistants, staff, students: everyone) will participate in the interviewing. Every team member will share this experience: hearing for themselves the life stories of refugees living in Montreal. We believe that this commitment will serve to further deepen the university-community alliance. In some cases, a university-based interviewer will be paired with a community-based one. In others, a member of one cultural group will be teamed with a member of another. At regular intervals, there will be recorded meetings of all the interviewers, project-wide, where we will discuss our experiences, share observations, compare notes on methodology, and provide peer support. From time to time, a psychologist will assist with this debriefing. These sessions will contribute to the project-wide commitment to drawing cross-cultural comparisons and provide yet another opportunity to learn from one another.

The project's five year research plan is as follows. In year one, "Developing Methodology, Engaging Partners", we will develop our research capacity (hiring staff, developing financial and data management protocols, setting up our project management software), develop our web site, and prepare life story training materials and workshop modules. These workshops, to

be held late in the first year, will train the project team in interdisciplinary methodologies, ethics, digital technologies, and in the history and culture of the immigrant communities that we are working with. Our engagement with partners will include a series of community meetings and the formation of an "advisory council" of trusted people in each cultural community. Interview recruitment and interviewing will begin near the end of the year. In year two, "Recording Life Stories", the project team will immerse itself in life story interviewing as well as in the collective storytelling initiatives discussed below. As interviewing progresses, the building of the life stories database will begin. Interviews will be transcribed (with possible close captioning of the video). In year three, "Engaging with Diverse Audiences", life story interviewing will continue as will database construction. Regular training workshops will be held. Year four, "Strategizing for long-term impact", will see the completion of life story interviewing and the project database. At this point, researchers will be able to access all the interviews. Years four and five will see the formation of four "Community Documentation Centres" (CDCs) hosted by project partners. Each centre will be equipped with a computer workstation, a copy of the entire life stories database (except for anonymous interviews) and a copy of all project materials. The CDCs will become public venues where researchers and community members can watch and listen to the interviews. In so doing, they will help their communities recollect and collect some of these experiences in forms that would be useful educationally and collectively. In year five, "Dissemination," the project will focus on communicating the results to diverse audiences. Since collaboration works best when there is a clear purpose and a plan of action, team members have formed into five purpose-based working groups.

**1.** The **"*Comparative Perspectives on Montreal Survivors of Atrocity Crimes Working Group"*** will pay simultaneous attention to the unique character of each community case-study as well as the important points of comparison and contrast between them. The three research clusters in this Group will conduct multiple life course interviews with genocide survivors and their children for the oral history database and associated digital productions and analyze them, taking into account their communication (or not) of these stories across generations. The issue of inter-generational memory transmission is of special interest today to our partners in the Rwandan and Cambodian communities where anxiety over reproducing pain and suffering in the younger generation is manifest. Much may be learned of benefit to other partners from the best practices of Montreal's Jewish day schools, the *Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre (MHMC)*, and other Jewish institutions in Montreal. The Holocaust Cluster will focus mainly on the life stories of Sephardic Jews who came to Montreal from Greece, Yugoslavia, North Africa, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon. Holocaust researchers and their partners will record an estimated 150 life stories. The Great Lakes Cluster will record the life stories of 200 refugees from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Researchers will explore the memory and meaning of displacement and violence on refugees from the region and examine the configuration of Rwandan immigrant networks in Montreal and the role the history of genocide plays in them. The Cambodian Research Cluster will examine the life stories from the survivors of the Cambodian genocide, now living in Montreal. An estimated 150 people will be interviewed. In year one, the team will digitize 500 existing interviews with Holocaust survivors held at the *MHMC*. It will also develop training materials. Interview kits will be tailored to each cultural community. Life history interviewing will occur in years one to four. The group intends to work with community participants in the development of radio

programming, "life story photography" installations (that integrate image, voice and *Isangano's* dance performance), and instructional guides to the teaching of mass suffering and migration without inflicting trauma on new generations. The community documentation centres will be hosted by *Page-Rwanda*, the *MHMC*, and the *Cambodian Genocide Group*.

**2.** The *"Life Stories of Haitian Refugees in Montreal Working Group"* will explore the role of violence in Haitian society and its impact upon the lives of Haitians who have fled their country during periods of crisis over the past five decades and how they have reconstructed their lives in Montreal. The city's Haitian community presently comprises some 50,000 individuals.  The group will undertake fifty in-depth interviews over multiple sessions aimed at situating the individual within his/her social, political, and cultural context, from childhood through adult life; discerning the immediate causes and context of their flight and exile from Haiti; understanding the circumstances and conditions of their arrival in Montreal; their subsequent life trajectory; and the consequences of their migration upon remaining family members in Haiti. *CIDIHCA*, the principal community partner, has well established expertise in conducting such interviews. In year one, the group will elaborate its methodology, develop culturally-specific interview kits, recruit interviewers and train them, and begin to recruit interviewees. Life story interviewing will occur in years two and three. These interviews will be audio recorded for the most part. In years four and five, the group intends to initiate a series of colloquia and public seminars as well as produce pedagogical materials and scholarly articles. A comprehensive analysis of the oral histories will be undertaken. However, the ultimate goal of the group is the transmission of historical memory to members of the Haitian community of Montreal and, in particular, to Canadian-born Haitian youth.  Thus the most significant outcome of the project will be to transform the production of oral histories into cultural and historical material for the Haitian community, to transmit to Haitians aspects of their own history that otherwise would be lost, and to generate pedagogical materials.

**3.** The *"Life Stories in Education Working Group"* will design and develop pedagogical and instructional material/activities around recorded life stories, provide a "digital memory bank" by inviting online submissions of refugee stories (for example, see the Hurricane Katrina Memory Bank at http://hurricanearchive.org/) and encourage story-tellers to share their stories within educational venues. In so doing, the group will explore ways to use stories in different instructional contexts and ensure that the stories will be "given back" to the communities and the greater public through means of digital media and online community space. How might students "work with stories"? How do community storytellers share communal stories within educational venues, formal and informal? In what ways might these life stories enrich the Quebec "culture and ethics" and "social studies" curricula by integrating these stories into teacher training and ongoing professional development? The group's five year plan begins with the formation of a teacher focus group in year one, working closely with *RECIT/LEARNing*. Eight to ten teachers will meet 2-3 times each year during the life of the project to assess draft instructional material and curriculum development. Year one will also see the development of the "digital memory bank". By year two, this social computing initiative will begin to gather stories, especially in relationship with *Page-Rwanda*. Development of instructional materials will follow in years three and four. Working in collaboration with the *National Film Board*, a bilingual on-line educational meta data system for teachers will be developed in year four. The project's online database will be "tagged" to enable both French- and English-language

teachers to match stories with the curriculum requirements of the province. Finally, the group will organize and host bilingual summer institutes on human rights education together with *EQUITAS* to involve students in collecting and using the stories and for the training of teachers in the use of instructional materials in years four and five.

**4.** The *"Staging Human Rights/Rites Group"* will design and implement a series of intercultural performance workshops involving researchers and community participants recruited from the life story interviewees and the South Asian, Palestinian, Lebanese, and other communities that are a constituent part of the work of *Teesri Duniya* and *Creative Alternatives*. The process will involve the collective telling and exploration of stories and themes within a safe and structured workshop setting under the guidance of trained facilitators supervised by project co-investigators. The workshops will employ various autobiographical, therapeutic, and self-revelatory performance modalities drawn from Story Circles, Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, mask work, Playback Theatre, and Shadow Puppets. Twelve workshops, organized in two-month intervals in years two and three, will build on one another to emphasize similarities and differences as well as the development of accessible and effective performance tools to enhance communication across cultural, social, and other differences. Each workshop will have a multimedia team providing on-site sound and lighting support as well as digital video and photographic workshop documentation. Trained and supervised by project co-investigators, the media team will both record the process and integrate media into the workshops. These audiovisual texts will become part of planning and running future workshops, as participants will be invited to view and comment on key moments and creative choices from previous ones.

   The workshops will lead to both amateur and professional performances. In the first instance, workshop participants would work collectively to present their dramatized stories as a series of short plays or oral histories at community venues. These stories and plays would be interspersed with the recital of poems, songs and dances designed to involve additional community participants and to support and provide perspectives on the stories. For the professional productions, *Teesri Duniya* will work in consultation with workshop participants and their communities to script and produce a series of plays drawing on the research, stories, and overall experiences of the Oral History and Performance project. *Teesri Duniya*'s unique approach to intercultural theatre for social change starts with community outreach and builds towards culturally sensitive dramaturgy - a method of co-creation that situates the emotional memories and lived experiences of cultural diversity (Salter). This work will further the development and recognition of the performing arts as an efficacious and viable means of exploring urgent issues relating to the social and political effects of war, genocide, rape, displacement, and exile.

**5.** The *"Experiences of Refugee Youth in Montreal Group"* will facilitate the vital participation of youth refugees, by training youth participants in video and interview techniques as a tool for self-reflection and as a catalyst for dialogue. In the documentary film and internet portraits that will be produced with the participants, the group will address the neglected issue of refugee youth, with an emphasis on youth from Latin America (Chiswick; Driedger; Grouey; Hirschman; Wilkinson; Zuber). Group members will use a participatory action research methodology (Wells) to involve this population and to sensitize other Canadian youth to the realities of their peers (see Rousseau, multiple). Documenting youth experiences and making them accessible on the internet will strengthen initiatives like the *Canadian*

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*Council for Refugees* Youth Network which connects youth refugees throughout Canada. Group members are engaging literature on both inter-generational and intra-generational memory, that is, how memories of a traumatic experience are passed on from one generation to the next as part of an effort to recreate an historical memory and how a group memory coalesces around certain historical junctures. In year one, the group will develop a methodology that engages young people and partners. Interview materials will be developed in time for two peer interview training sessions with an estimated ten young people. An initial five "pilot" interviews will be conducted. In year two, there will be a second round of peer interview training and another writing workshop. The first video-making workshop will also be held. An estimated ten interviews will be conducted by youth participants. In the meantime, research and pedagogical goals will be refined. In year three, video training will be completed. Sample video materials will be "broadcast" on-line to share and explore mechanisms for feedback. There will also be public screenings of the material to outside audiences. Ten more interviews will be conducted and a short (20 minute) documentary will be produced based on all the interviews conducted up to that time. Other activities in year three include strengthening the connections with schools and teachers. In year four, another 10 interviews (for a total of 35) will be undertaken. The group will work with teachers on the development of curriculum materials; the refugee youth working with the project will produce a second, longer, documentary video. Year five will see participating youth visit schools and screen their film(s) as well as distribute research and curriculum materials.

Taken together, the researchers and community partners assembled for this application have considerable expertise in the use of new media as tools of scholarly inquiry and dissemination. Because oral testimonies are critical to emerging scholarship in the field, it is possible to use these resources in numerous ways. For example, digital technologies can be used to open up new vistas for the scholarly and popular presentation of history in both real and virtual time, through web-based exhibits, radio or film documentaries, community theatre, and digital video databases. New digital tools offer direct access to the audio-visual content of oral sources. The life stories will be accessible in two digital environments, both utilizing a web-hosted database. First, researchers will be able to access the entire database of interviews (except anonymous interviews) using the "Zotero" desktop open-source software under development at George Mason University's Center for History and New Media. Elena Razlogova, a co-applicant, is part of the software development team and would work with them in year one of the CURA to customize it for our needs. Zotero will help us collect, manage, and search the database. We are proposing a second, publicly-accessible web-based interface that would allow anyone on the internet to access the recorded interviews of participants who have agreed to have their story available online. The *National Film Board (NFB)*, which operates CITIZENShift - "an interactive platform where you can explore social issues through: film, photography, articles, blogs and podcasts" - has agreed to work with us in its development. This partnership has several advantages. It is an established project with stable funding over the long term and the software is open-sourced and has superior design qualities (http://citizen.nfb.ca/onf/info ). This partnership will also provide public visibility.

**THE COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS:**

The Life Stories project will generate scholarly books and journal articles, conference papers and special lectures. But its ambition goes well beyond these traditional ways of communicating academic research. Working with oral sources – the life story interviews of refugees living in Montreal – the project team will communicate their findings orally and visually as well as textually. We will produce documentary films, radio programming, community-engaged theatre, photography exhibits as well as digital storytelling initiatives such as the life stories "memory bank". We will also integrate edited life course interview material into classrooms, especially in contexts that validate the family histories and identities of students coming from the communities in this partnership. Materials produced by the project will form the core of the proposed community documentation centres. Each centre, equipped with the life stories database and all CURA materials, will be a lasting legacy of the project. In effect, the most significant outcome will be to transform the production of life stories into cultural and historical materials for Montreal's immigrant communities, to preserve within these groups aspects of their own history that otherwise might be lost.  A communications committee will be formed to coordinate our efforts to reach diverse audiences. The outcomes can be grouped into four categories:

**1.  Knowledge Mobilization:**  the project team has identified a number of strategies to create a space of dialogue and exchange within the project and between the project and Montreal's immigrant communities – a necessary first step. The project will organize regular community meetings and invite community members to participate in the project and to sit on the community advisory boards being set up.  Central to the project's efforts will be the web-based life stories database hosted by the NFB – a unique resource to researchers and community members alike. To mobilize knowledge within the project, we will build a web site in year one, produce regular newsletters and organize research seminars (8/year) and public lectures (4/year). A short bilingual abstract of all reports and publications will be posted on the web site and be made available at each one of our community documentation centres.

**2.  Pedagogical Outcomes:** all five of the working-groups have made the production of instructional materials and classroom resources a research priority. The proposed focus group of Quebec teachers will therefore be integral to the research activity of the entire project. The Life Stories database will be tagged with regards to the Quebec curriculum and made available on-line to teachers.  This pedagogical work will culminate in bilingual summer institutes on human rights education for teachers in years four and five.  A variety of scholarly publications will also result.

**3.  Collective Storytelling:** the project will undertake five initiatives – oral performance workshop participants will work collectively to present their dramatized stories as a series of short plays or oral histories at community venues; *Teesri Duniya* will work in consultation with workshop participants and their communities to script and produce a series of plays drawing on the research, stories, and overall experiences of the project; a series of documentary films and internet portraits will be co-produced with refugee and immigrant youth who will then visit schools and screen their films; a major "life stories photography" installation will be developed; and, community radio programming will be produced.

**4. Scholarly Production:** a wide variety of scholarly production is envisioned. The project will host two international conferences including one already planned in year one on "Sharing Authority" which will result in a special issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies* (confirmed). In addition, the project team will produce at least one more special issue, an anthology, and two monographs. The first monograph, "Remembering War, Genocide and Atrocity Crime" will consist of carefully edited life stories organized thematically across cultures and include a CD-ROM or DVD. The second, "Life Stories – Sharing Authority", will focus on the methodology of life story interviewing, community-engaged theatre, and sharing authority. An end-of-project conference will be held in Montreal aimed at communicating project research to policy-makers, teachers, community partners, and the public.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES**

A research alliance is of fundamental importance to the proposed project. Our project is an explicitly collaborative one, built on the framework of Michael Frisch's notion of "shared authority."  The project team has agreed on a governance structure that maintains parity between university researchers and community representatives at key levels of decision-making. The final decision-making body will be the *project assembly* composed of all CURA co-applicants, collaborators and partners. It will meet twice a year and simultaneous translation will be provided. The day-to-day coordination of the project, however, will fall to the *coordinating committee* composed of six persons and the applicant. A coordinating committee was elected in September 2006. In addition to the applicant (High), it is composed of an equal number of community-based (Kabayiza, Nazarri, Luchs) and university-based (Strobel, Miller, Chalk) members. This body, meeting 9-10 times per year, is responsible for overall project coordination; internal and external communications; developing research protocols; identifying training needs; ensuring psychological support; providing financial oversight and employment supervision; creating benchmarks for internal assessment; and building the life stories database. A paid project administrator and a part-time technologist will assist in these endeavours. There is parity in community and university membership on all project-wide committees (eg. ethics; communications) and each working group has a co-leadership structure. Working groups will coordinate research activities and undertake community mobilization in their area. Sharing authority is therefore the project's "controlling idea", shaping everything and everyone.

The Life Stories CURA has developed eighteen (18) community partnerships, seventeen of which are with Montreal-based organizations. One of the distinguishing features of the proposed project is the large number of community co-applicants. Twelve of the 35 co-applicants are representatives of partner organizations and two others are documentary photographers based in the community. All of these co-applicants are making a personal commitment to be involved in project direction and management, interviewing, artistic expression and research. To signal our commitment to sharing authority, we decided early on to avoid making the common distinction between university-based "co-applicants" and community-based "collaborators."  This decision reflects the high level of engagement of the community partners and their representatives at project meetings. Most of the community co-applicants have served on project-wide committees (including the coordinating committee) and/or have taken up leadership roles within their working group. They have fundamentally influenced the Life Stories CURA project's development. What follows is a summary of the

roles and proposed contributions of each community partner organized by working group, but we will start with the host institution.

*Concordia University* is the host institution for the proposed Life Stories CURA. The administrative "home" of the project will be in the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, part of the university's Department of History. The applicant and seven co-applicants are from this one department. Two of the department's research strengths are comparative genocide studies and public/oral history – evidenced by the department's two Canada Research Chairs in these areas (one soon to be nominated). The Centre was co-founded in 2005 with a $344,000 award for research infrastructure from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. Its aim is to transform Concordia into a national leader in digital applications to oral history. The Centre's recording equipment, computer workstations, interview studio as well as its video-conferencing room and dedicated training facilities will be made available to CURA team members and partners. The CURA staff members will have office space within the Centre. Concordia University has made a substantial financial commitment to the proposed project as well. All told, the university will contribute $85,000 in cash, $30,000 in RTS (5 releases in Arts and Science, 1 in Fine Arts), and $70,000 in in-kind contributions for a total of $185,000 over the five year life of the project. It should be noted that $5,000 of this cash contribution will fund our activities between the application deadline (February 2007) and the announcement (September 2007). The Centre's own in-kind contribution of $35,000 is calculated on the basis of the extensive use of its equipment and facilities and the time spent on project work by the Centre's graduate interns.

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES WORKING GROUP (9 partners)

*Page-Rwanda* (www.page-rwanda.ca) – is a community group formed by parents and friends of the victims of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. It provides psychological counseling and promotes awareness. *Page-Rwanda* joined the project early on and three community co-applicants come from its ranks. Callixte Kabayiza, its president, sits on the project's coordinating committee. Likewise, Monique Gasengayire and Monique Mukabalisa have sat on key project-wide committees. *Page-Rwanda*'s objectives in participating are three-fold: (1) to educate Rwandan youth as well as other Canadians about the value of tolerance and non-violence, (2) to offer survivors still in pain psychological support that is culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate and (3) to research the consequences of genocide on the integration of survivors living in Montreal. *Page-Rwanda* will play an instrumental role in the "Great Lakes research cluster". Mukabalisa, a teacher, is a member of the "Life Stories in Education" group where she will assist in the production of pedagogical materials for Montreal's French-language school board. *Page-Rwanda*, which initiated the "Community Documentation Centre" idea, will host one. It is the partner's hope that the project will contribute to healing and reconciliation.

*Isangano* (**www.isangano.ca**) **-** is a cultural organization of young Rwandans that performs traditional dance and is at the forefront of the community's effort to create a cultural centre. Isangano means "un point de rencontre", or meeting place, in the Kinyarwanda language. Established in 1999, *Isangano* is represented in the CURA project by Lisa Ndejuru, a co-applicant. She was instrumental in convincing the project team of the need for "community advisory councils" to serve as an additional bridge between the project and cultural communities. *Isangano*'s institutional role in the project will be to assist in the recruitment of

interviewees, to participate in the interviewing process, to contribute to the "community advisory council" being formed, and to collaborate through dance performance.

The *Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre* (**www.mhmc.ca** ) aims to educate people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust. It has developed considerable expertise in Holocaust educational programming and the interviewing of survivors. The *MHMC* is very interested in working with other cultural communities in Holocaust education and research and will play an active role in the project. The CURA project therefore fits very well with its primary mission. It will help recruit and interview Holocaust survivors – most particularly those from Greece, the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East. The Centre will assist in interviewer training, workshop animation, and the mounting of exhibitions based on CURA research. The *MHMC*'s existing collection of 500 interviews will be digitized by the project and made available to researchers. Its director of communications and outreach, Miriam Rabkin, is a co-applicant and opened the one day project workshop held at the *MHMC*.

*Communauté sépharade unifiée du Québec* represents the 25,000 Sephardic Jews living in the Montreal area. It will assist the Holocaust research cluster of the CURA to recruit life story interviewees in the Sephardic community, contribute to the advisory council being established, and help team members communicate project findings within the community.

*Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada* (**www.jias.org**) is Canada's oldest chartered immigrant settlement organization. Founded in 1922, the JIAS has been building the Jewish community in Canada for over 80 years. It will assist the project in recruiting interviewees, in forming an advisory council of trusted persons, and in diffusing research results within Montreal's Jewish community.

*Cambodian Genocide Group* (http://www.cambodiangenocide.org) is an international student organization dedicated to the study of the Cambodian genocide. The Montreal area chapter, headed by co-applicant Catrina McKinlay, includes members from a cross-section of the community. Its central goals are to foster discussion and awareness about the genocide and to pursue justice for Cambodian genocide survivors. For example, the *Group*'s reconciliation project collects and documents statements from survivors. As a result, the *Cambodian Genocide Group*'s involvement in the proposed CURA would further its existing goals to educate and document the Cambodian genocide. It will coordinate life story interviewing among Montreal's Cambodian community and contribute to research.  As an individual co-applicant, McKinlay has been a key member of the research team – chairing the project's ethics committee and leading the Cambodian research cluster.

*Communauté Angkorienne du Canada* (www.cambodia.ca) is an independent non-partisan community organization founded in 2001. Its mission is to promote Khmer culture among young people, contribute to family well-being and to encourage socio-cultural exchange between Canadians of diverse origins. It organizes a variety of youth activities as well as the annual Festival Cambodian at Long Sault. *CAC* will assist in the recruitment of interviewees in Montreal's Cambodian community, contribute to outreach and assist in the formation of an advisory council. It hopes that the interviewing and research activities of the project will cause

different communities living in Montreal to reflect on memory, contribute to the healing process and aid future generations to comprehend why this genocide occurred.

***Temple Bouddhiste Khmer de Montréal*** is a religious organization created in 2000 with the objective of organizing and maintaining a pagoda for the religious services of its members. The temple in Anjou provides a communal space where the Khmer community can practice its religion and get news from its country of origin. The *Temple Bouddhiste* has agreed to actively participate in the project and assist in interviewing within Montreal's Khmer community. In doing so, it hopes that the project will contribute to a better understanding of why these criminal acts were allowed to occur.

***Documentation Centre of Cambodia*** (www.dccam.org) was established by Yale University's Cambodia Genocide Program in 1995 and became an autonomous Cambodian research institute in 1997. The Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental organization with two objectives. The first is to record and preserve the history of the Khmer Rouge regime for future generations. The second is to assemble materials that serve as potential evidence in support of those who seek accountability for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. *DC-CAM's* role within the Life Stories CURA is substantially different from the others as it is our only non-Montreal based partner. It will assist us in developing culturally sensitive interview kits and other training materials as well as internship possibilities for graduate students.

### LIFE STORIES OF HAITIAN REFUGEES WORKING GROUP ( 1 partner)
***Le Centre international de documentation et d'information haïtitenne, caribéenne et afro canadienne* (CIDIHCA)** is a non-profit organization founded in Montreal in 1983. Its activities include information and documentation, cultural and scientific training, publishing, and audio-visual production. Co-applicant Franz Voltaire, *CIDIHCA*'s director, has well established expertise in conducting interviews and has produced several documentary video films. As the core partner in this working group, *CIDIHCA* will be fundamentally involved in every stage of research and dissemination.

### LIFE STORIES IN EDUCATION WORKING GROUP (4 partners)
***Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education*** (www.equitas.org) has forty years of experience in the development and delivery of human rights education programming in Canada and around the world. Its participatory education and training programs help people become more effective human rights monitors, advocates, and educators. The content of its programmes centre on the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours required for individuals to understand, assert, and defend their human rights as well as to respect the rights of others. Its director of education, Vincenza Nazzari, a co-applicant, is a key member of the project team – serving on the coordinating committee and as co-leader of this working group. EQUITAS will contribute in a variety of ways including the hosting of a summer institute in human rights education (for teachers) in years 4 and 5.

***RECIT/LEARNing Communities*** (http://www.learnquebec.ca) is a leading educational resource network in Quebec. This non-profit educational foundation supports and promotes pedagogical collaboration and innovation through the use of information technology and modeling of best practice. The *LEARNing Communities'* mission is to support and promote

pedagogical collaboration and innovation in the community of learners in the primary and secondary schools of Quebec. Its director, Bev White, is a co-applicant in the CURA application. Because this partner has direct ties with many of the classrooms of Montreal through its consultants, and can reach teachers through its publishing arm, it provides the project with some reach into the province's classrooms. As a result, this partnership will assist the project in developing a working relationship with the English- and French-language school boards and in developing material that is suitable to the Quebec curriculum.

***Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance*** (http://doe.concordia.ca/cslp ) is a provincial centre for excellence in Quebec in the application of information and communication technologies to teaching and learning. The Centre will participate in the development of educational materials and provide additional research infrastructure for project activities.

***National Film Board*** (http://citizen.nfb.ca/onf/info ) - Our partnership is with the branch of the *NFB* that operates CITIZENShift which is described on its web site as "an interactive platform where you can explore social issues through: film, photography, articles, blogs and podcasts". The *NFB* has agreed to work with us to develop a web-based database of life story interviews to be housed on the Concordia server. As stated in another section, the partnership with the *NFB* will provide us with web-based software that is already developed. It will also greatly increase the public visibility of the project.

## REFUGEE YOUTH WORKING GROUP (1 partner)

***Canadian Council for Refugees*** (**www.web.net/~ccr/** )is a national umbrella organization that has advocated for refugee and immigrant rights in Canada since 1978. It holds regular national consultations and recently formed a youth network to encourage greater participation from refugee and immigrant youth. The working group held a "caucus" meeting at the *CCR*'s November 2006 consultation in Montreal. Youth from across Canada provided feedback to team members. Co-applicant Janet Dench, the Executive Director, has been an active member of the group since its inception. The *CCR* offers the project resources, contacts and experience. When the project team sought to employ an assistant to  develop a comprehensive inventory of youth contacts, for example, it turned to the expertise of the *CCR*.

## STAGING HUMAN RIGHTS/RITES WORKING GROUP (2 partners)

***Teesri Duniya Theatre*** (www.teesriduniyatheatre.com) celebrated its twenty-fifth year of existence in 2006. This professional theatre company is dedicated to developing and producing socially and politically relevant plays that reflect the multicultural composition of Canada, promoting inter-culturalism through theatre, and creating theatrical styles based on the cultural experiences of visible minorities living in Canada. *Teesri Duniya* has produced over 25 major theatre productions including Rahul Varma's (a co-applicant) latest play *Bhopal* about Union Carbide's toxic spill that killed 8,000 within days. It will produce a series of plays flowing out of the project's workshops and interviewing.

***Creative Alternatives*** (www.creative-alternatives.ca/ca) is a not-for-profit Creative Arts Therapies Centre that uses art, drama, music and dance to "raise awareness, propose alternatives, inspire healing, and motivate critical engagement in social change." It provides

counseling services and opportunities for creative development. Its animators will assist in the performative workshops planned, at two month intervals, in years two and three of the CURA. *Creative Alternatives* will also assist in recruiting workshop participants in Montreal's South Asian and Middle Eastern communities.

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