



## **Post-Industrial Montreal: The Politics of Urban Change** **Life History Interview Guide**

Life history interviewing is flexible, following the lead of the interviewee whenever possible. The following interview guide therefore only represents a rough approximation of the kinds of questions that will be asked over the course of the interviews conducted for the course. Life history interviewing, however, is broadly chronological, situating the “event” or “moment” of particular research interest into context. The meaning of urban change can best be understood by understanding the “before” and “after” as well as the “during”.

Interviewees will be asked to draw on historic insurance plans or blank sheets of paper their old neighbourhood, thereby spatializing memory. Some of these interviews, particularly follow up ones, may be conducted while walking through the old neighbourhood. The built environment will therefore act as a further “prompt” to remember. Family photo albums will also be drawn upon.

While most interviews will be individual life story interviews, it is expected that there will be several group interviews – what we are calling ‘memory workshops’ where former residents will remember together. In these cases, the questions will focus on the community rather than individuals or their families.

### **PART ONE: INDIVIDUAL LIFE HISTORY**

#### **I: Family Heritage:**

How far back in time do the stories go within your family? Were you told stories about your great-great-grandparents? Where were they from? When did these stories get told? Did you know your grandparents? How did they earn a living? Did they help bring you up? Were you close to them? How did your family end up in Montreal? Tell us a bit about your parents. What are some of your earliest memories of them? What did they do for a living? Where were they from?

#### **II: Childhood Memories**

Where did you live? Describe your house (draw its interior). Do you have brothers and sisters? Who (else) did you play with? What would you do? Where would you go? Who didn’t you play with and why? Did race/religion/ethnicity/gender play a role in who you did / did not play with? Did you ever get into trouble?

What do you remember about your childhood home? Who lived in the house? What were your responsibilities as a child? Can you describe your childhood neighbourhood (or village) to me? What was it like growing up there? Was it a good place to grow up? Was it safe for children? Youths? Where could you/couldn't you play? Did you ever sneak into places where you were not supposed to go (industrial sites)? Did you ever go to the Lachine Canal? What do you remember of it? [follow ups] What stores did you go to? Did you avoid any? Did you go downtown much? Are there any distinctive sounds or smells that remind you of those times?

Can you tell me about your closest childhood friends? Were kids tougher back then? Were there any clubs or associations? Where did your family do on weekends? How did your childhood differ from other kids in the neighbourhood? Was there a big divide between rich and poor in Point St. Charles?

[GOOD PLACE TO DO A MEMORY MAPPING EXERCISE WHERE THE INTERVIEWEES SKETCHES WHERE THEY PLAYED WHERE THEY DID NOT; GEOGRAPHIES OF DANGER – GANGS?]

### **III: Schooling/Youth**

Where did you go to school? What was it like? Were there competing groups of kids at school? If so, which group did you belong to, and why? Was any teacher an important influence on you? How has schooling changed since you went to primary school? Do you have any special memories of your school years?

While you were at school, did you have any part-time jobs? Where did teenagers in your neighbourhood hang-out/play sports/etc? Was this typical? What did you want to do when you grew up? Did you want to follow in your father's/mother's footsteps? What did they want you to do?

### **IV: Young Adulthood and Work**

What chores did you have to do at home growing up? When did you start to earn wages? How did you get the job? Was it hard work? What other jobs did you have early-on?

When did you leave your parents home? How did you make your living? Tell me about the first time that you got a full-time job? Was it through family connections? Do you remember your first day at work? What did you do there? Describe your workplace [might sketch it out] Was it dangerous work? If so, tell us why. Did people play practical jokes on each other? How did people make work more fun? Was it ever nasty?

Did you work with others from the neighbourhood? Did men and women work together? Anglophones and Francophones? Different races or ethnic groups? Did the workforce change over time? Did you like working there? What did people do during lunch/on break/after work? Were there nearby restaurants or taverns?

Was there ever conflict at work? How did it play itself out? Did you belong to a trade union? If so, were you active in it? Did you ever go on strike? Were there hard-times (layoffs, etc)?

Did you have other family members in the workplace? Did the older generation get along with your generation at work? How about those who came after you? Did people's work ethic change over time? If so, in what ways?

How did the Quiet Revolution or other social changes affect your career/life? Could you function in both French and English? Did you see French-English tensions at work or in your neighbourhood? Were you ever discriminated against?

For those who immigrated to Canada: What brought you to Montreal? Tell us about your first impressions? How were you received? What was most difficult in coming to Montreal? Where did you find support? Did Montreal become home? If not, why not? If so, when?

Did you retire or were you laid off?

If laid-off: Did you anticipate the shutdown? Please describe the day that the announcement was made to close the plant. Did you get advance notice? Severance pay? Pension? Were you invited to move to another facility? How did your family react to the news? Tell me about your last shift. Did you keep any mementoes? Why did it close? Could it have been avoided? Did the community or your union help your family through this crisis?

## **V. Marriage and Children:**

At what age did young people start to date? Where did young couples go? Can you tell me how you and your partner first met? Did you get married earlier than others? Do you have children? If so, how many? When you were bringing them up, did you approach parenting the same way as your own parents? Did you bring them up to believe that certain things are important in life?

## **VI. Community Activism**

What community organizations were you involved in? Why?

Were you involved in (or had any contact with) any of these organizations. If so, did any of these organizations make a difference to you and others in PSC?

- La Clinique Communautaire?
- Le Carrefour d'Education Populaire
- [list organizations]
- Action Gardien – Table de concertation de PSC
- Bibliotheque du peuple.
- Carrefour d'Education Populaire de PSC
- Club populaire des consommateurs de PSC
- St. Columba House
- YMCA de PSC

- Seniors Club
- Your Church.
- Archives Populaires de PSC (mid-1990s to mid-2000s).
- Regroupement Information Logement (RIL).
- Clinique Juridique d PSC, 1971- ?.
- Regroupement pour la relance economique et sociale du Sud-Ouest (RESO).
- Canadian Legion (PSC).
- Another community organization?

**[this section allows you to explore the history of activism in the neighbourhood. Explore the struggles, the challenges, the people in relation to specific organizations – delve deeply into this area. We want vivid stories from this.]** We want to gain a sense of the social, political and cultural geography of PSC over time.

### **VII: Neighbourhood Identity**

What does it mean to be from Pointe St. Charles? Does it mean the same thing today as it did when you were a child? How did this neighbourhood change over your lifetime? When did it start to change?

Would you like to add anything else?

## **PART TWO: COMMUNITY MAPPING AND FAMILY PHOTO ALBUMS**

### **VII: Mapping the Neighbourhood**

Using a map or a blank piece paper, can you describe the neighbourhood for me? Who lived where? Where were the stores? Parks? Where did you hang out as a kid? Were there places that you avoided? Why? Tell me a story about each place. How did those living outside your neighbourhood view it? Was it considered rich/poor? Was it associated with a particular ethnic group? Why? In your neighbourhood, were you considered better off or worse off than your neighbours? Who did you mix most easily with?

### **X: Family Photograph Album**

Ask the interviewee if you can go through the family photograph album and record the subsequent stories attached. Pay particular close attention to the photographic representation of the old neighbourhood and any signs of displacement. Is there a change in tone in the photographs that follow? When do these albums come out?

What would you most like others outside of your community to know about your experiences? Have your views changed over time? Is there anything that you would like to add?  
*Note: we will be asking interviewees if we might scan photographs and if they have any textual materials in their possession that they would agree to be scanned.*