



Tips for Interviewing Kūpuna about ‘Āina

Kīpuka Kuleana ‘Ohana ‘Āina Workshop | January 21, 2023

- 1) If possible, go to the ‘āina itself together. Take pictures. Walk the area and its boundaries. If you can't go, bring maps and pictures to your talk story time.
- 2) Be sure that your kūpuna knows what you are interviewing them about and why. Make them comfortable.
- 3) Start with easier and more general questions (like their name and connection to this place) to build comfort and confidence.
- 4) Bring a recording device so that you can focus on the person talking, not try to write notes wildly the whole time. Showing that you are listening is important. Bring two recording devices and set them both so you have back up. Always test them first. The voice memo app on an iPhone works great and can be inputted into iTunes as wav or other format files and shared with kūpuna and if they agree, other ‘ohana members.
- 5) Don't start recording right away. Ask first if it is ok to do so. Be prepared for them to say it is not OK. In that case, be prepared to take notes and to remember. Take notes that jog your memory since it is hard to capture every word. Taking notes on a computer is often more distracting than by hand.
- 6) Know that wind comes through loudly on a recording and ruins it, so non-windy locations are key. Using microphones that clip to a lapel are great, small unobtrusive ones or just external mics on a recording device. Set the device where it is close to the kūpuna but you can check it often. If using a phone, put in on airplane mode so it doesn't ring and delete your whole recording.
- 7) Wait until they are finished speaking to ask the next question. Don't interrupt. Don't ask a question if they have just answered it.
- 8) View your interview questions as a map. At some point the trail of your interview should cover the whole map. It is ok if you don't ask each question in the exact same order or spend as much stop at each "stop" or question on the map.
- 9) Probe (gently). Go deeper. After a question is answered and before you ask the next you can say, "mhhhm," or "interesting," or "could you tell me more about that?" or "why?" That may elicit a whole deeper level of answer to the question. Sometimes just repeating the last words they said encourages them to share more.
- 10) Give think time and wait time. After you ask a question, be quiet, let them think, don't be nervous or they will be.
- 11) Do look at them while they talk.

- 12) Don't check your watch. Or your phone!
- 13) Don't say what you think or make "judgments"- even supportive ones - or they might direct their future answers to please you. Do encourage them.
- 14) Especially with kūpuna, they are reminiscing, in a sense taking a journey. You want to hold their hand, but let them lead and immerse in where they are. So try not to interrupt or change topics quickly. Just listen.
- 15) Take notes (your recording may not work!) on main topics as they talk. Note the time next to each topic as they change subjects. This will help you to have an outline of your interview and as you transcribe and go back to analyze it.
- 16) Plan for time to take notes immediately afterwards. Type up everything you can remember that they said. If you took a partner, do this together to remember more. If the recording fails, this is your back up. Also, though, this helps you to learn and make sense of it all. And to practice oral recollection.
- 17) Some useful questions to ask:
 - Where are your 'ohana 'āina?
 - What are your earliest memories of this 'āina? What was it like?
 - How often did you come and what did you do here?
 - Who lived here?
 - How did your 'ohana take care of this place?
 - Who were the 'ohana members connected to this place? Do you have genealogy or documents connecting your 'ohana to this place?
 - What are some of the names your 'ohana used for your 'āina and surrounding areas?
 - How has this place changed and why?
 - What do you want to see for the future?
 - What do you want your mo'opuna and future generations of our family to know about this place?
 - What do you want to see in the future?