

Documenting Your Own Community through Oral Histories

Most of the information on the Berea Public Art Tour website was collected through oral history interviews, and most of it is presented as clips from the audio recordings made of those interviews. Be sure to share some of the oral history clips with the children on your tour. It is a way that they can hear the voices of the artists who created the artwork, of the curators who have taken care of it, and the historians who have studied and interpreted it. The oral history interview clips help to bring the sites on the tour to life.

Students of all ages enjoy being part of the interview process, too, whether they are the ones conducting the interview (the interviewer) or the one being interviewed (the interviewee). Most of the oral history clips on the Berea Public Art Tour were collected by college or high school students.



Follow up on the oral history aspect of the Berea Public Art Tour is by conducting interviews with people in your community about any works of public art (architecture, monuments, sculptures, stained glass, murals, etc.). Interview the artists if at all possible, or interview local historians, tourism staff, church or community leaders, or long time residents.

When people think of recording interviews, they usually think of videotaping. Technology has made it fairly easy to make a video, but it is still beyond the expertise of most people to edit a video. In this regard, audio interviews are easier. Middle and high school students can learn to do basic editing of audio files (such as clipping out excerpts) using free, downloadable software like Audacity. They can also learn to combine audio clips with photographs using programs like MovieMaker.

You can also transcribe segments of interviews or use information from the interviews as a primary resource for writing about the public art of your community.