Nikkei
national museum
& cultural centre
日系文化センター・博物館

NNMCC Heritage StoryLab Interview Prep Cheat Sheet

A practical guide for creating a prepared, respectful, consent-based story interview

Core frame: An interview is not extraction. It is a partnership. The goal is for the interviewee and interviewer to understand the purpose, rights, materials, consent options, and next steps before, during, and after the conversation.

1. The 6-Step Interview Prep Flow

Step	Action	What to do
1	Invite with care	Explain why their story matters, how the interview will be used, and who is involved.
2	Prepare the packet	Information sheet, consent/release, interview log, prompt sheet, contact info, materials/photo log, and tech checklist.
3	Align before recording	Review purpose, comfort, topic boundaries, language, accessibility needs, and the right to pause or stop.
4	Confirm consent	Make sure the information sheet matches the release/consent form. Clarify sharing levels and supplementary materials.
5	Gather the story	Listen deeply, ask open questions, follow emotion with care, and let the storyteller lead the pace.
6	Close the loop	Thank them, explain next steps, confirm storage/sharing, offer a copy, and document follow-up needs.

2. Pre-Interview Packet Checklist

Have these ready before the interview. For event-based interviews, keep copies at the check-in table or with the interviewer clipboard.

Item	Purpose
[ ] Information Sheet	Plain-language summary of the project, interview process, use of recording, photos/materials, rights, contacts, and next steps. It should mirror the release/consent form.
[ ] Release / Consent Form	Signed permission form with clear choices for recording, archiving, sharing, promotional use, and supplementary materials.
[ ] Interview Log or Sign In / Sign Out Sheet	Tracks who was interviewed, date, interviewer, files created, materials received, consent status, and follow-up needed.
[ ] Story Prompt Sheet	A short menu of respectful prompts so the interviewee can prepare without feeling over-managed.
[ ] Photo and Supplementary Materials Log	Records any photos, letters, documents, or objects photographed or collected, who owns them, and how they may be used.
[ ] Contact and Follow-up Sheet	Interviewee contact details, preferred communication method, family contact if needed, and who to contact with questions.
[ ] Tech and Comfort Checklist	Recording device, microphone, storage, backup, battery, quiet location, seating, water, accessibility needs, language preferences.
[ ] Warm Introduction Plan	If the interviewer is not family or already known to the interviewee, arrange an introduction from a trusted person whenever possible.

3. Information Sheet: What It Must Include

Use this as the plain-language companion to the consent/release form. The interviewee should be able to read this and understand the interview before signing anything.

Section	Include this information
Project name and purpose	What is StoryLab? Why are stories being gathered? Who is involved?
People involved	Interviewee, interviewer, family/community connection, organization contact, and archive/contact person if applicable.
What happens in the interview	Approximate length, format, sample questions, recording method, language options, and ability to take breaks.
Recording and storage	What will be recorded, where files will be stored, who can access them, and how they will be labeled.
Sharing options	Private family use, workshop/community use, museum/archive use, public online use, educational use, or promotional use.
Supplementary materials	How photos, documents, objects, or event images may be photographed, copied, returned, archived, or shared.
Rights and choices	The right to ask questions, skip topics, stop recording, go off-record, withdraw or limit use where possible, and request follow-up.
After the interview	When they may receive a copy, how edits/corrections are handled, how to contact the team, and what happens next.

Note: Have the final consent/release language reviewed and approved by the Nikkei team before distribution.

4. 10-Minute Pre-Interview Conversation

Use this before the recording starts. It helps both people feel prepared, clear, and respected.

Moment	Simple language to use
1. Welcome and relationship	Thank you for being here. Before we record anything, I want to make sure you feel clear, comfortable, and fully in choice about what you share.
2. Purpose	We are gathering stories so family members, future generations, and the community can better understand the lived experiences behind our history.
3. Partnership frame	This is not about taking a story from you. This is a partnership. You get to choose what you share, what you skip, and how your story can be used.
4. Consent review	Let us review the information sheet and consent form together. I will pause after each section so you can ask questions.
5. Rights reminder	You can pause, take a break, skip a question, go off-record, or stop the interview at any point. You do not need to explain why.
6. Materials and photos	If we photograph or collect any photos, documents, or objects, we will record what they are, who owns them, and how they may be used or shared.
7. Comfort and boundaries	Are there any topics you would rather avoid today? Are there topics you want to make sure we include?
8. Logistics	We will record with [device]. The interview may take about [time]. We can pause anytime. Afterward, we will explain the next steps again.
9. Start consent on recording	Once we begin recording, I will confirm your name, today's date, and that you consent to this interview under the options you selected.

5. Consent Choices to Clarify

The consent form should make these choices clear. The information sheet should explain them in simple language before signing.

[ ] Audio recording allowed	[ ] Video recording allowed
[ ] Interview may be shared with family only	[ ] Interview may be used in StoryLab workshop or educational settings
[ ] Interview may be archived by the museum or community archive	[ ] Interview may be shared publicly online
[ ] Short excerpts may be used in promotional or public-facing materials	[ ] Photos, letters, documents, or objects may be photographed or scanned
[ ] Event photos may include the interviewee or their materials	[ ] Interviewee wants to review transcript, clips, or summary before public use

Tip: Avoid assuming that one signature means every possible use is approved. Separate consent choices build trust and reduce confusion later.

6. During and After the Interview

During: Hold the story with care	Watch for yellow/red flags	After: Close the loop
- Listen without interrupting. - Use open questions. - Ask permission before going deeper. - Let silence do some work. - Respect names, terms, and identity. - Confirm spellings and relationships.	- Emotional overwhelm. - Confusion about consent. - Family conflict or privacy concerns. - Story feels too sensitive for public sharing. - Interviewee seems tired, pressured, or unsure. - Stop and check in if needed.	- Thank them sincerely. - Confirm how story and materials may be used. - Explain next steps and timeline. - Offer copy or summary when appropriate. - Label files immediately. - Back up files and update the interview log.

7. Gentle Prompt Bank

Choose a few prompts, not all of them. The goal is not to extract every detail. The goal is to help the storyteller find what matters.

Theme	Prompt
Beginnings	Where does this story begin for you? What do you remember about your family, home, or community at that time?
People	Who shaped you? Who taught you something important? Who do you wish more people knew about?
Places	What places carry meaning for you? A home, street, school, business, church, temple, community hall, or gathering place?
Objects and photos	Is there a photo, object, recipe, letter, or document that carries a story? What does it help you remember?
Challenges	Was there a time your family or community had to adapt, endure, rebuild, or begin again?
Lessons	What did that experience teach you? What values, choices, or strengths came from it?
Legacy	What do you hope children, grandchildren, or future generations understand from this story?

8. Mini Interview Log

Print one copy per interview or use as a template inside a digital archive.

Field	Notes
Interviewee name	Preferred name / spelling
Interviewer name	Relationship or organization
Date and location	In person / online / event
Language(s)	Translation or interpretation needs
Recording files	Audio/video filenames and storage folder
Consent status	Signed / needs follow-up / limitations
Sharing level	Family / educational / archive / public / promo
Supplementary materials	Photos, documents, objects, letters, recipes
Topics covered	Key memories, names, places, themes
Follow-up needed	Review, copy, spelling, permissions, questions

One-Page Interview Prep Checklist

Use this as the quick version on interview day.

Before inviting someone [ ] Know why this person is being invited [ ] Clarify family/community connection [ ] Arrange warm intro if not family [ ] Choose location, language, format, and timing [ ] Prepare information sheet and consent form	**Before recording** [ ] Review information sheet [ ] Review release/consent choices [ ] Confirm recording method [ ] Confirm what can and cannot be shared [ ] Ask for topic boundaries [ ] Explain right to pause, skip, stop, or go off-record
Materials and photos [ ] Identify photos/documents/objects [ ] Confirm ownership [ ] Explain how materials may be used [ ] Complete materials log [ ] Return originals or confirm storage plan	**During the interview** [ ] Start with recorded consent [ ] Ask open questions [ ] Listen without rushing [ ] Ask permission before sensitive follow-up [ ] Watch for fatigue or overwhelm [ ] Confirm names, places, dates, and spellings
After the interview [ ] Thank interviewee [ ] Review next steps [ ] Confirm copy/review requests [ ] Label files [ ] Back up files [ ] Update interview log [ ] Follow up on questions or permissions	**Partnership reminders** [ ] The interviewee is not a source to extract from [ ] Consent is active and ongoing [ ] Clear rights build trust [ ] The story belongs to the storyteller first [ ] The process should honour dignity, memory, and future generations

Optional language note: Use generational terms such as Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, or Gosei only when appropriate, and confirm how the storyteller describes themselves and their family.