Utilizing Oral History to Connect Students with Issues in their Coastal Community: A Voices from the Fisheries Project in Cortez, Florida

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National Working Waterfronts & Waterways Symposium
Outline

❖ Explanation of Project
  ▪ Goals
  ▪ Project Site
  ▪ Partners
  ▪ Methods
  ▪ Interview Questions

❖ Progress
  ▪ Training
  ▪ Integration into Curriculum
  ▪ Outreach
  ▪ Interviews Completed
  ▪ Other Outcomes
  ▪ Community Events

❖ Project Completion

Vessels in Cortez, FL
Explanation of Project

- SERO pilot project

- Partners staff anthropologists, local organizations in the community of Cortez, and a local public school

- Implement Voices from the Fisheries (VFF) Local Fisheries Knowledge Project to conduct oral histories with fishermen in the village of Cortez
  - VFF = NOAA Fisheries established method of partnering with local schools to conduct oral histories with fishermen
  - Students conduct the oral histories (interviews) with fishermen in their communities
Project Goals

Education Goals for Students:
- Provide learning opportunities
  - connect to issues in their coastal community
  - equip with skills for work and continued education
- Increase in knowledge and lasting interest in the fishing industry, fishing history, and in the preservation of that through oral history
- Explore connections between fisheries, the marine environment, their community, and their own lives

Data:
- Gather and preserve local fisheries knowledge and experiences

Relationships:
- Strengthen connections between students, schools, community, and NOAA Fisheries
Project Site

- **Cortez, Florida**
  - 30 minutes south of St. Petersburg (Gulf Coast of Florida)

- **Long history of fishing involvement**
  - Spanish-Colonial era
  - Late 19th Century fishermen from North Carolina moved to Cortez - descendants still fish there

- **Maintaining fishing way of life important to community**
Project Partners

- NOAA Fisheries – Southeast Regional Office

- Manatee School for the Arts (middle and high school in Palmetto, Florida)
  - Teacher = dept. head of social studies
  - 10th-12th grade students

- Florida Maritime Museum at Cortez

- Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage

- A.P. Bell Fish Co.
Methods

- Voices from the Fisheries
  - Model developed by NOAA Fisheries

- Developed to address:
  - Need to improve relationships with fishing communities affected by regulatory actions
  - Introduce youth to career possibilities in NOAA
  - Many fishermen’s belief that fisheries scientists and managers disdain their knowledge
  - NOAA’s expanding education role

- Pilot project in Maine 2003

- Published handbook
Methods

- VFF Handbook includes guidance on:
  - Identifying potential community partners
  - Integrating into school curriculum
  - Ethics in interviewing
  - Recording technologies
  - Interviewing
  - Transcribing
  - Archiving Interviews
  - Project Evaluation

Community partner meeting in Cortez
Progress

- Overarching theme = changing face of Cortez’s marine environment

- Interview questions developed by students

- Interviewees = community members involved in maritime activities
  - Commercial fishermen
  - Recreational fishermen
  - Crew members
  - Fishermen’s wives
  - Fish house workers
  - Boat yard workers
  - Ecotourism industry workers
Training

- Two day training & planning session - August 2012
- Facilitated by Susan Abbott-Jamieson

Participants:
- SERO anthropologists
- Community partners (museum staff, A. P. Bell Fish Co, community member)
- Teachers

Topics:
- Project planning
- Overarching project theme
- Interview topics & interviewee categories
- Interviewing & transcribing techniques
- Outreach
Progress

- Curriculum integration:
  - Integrated into Florida history classes
    - Interviews conducted by history students

- Additional subjects:
  - Biology
  - Theater
  - Photography
  - Art
  - Business Math
Progress

- **Class Presentations**
  - Presentations to participating history classes by SERO staff anthropologists

- **Outreach**
  - Article in the Islander (Anna Maria Newspaper)
  - Festivals
    - Schoolhouse Centennial Celebration - November 2012
    - Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival - February 2013

Project booth at Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival
Progress

- Interviews Completed = 6
  - Goal = 10-15 by end of school year
  - Interviews recorded by video camera and audio recorder
  - Plans to continue project & interviews next school year with new classes

- Goal - Connecting students with fisheries and their coastal community
  - Learned about local fishing history in class
  - First few interviews were with fishing family peers – students who fish in Cortez
  - Other interviewed fishermen excited to share their history and “what really happened” with the younger generation
  - Project incorporated into many subjects at school
Progress

- Additional Outcomes:
  - Touch tank of local fish species at Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival
  - Photos taken & being edited
  - Theater class has developed monologues
  - Art class creating fish prints
  - Business math class examining fish house/fishing expenses and earnings
Plans for Cortez Community Picnic:
- Annual event in community – April 20th

Students present to community:
- Monologues will be performed based on interviews and on book written about fishing family in community
- Photographs presented at fish house gallery
- Touch tank
- Music by students
Project Completion

- Year 1 project completion = end of school year

- Completed interviews:
  - Will be uploaded to Voices from the Fisheries website
    http://voices.nmfs.noaa.gov/
    - Available to public and researchers
  - Archived at Florida Maritime Museum at Cortez
    - May incorporate into an exhibit - would be available to museum visitors
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- Cortez Community Members