



Activity: Hazard Memories and Wisdom

Purpose: Learning from older community members about their past experiences of natural hazard and disaster and about what people used to do in times gone by to avoid danger from natural hazard

Age level: 14-18

Time needed: Approximately 160 minutes, i.e. 50 minutes for opening discussion, preparing and sharing questions and practicing interviewing (*Stage 1*); 40 minutes for interviewing in the community (*Stage 2*); 40 minutes for report preparation and oral presentations and 30 minutes for report writing (*Stage 3*). *Note: the activity is best spread over three or four different class sessions.*

Procedure

Stage 1

The teacher discusses with the whole class how much they know about what their own community and the local environment were like before they were born. Do they know whether their local place looked different and, if so, how? Do they know if people did things differently from how they are done today? Do they know if the demography of the community is different from today? Do they know what dangers and threats were faced? Do they know what people did to avoid danger and keep safe when a storm or other natural hazard threatened?

After sharing what they know, students work in pairs or small groups to plan the questions they would like to ask elders and other adults in their community to find out more about lifestyles and the natural environment in years gone by, how things have changed, hazards faced and what people did to avoid danger and keep safe. The teacher can give a few ideas for the types of question they might use (see *Suggestions for Interview Questions* box). Pairs/groups each present their questions and others are encouraged to give critical, constructive feedback.

The teacher explains that good interviewing is not just about asking pre-prepared questions one after the other but also means listening carefully to what people say and asking follow-up questions prompted by their answers as a way of finding out more. The teacher



demonstrates interview techniques and student pairs/groups practice interviewing, if necessary.

Suggestions for Interview Questions

- Have the seasons changed? If so, how?
- Have changes in the weather brought new problems to the community? What are they?
- Has the landscape changed (rivers, sea levels, safe places becoming dangerous places, new roads and houses)? If so, how?
- Has the number and characteristics of community members changed? If so, in what ways?
- Has there been a local natural disaster or serious weather event during your lifetime? If so, what happened? What factors made the impact worse?
- What did people used to do to stay safe?
- Can past hazard experience and knowledge be applied to the present situation? If so, what and how?

Stage 2

The teacher takes the class out into the community to interview local adults or invites a number of community adult members to school for interview.

Stage 3

After the interviews, each group prepares a short report on what they have learned and makes a presentation to the class. The whole class discusses what has been learned from the reporting. The activity closes by having pupils write up their report.

Extension

The teacher arranges for elder or adult members of the community to take students on a guided tour of the locality to show how natural hazards have affected their home place in the past. Students present their reports to participating elders and invite feedback.

Potential/Facilitation Guidance

Timings given are approximate and the time needed for *Stage 1* will depend upon how



conversant and experienced students are in interview schedule construction and in conducting interviews.

Making prior arrangements with older members of the community is vital to the smooth running of the activity

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