

**Cambodia, from then to now:  
memory and plural identities in the aftermath of genocide  
May 5th, 6th and 7th, 2011  
[www.curakhmer.org](http://www.curakhmer.org)**

**Steven High**

**Narratives of Loss and Remembrance:  
Interviewing Survivors of the Cambodian Genocide in Montreal**

What is remembered and why is vitally important in oral history. Meaning can be found in the words spoken in an interview, but also in the form and structure of the oral narratives as well as in the voice and in body language. People's relationship to their own stories – where they linger and what they skip over, helps us understand what we are hearing. It also puts memory front and centre. Oral history therefore tells us “not just what people did, but what they intended to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.” Oral historians must therefore work on both factual and narrative planes, as well as on the past and on the present.

The proposed paper, tentatively entitled “Narratives of Loss and Remembrance: Interviewing Survivors of the Cambodian Genocide in Montreal”, will listen closely to the life stories of Cambodian refugees in Montreal, recorded as part of the Life Stories project. The paper will address three sets of questions. First, I will ask how the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouges on the Cambodian people has been remembered. What does it mean to be a Cambodian living in Montreal? Second, I will ask how displaced person, or survivors, compose and narrate their stories. How do they transmit these stories to their children and to others in their community? Third, the paper considers how these stories have been conveyed through new media and the arts. All of the interviews conducted in English and French by the project's Cambodian Working Group will be consulted as will translated transcriptions of those interviews conducted in khmer. The paper will also benefit from interviewer “blogs”, posted within twenty-four hours of the interview, as well as other materials such as digital stories and radio podcasts. The paper and presentation will be an exercise in deep listening.