



A publication of the Social Studies Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Volume 48, Number 2

Summer 2020

President's Message



I have to admit I get a wee boost of pride when students ask me random questions, say about geography or current events, and they are impressed with my knowledge. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the leader of Iran, I practised the pronunciation of his name for a few days to ensure I had it right. But should teachers be expected to be experts on everything in their classroom? No!

Many teachers are not comfortable teaching a particular topic because they are not an expert in the area. When I googled "teachers fear offending," there were almost four million hits, with topics ranging from the Holocaust, to religion, to 9/11, to reconciliation in Canada.

And yet those are all important topics to discuss in the social studies classroom (with consideration for age-appropriate content, of course).

One area in particular that many teachers in Alberta are concerned with is their knowledge base regarding the process of reconciliation in Canada, some stating that they are not comfortable teaching reconciliation if they are not a member of an Indigenous group in Canada. Alberta's new *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education 2018) includes the expectation that "A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students," which has caused some anxiety. Some teachers express fear of using the wrong terminology, appropriating a culture that does not belong to them, or unintentionally offending parents and students.

According to a session with professor David Scott, at the University of Calgary, Alberta was the first province to mandate the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives across all grade levels in social studies, which is something we can be proud of as educators (Scott and Gani 2018). But moving the

curriculum from paper to the classroom requires confidence. He pointed out that we social studies teachers must remember that we often represent the history and perspectives of groups we are not personally members of, like the pioneers or experiences of people living in Ukraine. Yet teachers are still expressing discomfort with the sensitive topics relating to Canada's Indigenous Peoples. I have experienced this sentiment

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first-hand as a Canadian of European descent who was given the assignment to teach an Aboriginal Studies 10 class in northern Alberta, which required me to teach Cree students their own culture.

One way to start making connections is through land acknowledgements. Many of us have heard these read right off of a script, but there are opportunities to make these more meaningful by personalizing them based on the territory you are on. This can occur by learning something new about the Indigenous Peoples in your region and making personal connections with Elders and local community members. So you aren't just reading a prescribed text, I have worked to focus on our shared interdependence, as well as understand how the past influences the present and how we see our future together. Bringing in such experts as local Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Keepers can help to not only ensure first-hand perspectives on the issues relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations but also provide the teacher with knowledge that can help with future lessons. Now I do admit that it can be difficult to find the right people and arrange for them to come into your classroom, but many school divisions have staff to help with this. There are also

many resources available in the ATA library, and I know the librarians are more than happy to help you. The ATA's Social Studies Network Facebook page can connect you with people who are more than willing to share their resources with you. Even as I was preparing this message, I came across the website for Reconciliation Canada (<https://reconciliationcanada.ca/>), which includes videos and stories.

Recently, I completed an online course with the organization Facing History and Ourselves (which is a treasure trove of teaching resources) that was based around the short textbook *Stolen Lives* (2015). This course has transformed the way that I teach the legacy of residential schools to Grade 10 students, as the focus is more on building empathy and telling stories instead of listing facts and events in a more clinical way. Students reflect on their own experiences, like how they feel when they are told "Get over it," which then leads to a discussion on the importance of taking the time needed to work through Canadian residential school reconciliation. A colleague has made it her goal this year to make the classroom a place where stories are told. Her reasoning is that we remember stories more than we remember bare facts, and I agree.

It's OK to not know, to encourage further questions and inquiry in the

classroom that includes the teacher in the process. One of my favourite university professors used to say, "I don't know. Why don't you teach me tomorrow?" thus putting more responsibility on the learner to not just ask but find out. This changed significantly in the classroom with the spread of smartphones. Now a teacher can have answers right away by saying, "I don't know. Let's look it up." What you need to ask yourself is: Are you conscientious, and are you willing to learn new ways and perspectives? If so, then you are an effective teacher and will continue to improve with each new group of students in your classroom.

References

- Alberta Education. 2018. *Teaching Quality Standard*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education. https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739620/standardsdocs-tqs_fa-web-2018-01-17.pdf (accessed June 2, 2020).
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Jennifer Williams

From the Editor



We are living in a time of increased uncertainty, but one thing is surely certain: Albertans have what it takes to get through this. Our efforts to social distance, support each other and keep our case numbers as low as we can is extremely commendable. Keep up the good work everyone! And know that the Social Studies Council is here to help you navigate through these new waters we find ourselves

swimming in when it comes to teaching and learning. As I say later on in my regional report as well, as a teacher you may not be on the front lines, but you are still making a world of difference right now! And we want you to know that we are here for you in many modes to help and support you.

First, I encourage you to check out the council's Facebook page for an extremely quick way to ask a question, collaborate, share a resource with other members, share a funny teaching meme, support other members or simply say hi.

Second, we have an ever-growing Google drive that contains many useful resources.

Third, our website at <https://ssc.teachers.ab.ca/> is great for getting regular council updates as well as links to our Facebook page, Google drive and more!

Last, I encourage you to take time for yourself whenever you can. Perhaps I can even encourage you to

do so right now with this mini puzzle (answer on page 13). Unscramble the following to reveal a special message:

OUY ERA NA LCELEXNET
EATHERC DAN OYU RAMTERT
OS CHUM! EPEK PU HET
TAFSANCI ROWK! KATE RACE
FO FLESUYOR! TAYS FASE DAN
HETHALY

____ _
____ _
____ _!
____ _!
____ _!
____ _!

It can be easy to feel overwhelmed during times like this, so self-care is extremely important! As people always say when it comes to flying in an airplane, you can't help others get their oxygen masks on if you don't have your own on first. So take time to put your metaphorical oxygen masks on, breathe, relax, and stay safe and healthy!

Sana Waseem

Conference 2020 Details

The Social Studies Council 2020 conference is scheduled for October 15–17 at the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta. Due to COVID-19, registration is on hold until we

know more about the situation as it arises. To keep up with details and updates, please visit our Facebook page, Twitter account or website.

Regional Updates

Calgary

It has been an interesting year full of different events and worldwide changes. The Calgary Regional planned some interesting events, which have been postponed until things get better. Please keep an eye out for them when the pandemic is over. In the meantime, I want you to know that I'm here for you if you need anything. We have been working hard to post valuable links and resources to our Facebook page for our members (and many of our members have also been doing the same). I want to thank you and commend you all for the dedication and support you have shown each other, your students and your communities in Calgary and the rest of Alberta. You might not be on the "front lines," but you are making a world of difference! Thank you!

Sana Waseem

Central

As the newsletter editor, it is my privilege to announce that amid all that is happening around us in the world today, we have some great news to share! We are excited to announce that Elaine Willette-Larsen is taking over as the regional representative for the Central

Regional. She brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, and we are extremely lucky to have her. We welcome her with open arms into this new role.

Sana Waseem

Northern

The Northern Regional has been busy. We had a high-profile booth at the Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention and were pleased that our new signage helped us to stand

out. We handed out some swag, which was a hit! We also had promotional materials for our next Social Studies Council (SSC) conference in Banff and a specialist council information event at our local college. Unfortunately, the specialist council event was cancelled due to the current situation. We also encouraged people to join the SSC or prove that they were currently members. With this they received entries into a draw for gift cards.

Nik Selwood



Nik Selwood (l) congratulates Charity Chaulk for winning the gift cards!

2019 Miniconference in Review

If one ventured into a quaint little hotel in the heart of Airdrie in October 2019 on the right day at the right time, one might have found themselves at a lovely wine-and-cheese social event, as part of the Social Studies Council 2019 miniconference. A merry time was had by all at this event, with a selection of lovely food and drinks, hearty speeches, a fantastic keynote by Facing History and an exciting trivia game to end the night on a happy note. If one were to wake up and follow the crowd exiting the hotel the next morning, one would find themselves at a school called Bert Church where a variety of workshops and activities were being held to promote the professional

development of social studies teachers. From blanket exercises to giant map activities, and a myriad of workshops, food and vendors in-between, there was something for everyone. To end the day, there was an AGM and keynote by Gwynn Dyer. If one were to walk out that day, they would have a smile on their face and some new learning to ponder thanks to the following:

- Jasmine Wong from Facing History
- Gwynn Dyer
- Rachel Collishaw of Elections Canada
- Reva Faber
- Don McLaughlin and Alison Katzko of GEOEC

- Canadian Geographic
- Jim Poirier and Brian Crouch
- Alberta Milk
- Silversmith Crafts
- Tribal Roots
- Claire Collyer of Thirty-One Bags
- WorldStrides Explorica
- Bert Church High School
- ATA blanket exercise facilitators
- Hampton Inn and Suites
- Gerald Prost for Photography and Videography
- ATA Social Studies Council members
- And all our student volunteers!

Looking forward to the next conference? Please see page 3 for more details.



Kristy Williams (l) and Sana Waseem getting ready to welcome and register guests.



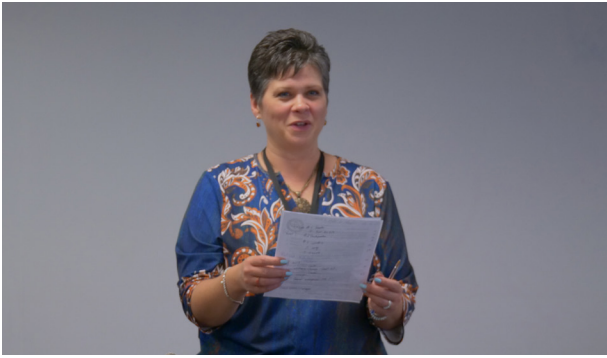
Guests enjoying the trivia game.



A very deep and meaningful blanket exercise.



Workshop by Rachel Collishaw, Elections Canada.



Jennifer Williams hosting the AGM.



Joy Wicks, the trivia game facilitator.



The hallway of vendors.



The awesome giant map activity.



Guests visiting the vendors.



Yes, these are definitely getting purchased!



Our wonderful keynote speaker, Jasmine Wong, from Facing History.



Brian Crouch (l) and Jim Poirier give a workshop on extreme dialogue.

A Peek Inside the Teachers Institute

Hello colleagues! I would like to share two amazing professional development opportunities with you that I participated in this school year: the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, in Ottawa, and the Alberta Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, in Edmonton. Both programs are open for K–12 teachers in any teaching subject to apply to participate. They are not just for high school social studies teachers.

In February 2020 I attended the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, which is a week-long institute for teachers sponsored by the Library of Parliament, in Ottawa. About 80 teachers are selected from each province and territory, with quotas based on population and number of applications. This is arguably the most amazing and intense PD opportunity you will have in your career! You will get an insider's perspective on Canada's parliamentary democracy, have access to a ton of resources and teaching ideas to engage students in

Canada's democracy, and meet and connect with teachers from across Canada. It felt like a month's worth of experiences packed into a week! Here are some highlights:

- Listening to panel discussions and keynotes with various members of Parliament, senators, Library of Parliament staff, and journalists and media experts.
- Visiting Rideau Hall and meeting the governor general, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette. This was an amazing experience.
- Touring the House of Commons and the Senate, hosted by the speaker of the House and speaker of the Senate, with sessions by House and Senate clerks on the role of the House of Commons and Senate in our parliamentary democracy.
- Visiting the Supreme Court of Canada, hosted by a Supreme Court justice.
- Touring the Library of Parliament, with a session on using resources and lessons for the classroom, including the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* (Canadian Geographic 2018), which is an amazing resource.

- Watching a simulation committee activity designed for students to learn how bills are debated by the House of Commons and Senate committees. The coolest part is the activity is done in the actual committee meeting rooms on Parliament Hill.
- Visiting a resource exhibit fair with free resources from various organizations, such as Forum for Young Canadians, Encounters Canada, Canadian War Museum, Senate and House Page Program, and the brand-new Virtual Reality Tour of Parliament with 24 VR headsets for students, which can be shipped to your own classroom.

All week-long, various MPs and senators attended evening banquets and events, including Jagmeet Singh, Elizabeth May and Paula Simons. As well, teachers from across the country from all grade levels spent the week networking and learning from each other, sharing resources, stories and friendship. Teachers are treated like royalty the whole week in Ottawa, with first-rate food, accommodations and a highly professional atmosphere.



Lorne Maier





Teachers Institute participants and Julie Payette, the governor general of Canada.

In November 2019, I also attended the Alberta Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, which is based on the Canadian Teachers Institute, but designed for the Alberta provincial legislature in Edmonton. This three-day institute is also a jam-packed, intense professional development opportunity to learn about parliamentary democracy and resources to teach students about the Alberta provincial legislature. Hosted by the Alberta speaker of the House, this institute gathers approximately 30 teachers from across Alberta to learn about parliamentary democracy from listening to various members of the legislative assembly, the speaker of the House, provincial court justices and the lieutenant governor of Alberta. Similar to the Canadian Teachers Institute, the Alberta Teachers Institute provides K–12

teachers in different teaching areas the opportunity to meet and network with teachers from across the province, share and learn teaching resources ready for the classroom for all grade levels, and experience the Alberta legislature by visiting and touring the

- legislative assembly,
- premier's office and cabinet room,
- Legislature Library,
- provincial court and Court of Queen's Bench and
- Government House—official residence of the lieutenant governor.

Similarly, you will be treated very well during the Alberta Teachers Institute with amazing food, accommodations near the legislature and a highly professional environment.

I encourage teachers to apply to participate in the Alberta and



Canadian Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. It will be one of the best PD opportunities of your career. You will feel valued and inspired to teach students about citizenship and democracy!

Note: To see more photos of the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, please go to www.flickr.com/photos/parlcanada/sets/72157654318857699.

Lorne Maier



An Ethics Bowl for Alberta High Schools



Do your students enjoy discussing and debating current ethical issues and how we should respond to them as a society? The Ethics Bowl is a collaborative and competitive event between high school teams, in which Grades 9–12 students study, imagine, critique and compare bold strategies for solving such ethical issues as robots and automation, vaccination policy, animal rights, climate change, refugee crises, child welfare, Internet privacy and many more.

Unlike a debate, an Ethics Bowl pits teams against an issue, rather than against each other: each team competes to devise the most effective solution to the problem at hand, but also has the opportunity to pose and respond to questions about these solutions. This creates a blend of arguments from each team and a better understanding of ethical ways to approach pressing issues. Points are awarded to teams arriving at the most thoughtful, responsive and collaborative solutions to the question at hand.

The philosophy department at the University of Alberta is planning to host an Ethics Bowl for Alberta high schools next year (2021), under the auspices of the Canadian High School Ethics Bowl (details here: www.ethicsbowl.ca; brief video here: <https://vimeo.com/269011774>). Winning teams will represent the province at the Canadian championships in late April at the

Canadian Centre for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

The Alberta High School Ethics Bowl will be held on the U of A campus on a Saturday in January or February of 2021 (exact date TBA). Free registration and lunch will be provided for all participants. There will be fun and team prizes too! We will also provide coaching sessions for interested teams prior to the tournament.

Our hope is that in the longer run, the Alberta Ethics Bowl will provide a rewarding extracurricular option for Alberta teachers who want to deepen their students' engagement with the Alberta social studies curriculum.

For further information, please contact Jack Zupko, of the U of A department of philosophy (www.ualberta.ca/arts/about/people-collection/jack-zupko), at ethicsbowlAB@gmail.com.

Jack Zupko

Historical Thinking Summer Institute

Looking for professional development over the summer? The Historical Thinking Summer Institute might be of interest to you! While the 2020 one is postponed due to pandemic restrictions, it is worth checking out and keeping in mind for whenever it's rescheduled or for a future summer! The institute

provides the tools and knowledge needed for you to confidently incorporate historical thinking when designing courses and planning lessons. To read more about it, please visit the following website: www.canadashistory.ca/education/historical-thinking-summer-institute.

Screaming for Change: The Power of Protest Songs

“This Machine Kills Fascists” was the phrase on a sticker that adorned the guitar of folk singer Woody Guthrie and thus provided the inspiration for the protest songwriting project that Next Step High School students worked on this past year. This project was made possible by the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education grant in support of social justice learning, and its goal was to have students write, record and perform a protest song for an audience. The result was a song entitled “Scream for Change” and included the themes of environmental awareness, climate change, Indigenous rights, reconciliation, sexual equality, corporate greed and more.

Before sitting down to create this song, students first explored the history of protest music throughout the ages and its power to evoke change. They were introduced to the various movements some songwriters have been involved with including Bikini Kill and the riot girl movement, Kendrick Lamar and the Black Lives Matter movement, and Sam Cooke and the civil rights movement. Once students gained an idea of what constitutes a protest song, they were encouraged to bring their own voice to the songwriting table to explore issues they are passionate about and wanted the world to hear about.

Working alongside local musician Braden Sustrik, the students began to flesh out ideas for their song and chose musical instruments to learn and subsequently play. It was decided that the Woody Guthrie classic “This Land Is Your Land” would form the backbone of the

song and be rewritten and made their own. Each student wrote their own verse on a social justice issue identified earlier, and as this process unfolded, the group of students slowly evolved into a band named Morality Control Unit. A name used in an ironic fashion to raise awareness of the Pisces Bathhouse Raid in Edmonton on May 30, 1981, where 56 men were ultimately humiliated for their sexual orientation.

Armed with their newly penned verses, instruments and well-rehearsed song, the band entered the recording studio to begin the process of documenting their work. The result, as stated above, was a song entitled “Scream for Change (This Land Is Your Land)” and can now be found on YouTube for all to hear. On top of this recording, the band took to the road and embarked on a three-school tour to perform for a total of 250 elementary students. This allowed the band to engage these students in discussions of the themes in the song, what it means to be a global citizen and how these social justice issues are important to us all. Some teachers at the performances even commented on how the song would be used in their classrooms to introduce their units on social justice. Hearing this was a humbling experience for the band and speaks to the sustainability of this song and hopefully inspires others to “scream for change.”

Evaluation

The ultimate goal of the project was to write, record and perform for an audience a protest song at a May Day assembly; for the most part

mission accomplished! Although, the initial theme of the song was one that explored the labour movement and workers’ rights, it deviated from that to be a song about social justice issues of climate change, mental health, sexual equality rights and Indigenous rights and reconciliation. The students all felt strongly about these issues, and in order to give some ownership of the project to them, that deviation was permitted.

If this project was to be implemented again, I would like to have had a tighter timeline and more frequent jam sessions to carry the momentum, which may have allowed us to finish before our May Day goal. We missed that date due to timing issues but felt more practice and the fact that we were no longer writing a song exclusively on workers’ rights justified the delay. It also allowed us to organize a band tour of local elementary schools that we felt provided a more engaged audience and discovered that this was in fact true.

Student Feedback

Overall, I think the project went much better than expected. I didn’t have much musical experience before joining the band and I thought that would be a problem. I ended up playing the bass for the first time and was happy to find it was not as difficult as I thought it would be. Going on tour to different schools was also a refreshing experience because we got to perform the song we wrote in front of elementary classes. At first I was nervous about performing, but I

got over my anxiety once we started playing and ended up having a good time. I was surprised when so many teachers came up to us after the performance to tell us how much they liked the song. I never expected it to have such an enormous impact on people, and I'm glad they enjoyed listening to it as much as I did making it.

—Becca McKenzie

Kristian Basaraba

Song Lyrics: Scream for Change (This Land Is Your Land)

by Morality Control Unit (original song by Woody Guthrie)

This land is your land, this land is my land
From Refinery Row down the Baseline Road man
From Nitza's Pizza to the Millennium Skatepark
This land was made for you and me.

As I was driving down Sherwood Park Freeway
Dreary fields of brown, gloomy skies of grey
Colourless buildings and empty alleyways
Let's make this land for you and me.

I passed by the Row, and saw cajoling
Chimney stacks smoking, and gas clouds rolling
The smog was lifting, and I was thinking
Let's make this land for you and me

The thought of future jobs—oil dependency

Seems so bleak to me let's use green energy
Listen up leaders—stop the climate change!
Let's make this land for you and me

This land is your land, this land is my land
From Refinery Row down the Baseline Road man
From Nitza's Pizza to the Millennium Skatepark
This land was made for you and me.

Once ancient meeting grounds, places to gather
Forced them on reserves 'cuz they don't matter
These Treaty 6 lands were theirs before us
This land was stolen (from them) for you and me.

But we can fix this, and help with healing
Change our perspective and start believing
Colonialism can be defeated
Let's make this land for you and me

This land is your land, this land is my land
From Refinery Row down the Baseline Road man
From Nitza's Pizza to the Millennium Skatepark
This land was made for you and me.

When I return home, to the Park I see
Taller power lines, wider SUVs
Larger corporate greed, more refineries
Let's make this land for you and me

What there needs to be, is change for you and me
Have more tolerance, more community

We can raise our voice, and all scream for change!
Let's make this land for you and me

This land is your land, this land is my land
From Refinery Row down the Baseline Road man
From Nitza's Pizza to the Millennium Skatepark
This land was made for you and me.

It feels so lonely without a centre
Lack of safe space for us to enter
I wish that there could be a place for youth like me
Let's make a (safe) space for you and me

Having gay pride should not be fearful
Wear a rainbow flag, receive an earful
Preach acceptance so us becomes we
Let's make a (safe) space for you and me

As I was walking, down darkened hallways
I saw around me a familiar face
Despaired and lonely, I wish they'd reach out
Because life can be hard on you and me

This school is your school, this school is my school
Monkey bars, swings and the science lab room
In the gymnasium we will sing with you
This song was made for you and me.
This land was made for you and me.

Song recording available here:
<https://youtu.be/0pUUqWQ5zuA>

John Tidswell



Student-created Morality Control Unit logo



Morality Control Unit



Morality Control Unit in the recording studio.



Morality Control Unit—Westboro performance



Morality Control Unit—Campbelltown performance



Morality Control Unit—Wye performance

Congratulations!

Congratulations to two very talented Albertans, Kayla Dallyn and Genevieve Soler, for receiving the prestigious 2019 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching! Their exemplary work on incorporating

respectful collaboration with Stoney Nakoda Elders and community members into their Grade 4 classroom, allowed these two educators to empower their students to learn about stories of their ancestors. More information

about their journey through this meaningful project can be found on the Canada's History website at www.canadashistory.ca/awards/governor-general-s-history-awards/award-recipients/2019/kayla-dallyn-and-genevieve-soler.

Puzzle Answer

You are an excellent teacher and you matter so much! Keep up the fantastic work! Take care of yourself! Stay safe and healthy!

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Print name: _____ Today's date: _____

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