

FOCUS NEWSLETTER

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From the President

Your social studies council is growing and this means great things for us all.

I am Roland Zimmermann, and I am your faithful servant in all that is the ATA Social Studies Council. At the 2013 Jasper annual general meeting, I was voted in as president-elect. I had been president a few years earlier and was determined to bring my experience to my upcoming term. I knew 2014 was going to mean major changes from the 2013 term due to a depleted bank account. The old Social Studies Council was due for an overhaul.

In 1970 my father, Fred W Zimmermann (Mr Zimmermann to all my friends and Fips to all of his), purchased a VW *Little Miss Sunshine* van, which he immediately camperized and took his family on a four-month vacation through the major cities of North and Central America. I remember learning English on the road as I made new friends. That van and all that it came to represent was special to me. In 1975 my father decided to add a new feature to the van and welded on detachable pontoons

and wheel-powered propellers. My dad always had a different way of looking at things. The van made it through various trials on local lakes, and it was a lot of fun. We used the van for many more trips to New York and other amazing places. In 1980 the van became my primary vehicle. Oh, did I laugh at the van's portrayal in *Little Miss Sunshine*; it brought back memories of the days I spent with my "fipsmobile." To my horror in 1982 my dad sold the van when the engine seized up. I was disappointed and believed no one could love the van as I did. In 1985 I met it and its new owner at the Whyte Avenue A&W in Edmonton. The new guy fibreglassed the front and back of the van making it look streamlined and hung surfboards on the side and back. He was taking three buddies to surf the west coast. I had to cheer.

During my time as president-elect, I participated in the detailed analysis of what council has been and what it has become. Under the capable hands of Aaron Stout, we slashed our budget, hosted a successful conference and

developed a mindset that everything is on the table. Our council is adapting. This may be a reinvention or a refocus. Please help us reimagineer our council into one that serves today's members. We will be calling for your input.

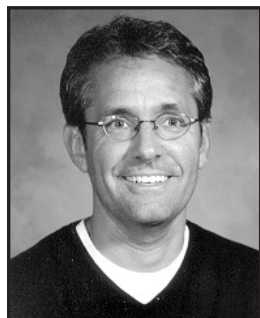
Oh yeah, I should tell you that my dad bought a massive outboard motor, attached it to an aluminum frame he welded together in the form of a small houseboat and threw the old pontoons underneath for good measure.

Roland Zimmermann

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From the Editor



Some years ago five-year-old Phil Plait peered at the stars through a cheap, wobbly telescope his father bought. He saw Saturn—the planet, not the car. He remembers the clarity of the sight—no longer just a yellow blob his father pointed out in the midnight sky but a beautifully ringed planet looking like a jewelled beacon almost within his reach. Plait called this his “moment of science”—the moment he knew he wanted to be a scientist. Dinosaurs captured his imagination for a while and vied for his scientific soul, but planets won out and he became prolific in his field. Everything from giant galactic super clusters to subatomic particles created fodder for his



nerd-like wonder. I have no clue what either of those are (perhaps ice cream flavours?), but if they can instill such a sense of awe in a person they must be pretty impressive.

While at the recent “(Re) Making Confederation: (Re) Imagining Canada” conference in Charlottetown I, too, was inspired and even intellectually intoxicated. I wondered about my moment of history. I wondered when I had my epiphany that developed my near-nerd-like passion for history. I know when I had the epiphanal moment for social studies (my first Noam Chomsky book) and history education. In fact, I can tell you the exact article that created my moment of history education. Yet, the exact moment of history that captured my intellectual soul remains elusive. This isn’t something that I fret about. I know the seminal moment happened long before I pondered the past standing on the walls of Quebec City or on battlefields and memorials in France and Belgium. These actions re-inspired another moment of history—MoH redux. My student teacher can name her MoH. It occurred in a university class when she realized people, like Martin Luther, have agency and can bring about significant change. I realized I have had many moments of history that have hooked and rehooked me on the power of the past. Charlottetown was one such moment.

I want to inspire my students to have this moment in a way that is enduring and deeply felt. I understand that not all students

will leave my class rhythmically chanting “Hi-stor-eee, hi-stor-eee, or “History rules, the periodic table drools.” Fortunately, my efforts are often rewarded (except the chanting) as I do think I instill a passion for history. Students are curious. We discuss, they challenge; we investigate and make joint discoveries then they leave with a greater personal sense of the importance of the past. They don’t come to class and memorize isolated facts, dates, names or the periodic table. History is much more than this, and this passion and sharing was on display at the conference. I left invigorated.

Yet, I also had a disturbing conversation—something that got at the heart of the problem with our current iteration of education and especially prevalent in social studies and history. In a discussion with two professors, I bemoaned the distractions I face as a teacher—too many outside initiatives that take me away from my passion. They noted that even at the university level there is a movement to diminish the time devoted to specific pedagogy and issues related to the subject and replace them with relatively generic courses. Think ... oh, I don’t know ... learning styles—a practice so egregiously misguided that a report authored by four leading cognitive psychologists in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* notes that there is no evidence base to justify using learning style assessments and that resources are better devoted to pedagogy that has a strong evidence base (Pashler et al 2008). Although I

provide only one such example, I am sure you can think of many others.

I fear for students' moment of history in a class where the teacher is a subject generalist not subject specialist and knows nothing of historical-thinking concepts, how the antecedents of current issues played out in the past or the debate of the big questions of Canada or history such as the (in)compatibility of celebratory heritage and critical history. Instead, it is more likely that their moment of history will be when, during goal setting, they find out they are kinesthetic learners not the auditory-musical learners they thought they were—a moment of learning styles? It's hardly a moment to instill a transformative experience but a moment more likely to instill ennui. I can't imagine learning styles being a soul-stealing moment.

In an oft-cited document, *What Did You Do in School Today?*, Sharon Friesen (2009, 3) notes that for education today,

"Schools and teachers need to thoughtfully and intentionally design learning environments and tasks in which teachers can explore issues that are relevant and develop pedagogies that are effective for a knowledge era." She notes that the most effective learning takes place when there is intellectual engagement where the student is so interested in the task that time seems to disappear. Friesen explains that a powerful illumination, like an epiphany, takes place that is intensely motivating and learning is deep and pleasurable. To achieve these conditions, students must do worthwhile work that "requires them to engage ... with discipline and other experts around real problems, issues, questions or ideas that are of real concern and central to the discipline (p 8)."

Hmm. "Powerful illumination," "engage in issues and questions central to the discipline." This sounds like we need to provide an environment for students to have their moment of history/

social studies with tasks designed by educators schooled in the discipline of history (or social studies) not learning styles or character education. We must be free of the chains—the tedium and new-age mendacity of the strategies of the day—that distract us from our real task of instilling moments of history that are engaging, inspiring and meaningful. To misquote Marx, "History/social studies teachers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains." My key to unlock the chains was Charlottetown, where will you find yours?

References

- Friesen, S. 2009. *What Did You Do in School Today? Teaching Effectiveness: A Framework and Rubric*. Toronto: Canadian Education Association (CEA).
- Pashler, H, M McDaniel, D Rohrer and R Bjork. 2008. "Learning Styles, Concepts and Evidence." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 9, no 3: 105–19.

Craig Harding

Forum for Young Canadians

Every year, Forum brings together over 300 students from across Canada for a week of intensive immersion in the world of Canadian politics. Over the course of this week, they are involved in intensive academic adventure, immersing themselves in the exciting world of national politics and public affairs. Their classroom is Parliament Hill, and their teachers are ministers, members of parliament, senators, senior public servants, members of the national media and business leaders.

Students learn about and visit many institutions during their stay including the House of Commons, the Senate, the Parliamentary Library, the

Supreme Court and Rideau Hall. In addition, through discussion with national leaders and decision makers, students develop their critical-thinking and active-listening skills. Through simulations and role-playing, participants enhance their leadership skills, team building and public-speaking capabilities.

The program's learning objectives include developing an understanding of the decision-making process, establishing a greater connection and understanding of Canada, enabling students to have an increased sense of their Canadian identity, and allowing connections to be made between students across the nation by increasing their awareness of similarities and differences.

The primary goal of Forum is to engage and inspire youth to get involved. The objective is that by the end of the program,

students have the right tools and capabilities to go back to their community, get engaged and be a voice for the future.

The 2015 Forum program dates are February 22–27, March 8–13 and March 22–27. Participation in Forum is limited to students between the ages of 15 to 19 and currently attending high school. I sincerely believe that students from your school would benefit immensely from this opportunity. For further information, please contact the Forum office directly at 613-233-4086 or go to the website (www.forum.ca) for additional information and an online application form.

I would be pleased if you would take the time to ensure that students at your school are informed about this opportunity. I sincerely believe it would have a huge impact on their lives.

*Leon Lubin
Alberta Director*



Conference 2014

The 2014 Social Studies Council Conference in Lethbridge was a blast this past October. Keynotes were presented by David Berliner, Darren Lund and Lawrence Hill. Each keynote brought a challenge from his own experience, which ranged from social inequalities, the plight of racism in Alberta and the use of story to change perspectives in society. The conference also took delegates out of their seats to parts of Southern Alberta to explore the surrounding area. Delegates had opportunities to experience a trivia night at a local pub, an outing to a Hutterite colony, an excursion to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, an exploration of the Galt Museum and a walk in the coulees.

It was also a time to recognize people who have contributed to the work of social studies in our province. The Certificate of Outstanding Service was given to Rachel MacLeod, John Tidswell, Joey Patrician, Carma Cornea and Mark Boschee. The Executive Service Award was presented to Paul Monaghan. The Honorary Life Membership was given to Glyn Hughes, who has been a pillar within the social studies community in our province. He was in attendance as we as a community recognized his passion and service to our profession.

In looking ahead to our next conference, we are to be hosted by the Edmonton Regional in 2016. If you are part of the Edmonton area and wish to be involved organizing the event, please contact Joy Wicks. We are looking forward to an excellent experience.

Calgary Regional

Regional activities were quiet last year. Although a September meeting was hosted to plan the year, little was accomplished toward these goals. Another planning event is forthcoming to establish goals for the upcoming year. Potential activities include organizing a guest speaker fair, a sharing session for new teachers and sessions with university professors, and inviting Edmonton director Tom Radford to speak about the movie *Common Ground—Defending the Public Sector*.

Several questions must be explored by our council. Will we be getting information about new subject teachers in the region? Is there a way to do that, or do we maintain our e-mail lists of current members?

Teachers continue to express concern about the practical implementation of Inspiring Education. Teachers are feeling challenged with the vision meeting the practice, and the

timetable of implementation leaves teachers with significant concerns. There is also some confusion about implementation and the viability of the policy. The regional has started some sessions regarding high school design and curriculum redesign; however, the sessions have been held during the day, challenging teachers with limited PD funds or substitute coverage to attend.

The regional was represented but did not do a presentation at the Beginning Teachers' Conference in October. Calgary Separate Local No 55 hosted an awareness day on October 2 for all specialist councils to meet and greet teachers and student teachers. The council continues to support local consortium efforts by communicating relevant PD opportunities. The council also continues to be at the centre of some provincial e-mail support programs.

There is optimism that a stronger core group can still be developed, but teacher obligations continue to be a challenge.

Dan Zeeb

Effective IMMEDIATELY, your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your ATA website username and password.

Specialist councils are your source for conferences, networking, publications, resources, workshops, online communities and professional development.

Alberta Teachers on a Summer Study Tour

Three Alberta teachers spent two weeks this summer exploring Canadian involvement in the Great War and World War II. Craig Findlay, from Lethbridge, Carolyn Kennedy, from Calgary, and Ken Stanski, from Namao, joined 13 other teachers from across Canada on the Cleghorn Battlefield study tour that explored Canadian involvement in the two wars. The study tour led by University of New Brunswick's (UNB) Gregg Centre military historians Lee Windsor and Cindy Brown combined rich military history with emerging evidence from Allied and Axis archives to inform teachers about Canadian participation and shatter myths about our involvement. Disciplinary knowledge was complemented by daily seminars that considered the latest history education pedagogy. Topics included the role of memorial, collective memory, historical-thinking concepts and questions about national narratives.

More information on study tours offered through the Gregg Centre at UNB is available at www.unb.ca/fredericton/arts/centres/gregg/tours.



Craig Findlay presented a moving biography about Lethbridge soldier Corporal John Paterson at the Barlin Communal Cemetery, in France.



Calgary educator Andrew Bear Robe honoured Siksika soldier Mike Foxhead with a tribute song and an offering of tobacco at the Menin Gate Memorial, in Ypres, Belgium.



Ken Stanski paid tribute to 22-year-old Private Adolph McCormack at Bény-sur-Mer.



Corporal Joseph Cuthbertson, from Nova Scotia, is honoured by Carolyn Kennedy at Bény-sur-Mer.

Governor General's History Award

Congratulations to Dr E P Scarlett High School teacher Mike Berry for winning the Governor General's History Award. Berry's colleague Jean-Pascal Morin nominated Berry for the award sponsored by *Canada's History* magazine. To his great surprise, Berry was one

of eight teachers selected as a 2014 recipient of the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. For Berry, the award ceremony, in Ottawa, held on November 3, was an unforgettable experience and one of the most significant highlights of his career.

A variety of components went into his application, but one that captured the most attention was an assignment he created called the Historical Federal Leader's Debate. In this project, students were assigned a Canadian prime minister to research. They collaborated with peers to

evaluate sources, both primary and secondary, to build arguments and ultimately represent their historical person in heated debates.

This project also involved a look at the government's evolving role in the Canadian economy. Specifically, it asked how the role of the government (or lack of) influenced the well-being of everyday Canadians throughout the last 100 years. The ultimate goal of this process was to help students determine an ideal role of the government by the economy today.



Mike Berry's students enjoy the success of their teacher.

Berry notes that he is only halfway through his career and feels rather humbled with the attention. He is grateful for the courage and efforts of his students and acknowledges that

the award is due in great part to their engagement. Looking ahead, Berry feels energized and inspired to find new ways to engage students with the history of Canada.

More details about the Governor General's History Award are available at www.canadashistory.ca/Awards.



Calgary teacher Mike Berry (front row, left) and other recipients of the Governor General's History Award.

Social Studies Resources

The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)

TC² offers resources and sample lesson plans to bring multiple perspectives to the teaching of Canadian history in relation to the experiences of three communities: Ukrainian Canadians, Chinese Canadians and South Asian Canadians. Learn more about Pivotal Voices.

Check out the TC² website at <http://tc2.ca>.

CHIN

The Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) has published a three-part series entitled Open Content and Open Image Sharing: A Guide for Museums. *Part One, What Is Open Content?*, provides an introduction to the topic; *Part Two, Culture Snackers*, talks about the issue of unauthorized use of online images and steps to prevent it; and *Part Three, How to Provide Open Content*, explores ways for museums to incorporate open content into their activities. CHIN's website is located at www.rcip-chin.gc.ca/index-eng.jsp.

Alberta Learning

Did you know that Learn Alberta has hundreds of resources designed specifically for Alberta's K–12 Social Studies Program of Studies? Critical Challenges are classroom activities that help students develop such competencies as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and innovation. These 21st-century competencies and others are described in the 2013 Ministerial Order on Student Learning.

Click [here](#) to discover Critical Challenges that you can use today!

For information about Alberta's social studies program, please contact Janis Irwin, team leader, Social Studies 10–12, at Janis.Irwin@gov.ab.ca, or Keith Millions, team leader, Social Studies (français), at Keith.Millions@gov.ab.ca.

Rooney and Punyi Educational Theatre Productions—Interview History

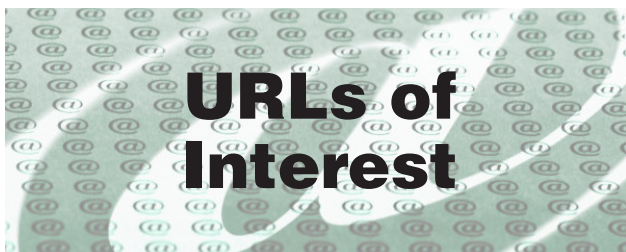
Grades 5–12 throughout Alberta (as well as Ontario, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories) have been thrilled when characters from the past have lit up their classrooms by walking right in and sitting down to be interviewed by the teacher. A riveting half-hour performance bringing dynamic history makers right into your classroom! Your students will be enthralled while you, the teacher, have the opportunity to ask many personal questions that we respond to with fully researched and accurate answers. Contact us for more information at info@interviewhistory.ca.

Historical characters waiting to be interviewed include Father Albert Lacombe, Vladimir Lenin, Louis Riel, Leonardo da Vinci, Nellie McClung, Samuel de Champlain, John A Macdonald, Irene Parlby, William Shakespeare, Pierre Trudeau and Catherine the Great.

Curriculum Links

Grades 5–7	Father Lacombe
Grades 5 and 7	Samuel de Champlain, Marguerite d'Youville
Grade 7	Nellie McClung, John A Macdonald, Louis Riel
Grade 8	Leonardo da Vinci
Grade 9	Pierre Trudeau

www.interviewhistory.ca



Editor's Pick

Canada's History

www.canadahistory.ca

While best known for sponsoring the Governor General's History Award, this organization's website has a wide range of useful information for all social studies teachers. There are lesson plans, book reviews and even instructions for developing your own travel guide while on vacation.

Essential Sites

The Council Home Page

www.atasocialstudies.ca

Always the best source of information related to social studies. Check out the conference information.

Images Canada

www.imagescanada.ca

Images Canada provides a wealth of images depicting Canadian events, people, places and things. The collections include archives, libraries, museums and universities from across Canada.

Canadian Geographic

www.canadiangeographic.ca

This website has an online mapmaker tool that allows you to create a map of the country or region and layer various human and physical features onto it.

Alberta Legislative Assemblies Educational Website

www.assembly.ab.ca/visitor/teachers/

The Alberta Legislative Assembly's website provides a wealth of educational resources for teachers, especially for Grade 6 but also for Grades 9 and 12. This website is immensely valuable.

Alberta Education Sites

www.learnalberta.ca

www.onlineguide.learnalberta.ca/

These sites provide subject bulletins to keep up to date on the newest developments in the subject and provide quality activities directly applicable to each grade.

Government of Canada Sites

<http://canada.gc.ca>

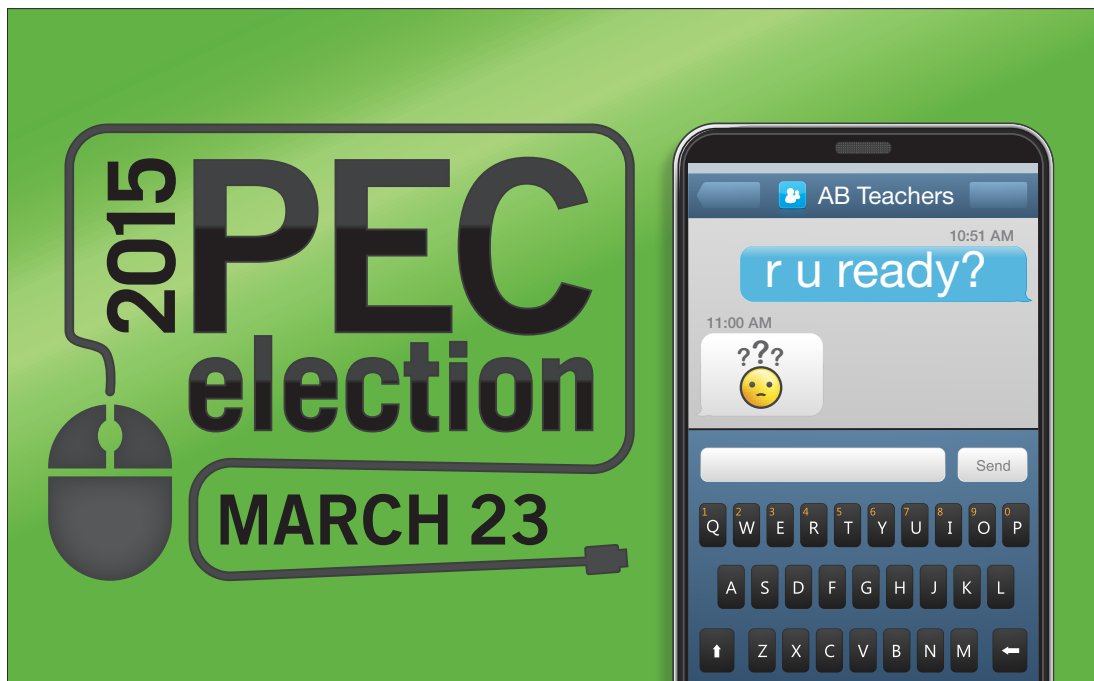
The About Canada section provides great information and links to Canadian maps, symbols and more.

www.culturecanada.gc.ca

This website focuses on Canadian culture and heritage.

www.parl.gc.ca

A good resource for students in Grades 6 and 9 to explore Canada's parliamentary system.



GET READY TO VOTE

If you want to be a part of history, you need to have an online ATA account.

Having one is absolutely necessary to vote in the first ever ATA election to be conducted 100% online. If you don't already have an account with us, you will need your teaching certificate number to create one.

For more information visit the **Information On** section of our homepage at **www.teachers.ab.ca**.

CREATE OR UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT TODAY!



The Alberta Teachers' Association

MS-16-9 2014

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