
A Message from the Editor

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“We must mend what has been torn apart, make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more.”

—Albert Camus

To sin by silence, when we should protest, makes cowards out of men.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox



The articles in this edition of *One World* were written in a tumultuous context, reflecting potentially massive disruptive changes at provincial, national and global levels. While much has been written about these disruptions in the midst of these unsettling times, the conclu-

sion and staying power, obviously, is yet to unfold. Our authors in this edition have offered insights into what could be done or should be considered for social studies—how we can *mend* the subject—or the world, for that matter.

Misinformation, conspiracies, populism and even COVID-19 have highlighted the need to invigorate critical thinking in schools to address the meteoric rise of anti-intellectualism as a response to the perceived failure of traditional experts. In the media we see and hear of individual anecdotal experiences, even from some political “leaders,” as a counter to reasoned and informed advice from the field of medicine. The

need to build community is apparent, as ruptured societies at provincial, national and global levels seemed to emerge, and populists, claiming to have direct access to popular will, sought to exert their provocative political perspective and offered up a new notion of “common sense” that often questioned commonly understood concepts such as *justice* and *voice*. Leaders in many countries and provinces, elected by a minority of voters, spoke as if only their voice represented the will of the people.

While social justice movements gained a greater voice, individual teachers must consider the extent to which they must make changes in how they address pluralism, citizenship and identity. To be silent, according to Wilcox, is to make us cowards. It is difficult to simply use the hegemony of the heroic past as a way to legitimize political identities in a way that empowers the establishment’s regressive policies—in fact, this approach has to be confronted. Not only must curriculum meaningfully incorporate the voices and experiences of all citizens in an authentic manner, it must do so in a way that builds the capacity of students to acquire enduring understandings that have implications and application beyond the classroom. Reflecting on the above quote by Camus, the disruptions of the past year should encourage teachers to question how these social changes will influence what and how they teach, who is their real audience, and what sort of society we want as we recover from and adapt to these disruptions. Seeking to mend, as Camus urges, requires teachers to take an informed and ethical stand. Silence is not an option. This edition of *One World* encourages readers to reflect on what rebuilding and recovering should look like. And while we have a lot of work to do on a lot of different fronts,

there are things we can do in our classrooms to ameliorate the disruptions of the recent past.

This edition starts with a thoughtful consideration of the past and potential trajectory of social studies in Alberta. Framing it, in short, as somewhat of a culture war, University of Calgary professor Dave Scott investigates the often polarized views on the future of social studies in the province by exploring the rich, progressive heritage of Alberta social studies, long seen as a global leader in the subject, and juxtaposing it with the current re-storied government proposal. As Scott zooms out to take a mile-high look at the curriculum, it is a compelling starting point for all teachers to consider what they want social studies, writ large, to look like. The article is certain to be a discussion provocation for social studies, provincewide.

While Dave Scott's article established the context for rethinking, or reaffirming, social studies, Jacqui Kusnick zooms in a bit closer to consider the purpose of education, and social studies in particular. Kusnick, a vice-principal in a rural Manitoba middle school, argues it is time for educators to examine, or re-examine, their moral purpose. She challenges us to consider what is our "why." Kusnick argues that the response of "to help our students grow" is insufficient. The usual responses must be reimagined to determine if the current approach to social studies must be re-conceptualized or dismantled—she wonders if tinkering is enough to address the needs of students, or if social studies needs to be torn down and resurrected in a different form. Dave Scott's article provides the context for considering Kusnick's exhortation that we must be thoughtful and informed when reimagining what is our "why."

Subsequent articles zoom in even closer. Matthew Etherington, of Trinity Western University, offers insights on the need for teachers to reconsider critical thinking. While he addresses critical thinking in teacher education, his article has relevance to classroom teachers who think that they must abandon "old ways of thinking" as he argues for a more inclusive approach to critical thinking that includes nonscientific ways of pursuing knowledge and truth. This idea is particularly relevant for Alberta teachers, where nearly a quarter of the students in some school districts are English language learners. Instead of smashing down these old ways, he argues, we must unite and include traditional perspectives because diverse

perspectives and inclusive communities are ideal for nurturing creativity and innovation that a single culture would never have considered.

Former Calgary teacher Tim Skuce and his Brandon University colleague Shannon Moore explore how our disruptive times are exposing the vulnerability and fragility of human understanding. The consequence of this is that predictability in the classroom has been lost. As a remedy for—or an approach to Camus' mending—this, Skuce and Moore argue that educators must adopt an approach more attuned to uncertainty by creating a dialogic space where discussion and learning emerge organically rather than by the use of preplanned instructional strategies. This approach, they argue, recognizes that the uniqueness of our current milieu is characterized by student vulnerability, classroom ambiguity and the unfinishedness of the subject matter.

The final article, by Alberta artist Anastasia Filion More, argues for greater recognition of the role of creativity in social studies. While creativity has historically been considered secondary to critical thinking, at least in social studies, Filion More argues that for students to become better critical thinkers, creativity must be explicitly developed. To accomplish this, she seeks to clarify the definitions and attributes of both creative and critical thinking to illustrate how they are used in both personal and social activities. A richly conceived and progressive social studies curriculum is seen as playing a crucial role in developing these attributes.

My hope in bringing forward these articles is that they encourage you to reflect upon your perspectives about what you do—and, especially, to reconceive the why and how. As well, consider how you would reconceive social studies given the changes we are experiencing: What needs to be mended? How should it be mended? And most important, How will you use your voice to give *happiness* (in social studies) *a meaning once more?*

References

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- Wilcox, E W. 1970. "Protest." In *Poems of Problems: Wilcox, Ella Wheeler, 1850-1919*. Available at <https://archive.org/details/poemsproblems00wilcrich/page/n157/mode/2up> (accessed January 5, 2021). (Orig pub Conkey 1914.)