

# One World



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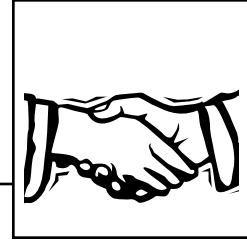
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# From the Editor

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*Craig Findlay*

Unfortunately, there has been a prolonged period of stagnation with respect to one of our council's key publications. Over the course of the past few months there have been renewed efforts to rebuild the great tradition that is the *One World* journal. As we all know, the social studies community across Alberta is being challenged with the implementation of a new and exciting program of studies. It is therefore obvious that now is not the most opportune time to be without a publication whose mission is to share meaningful discourse in the goal of furthering social studies education. The council is excited to release this edition, which we feel contains work that will foster thoughtful exploration of some of the key ideas guiding the direction of our social studies program.

The first submission tells an inspirational story of our shared vision of social studies. Simply put, as a high school student, Blair McMurren was a social studies teacher's dream. He was a brilliant young man with an intellect and insight far beyond his years. As a member of a panel discussion, Blair was asked to address members of our council in 1992 when the conference was last held in Lethbridge. McMurren's words will not only give you a glimpse of his great mind but, more importantly, they will reaffirm what we all know to be true: that social studies is indeed the most important subject taught in the classrooms of Alberta. His message both applauds the work that social studies teachers have done in our province and reaffirms the vision outlined in the preamble of our new program. McMurren recently returned to the halls of his former high school to receive a distinguished achievement award, and graciously agreed to share his story with us.

The second piece is from Dr Roland Case, co-founder of TC<sup>2</sup>—The Critical Thinking Consortium. Case explores the limitations of traditional methodology employed in teaching thinking skills and offers an alternative embedded-tools approach. As Case notes in his article, beginning on page 7 of this journal:

The term *embedded* signifies that the purpose is not to teach thinking in the disciplines per se or as generic skill, but to teach students to think in the context of the kinds of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary issues and challenges that citizens need to address. In other words, it integrates instruction in thinking with the curriculum content that students are expected to master. Curriculum content is made problematic so that learning to think is not a stand-alone topic, but the means by which students work through the subject matter.

Case highlights material from CT<sup>2</sup>'s latest publication on historical thinking to provide a practical set of tools to engage students in the process of critical thinking about history.

In our third piece, Tim Coates shares some of his thoughts and experiences born out of the work he has done with the Assessment Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in the United States. Coates is a long-time social studies teacher in our province and is now working with Alberta Learning, in the Learner Assessment Branch. In the article he explores the direction of social studies education in the United States, and in so doing, offers the story as a cautionary tale.

Lois Gluck's article highlights the powerful learning opportunity that heritage fairs offer to both teachers

and students. Gluck has worked extensively promoting heritage fairs across the province and across the country. She reminds us that the new program of studies offers new and exciting challenges, which she feels can be met with student learning guided by the inquiry and historical thinking skills that heritage fair projects afford.

Our fifth submission is from Dr Pamela Adams from the University of Lethbridge, who writes:

This paper will examine the nexus between two current priorities of many educators. The first surrounds the problematics of the well-intentioned recommendation that “every school operate as a professional learning community dedicated to continuous improvement ...” (Alberta’s Commission on Learning 2003, 8). The second and more immediate one for many teachers of social studies is the implementation of a new curriculum that emphasizes critical inquiry, pluralistic democracy, multiple perspectives and active responsible citizenship.

Adams shares a model to guide learning communities, while exploring the potential these communities offer to teachers and students. Pamela goes on to provide an interesting look at how the vision of the new program, coupled with the potential offered by effective learning communities, presents unique and exciting learning opportunities for social studies teachers and students.

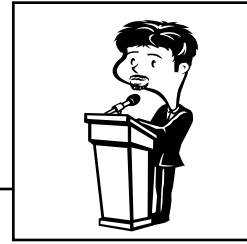
The sixth article is from John W Friesen, PhD, DMin, DRS, professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. A foundation of the new

program of studies is a multiple-perspectives approach to social studies education. The program attempts to be inclusive of the stories and perspectives often overlooked in the telling of history from a Eurocentric view. Friesen has shared one such story, that of Doukhobor children and the education system that failed them. The story he tells is indicative of the types of stories we will begin to promulgate in the delivery of our new program. In sharing often-overlooked perspectives, we will attempt to engage students in meaningful issues as we work to achieve our mandate of fostering a truly pluralistic society.

Our seventh and final article comes from Lola Major, a recently retired master teacher who has dedicated her life to the promotion of social studies education. Major is currently working with the Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium, and she has been contracted by the Library of Parliament to promote their educational programs. Her work reminds us of the incredible opportunities for both student and teacher learning that are available through the Parliamentary treasure chest of educational programs.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *One World*. Special thanks go out to our South Region president, David Fletcher, for all of his help in securing the wonderful articles found in this edition. We are thankful to those who have graciously taken the time to share their expertise.

If you have any ideas for future submissions, please feel free to contact members of the full board of our provincial council. Contact information can be found at our council website, <http://ssc.teachers.ab.ca>.



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# Social Studies and Balance

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## *Blair McMurren*

*Dr Blair McMurren was a student at the Lethbridge Collegiate Institute (LCI) when he gave this address as part of the panel discussion during the 1992 Social Studies Council Annual Conference, October 15–17, in Lethbridge. Blair went on to become the 1992 valedictorian of LCI; he earned a BA, English (with great distinction) from the University of Lethbridge; he became a Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford, where he earned an Honours BA, English language and literature, and a DPhil, Comparative Literature. He also earned an MA in translation from the University of Surrey at Guilford, UK. Blair has worked as a senior advisor in the Corporate Strategic Policy Group for the Department of Canadian Heritage and is currently a manager for the Government of Canada Recruitment of Policy Leaders (RPL) program.*

A common complaint among members of my generation against the vague process of “growing up” is that age tends to rob youth of the mysteries and secrets that we breathlessly hold sacred for a good many years. Whether or not this is entirely true, I must confess that one of these forbidden riddles is being taken away from me tonight: that being, what is it that teachers do when they get together in the so-called real world? I suppose that “Is there such thing as a real world?” shall be the next to go! Despite this apprehension, however, I would like to thank you for inviting me to attend and take part in your conference. The school subject that brings each of you here this evening is one that has touched, challenged and moved me in a number of personal and positive ways. Whether sifting through a slanted editorial in a magazine or shooting my brother a withering glance for an off-colour joke, I find that I continue to owe social studies a great deal, indeed—which is why repaying it with any ideas I can offer means so much.

I think that one of the most exciting and straightforward aspects of social studies involves giving students the means and information with which to explore all angles of an issue before formulating an opinion or decision. That is, after all, the basis of

critical thinking, fairness and diligent preparation, all of which have been seen to suffer in a society that embraces the stereotype. Social studies is, quite simply, a staunch and invaluable proponent of clear forethought. Where this subject need not be as shy, however, is in guiding young people beyond that crucial choice of pro or con.

Obviously, we students must be able to take a position based upon our own decision and initiative. At the same time, I think that we should be able to recognize a difference between the noble defence of an ideal and the hurtful plying of an extreme—that is, extremism for extremism’s sake. Classroom debate seems to be the place where all too many of us try our hand at the defeating practice of drawing inflexible lines in the sand, more for the sake of interest than rationality. In issues where black and white values are at odds, I think that social studies should definitely encourage vivid and unflinching support of whichever position the student adopts; it is in this colourful way that humanity has often come to terms with internal divisions. In issues where complexity and role reversal are the rule, however, I think that social studies should distinctly discourage any crafty attempts to mould a host of concerns into two opposed

areas. The social studies graduate must certainly be allowed to trim away extraneous matter in order to clarify an issue, but should never confuse the simplification of a debate with banalization. I would defy even the most adroit student orator to cleanly divide the ongoing Balkan crisis into two ideological corners, or neatly group all of the factors in the origin of the Vietnam War into orderly columns down one side of a loose-leaf page. Except in rare cases, current events, history and even personal affairs all argue against the mathematical dissection of ideals and beliefs into convenient puzzle pieces. The social studies graduate could only do well in showing a sensitivity to this particular, very frustrating reality.

In learning to embrace the moderate view or middle road, I think that graduates should at the same time be extremely careful to avoid the mundane trappings of mediocrity and even apathy. All sides of an issue should oppositely not be rationalized away until a bland and inoffensive trading of euphemisms replaces what should have been an insightful debate—this would be a tragedy in the other direction. If anything, the social studies graduate should be assertive enough to reject the petty and desensitizing nature of politically correct treatment of an issue when it threatens to become distorting or begins to erode the significance of an idea. This graduate should be excited when his or her position can be expanded to include other relevant aspects, not lulled into thinking that the debate will now resolve itself without added input, or worse yet, convinced that the issue has become dull and therefore unpressing. The current constitutional debate in Canada strikes most students as being outright boring for many of these same reasons, which is why most will either give the issue half-hearted consideration or assume hard-line positions on the specific issue of Quebec's place in confederation, in the hopes of adding in an element of the extreme. The graduate should be able to delve into a well of emotion in order to propel an organized, rational argument; the two should by no means be mutually exclusive.

Essentially, I suppose that I am suggesting that a social studies student be perfectly balanced between conviction and moderation—a marvel that I will not even pretend to have been able to establish in myself. However, I would still hold that striving for this style of equilibrium is far more helpful than simply equating vehemence and indignation with true passion and integrity; a frustrated but constantly self-evaluating group of future world leaders will avoid the self-righteous mob mentality far more successfully than a more restless group, who sometimes behave like

rabblerousing loose cannons, thereby wasting their potential.

By the year 2000, it can be hoped that the social studies graduate will be of a consistent and honest sentiment regarding tolerance and open-mindedness toward the by-now familiar spectrum of gender, race, culture, religion and ideology. There ought to come a time when prejudice, bigotry and discrimination will be more than just academic taboos; they will be social taboos as well. Furthermore, this graduate should be able to find his or her own personal, compelling reasons for this frank new acceptance of diversity, beyond the simple fact that the trait is at last winning a solid place in the norm. Tolerance through positive peer pressure is a wonderful opening step, of course, but tolerance by choice is more lasting and more significant, not to mention more of an example.

I would next submit that a social studies graduate leave his or her years of schooling with a very vibrant, human sense of history. The grand historical story should be viewed as an extensive prelude, tumultuous continuation and thrilling direction that encompasses each world citizen, and not a daunting deluge of place names, dates and theories. Although such a creative perspective is almost totally a personal effort on the part of the student, art, literature and even science are also vivid historical gauges that prompt response and research in young minds. As well, a working knowledge of Canadian history is as crucial as ever, particularly as it relates to constitution building and aboriginal relations—both for evident reasons; reciting the names of all eighteen of our prime ministers in the tradition of our southern neighbours would be admirable, of course, but more important, I think, is fostering a pride (not a cynical amusement) in the slow compromise and exploration that always characterized Canada, perhaps now more than ever. A healthy knowledge of our own blatant past shame, from Louis Riel's execution through to Japanese internment and the Oka standoff, would further round off this necessary national self-awareness, as such humbling lessons remain equally powerful. I say healthy knowledge, however, in that there is a proverbial fine line separating sombre reminders of our own failings and belaboured negativism. At this insecure juncture in our development, I think that for a social studies student to err on the side of notoriously modest Canadian patriotism and optimism is not necessarily a disagreeable excess. If one returns to the international scope, pragmatic but inventive measures seem to be the new standard. The Cold War era having been an unprecedented phenomenon, its

aftermath similarly has no parallel in history to look toward; common sense and uncommon imagination should be the graduate's guide in the search for stability at all levels, grand or humble.

In closing, I would like to say that social studies is anything but a static twelve-year series of beeping filmstrips, pull-down maps and position papers. The

social studies graduate of this or any future century should realize that each classroom memory, experience and insight, be it shared or individual, is part of an unassuming but irreplaceable process of society strengthening. The momentary responsibility and expectation may seem avoidable, but the far-reaching implication and lost opportunity are not.





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# Thinking About Thinking in Social Studies

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## *Roland Case*

*Dr Roland Case is professor of curriculum and social studies at Simon Fraser University. He is a cofounder of TC<sup>2</sup>—The Critical Thinking Consortium, an association of 30 school districts, postsecondary institutions and teacher organizations working to support critical thinking from kindergarten to graduate school. With this group, Case has worked with 15,000 classroom teachers to embed critical thinking into their practice.*

In my social studies methodology classes I regularly showed a video clip from *Saturday Night Live* featuring comedian Jerry Seinfeld as a teacher trying to get his high school students to “think history.”<sup>1</sup> The lesson consisted of a teacher-dominated discussion with students attempting to feed Seinfeld’s narrative by guessing the answers to the factual questions he posed. Predictably, the lesson stalled as students recalled so few of the historical facts they had supposed already learned. After showing the clip I would ask my students how they would repair Seinfeld’s lesson, given his students’ paltry knowledge of the topic. This task proved difficult for my student teachers. This is not surprising, since the profession generally has struggled to effectively involve and support students in thinking about history and other social sciences.

Traditionally, three general approaches have been used to teach social studies students how to think. I will call these the *generic thinking skills*, *direct involvement*, and *unique forms of reasoning* approaches. Although any typology is somewhat artificial, this classification helps us see what has been tried and appreciate why none has been entirely satisfactory. After briefly explaining the approaches and exploring their shortcomings, I outline an alternative—called the *embedded tools* approach—that

better meets the challenges of helping students to think in social studies.

## Three Approaches to Teaching Thinking

The *generic thinking skills* approach popularized by writers such as Benjamin Bloom, Robert Marzano and Louis Rath divides educational objectives into three domains: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Proponents believe that there is a core set of thinking skills that can be taught, independent of specific content knowledge and attitudes. For example, in *Dimensions of Thinking* (1988), Marzano and others identify eight thinking processes (including concept formation, problem solving, decision making and research) involving 21 core thinking skills (including defining goals, setting goals, inferring and predicting). This approach espouses an information-processing model where each skill is introduced and practised independently before students apply or “transfer” the skill to a particular body of information. Many but not all versions of critical thinking advocate a generic skills approach. The appeal of this approach is the promise of teaching a finite set of skills that forms the basis of thinking in all domains.

The *direct involvement* approach, popularized by John Dewey, is predicated on learning by doing. It seeks to involve students in the kinds of authentic tasks that practitioners and scholars would undertake. In history, this means using primary documents to construct historical accounts and participating in simulations of historical events; in geography and archaeology, students undertake field studies or digs; and in law and politics, students conduct mock trials and simulate legislative assemblies. The goal is to teach students to think by assuming the roles either of actors (eg, historical figures, lawyers and politicians) or of scholars (eg, historians, sociologists and political scientists) operating in various fields. The strength of the direct involvement approach is an engaging pedagogy and perceived student relevance.

The *unique forms of reasoning* approach arose as a reaction against the generic skills approach. Writers such as Paul Hirst and Jerome Bruner and, in Canada, John McPeck and Robin Barrow argued that each discipline (or cluster of disciplines) has its own distinctive methods of inquiry, standards of reasoning and defining concepts. In their view, competent thinking can be mastered only by studying the discipline-specific rules and procedures unique to each form of reasoning. In the context of history, this means teaching core concepts (eg, primary and secondary sources, eyewitness testimony, provenance), and examining the nature of history and how it differs from other interpretive studies.

Proponents of the unique forms of reasoning approach would, of course, espouse what I have labelled the direct involvement approach. However, despite the natural affinity, I distinguish these approaches for two reasons. Many advocates of direct involvement do not teach much of the structure of the disciplines. This is especially true when the activities focus on re-enacting what the actors—not the scholars—in a particular field might do (eg, the actions of judges or politicians vs legal academics or political scientists). In addition, the tendency in the unique forms of reasoning approach is to teach *about* the core concepts, standards and methodological issues, but not to employ them regularly to engage students in thinking about the subject matter. At the risk of oversimplifying, the focus of the direct involvement approach is on the activities within a field, whereas the unique forms of reasoning approach emphasizes the theory of thinking within a discipline.

As suggested above, the three approaches are often used in combination. For instance, thinking in the new social studies curriculum in Alberta is defined

in terms of “Skills and Processes” (Alberta Education 2005, 2). This suggests a predominant focus on teaching generic thinking skills. However, inclusion of historical and geographic thinking and media literacy signals some attention to unique forms of reasoning. The direct involvement approach is more implicit than explicit in this curriculum, as evidenced by references to participation in social action projects and interpretation of source documents.

## Limitations of Common Approaches

These approaches, especially as traditionally implemented, have fallen short of the desired result. Generally speaking, students are not adequately prepared to think rigorously about social studies issues, and much of the curriculum content is learned through transmission of information and not acquired in the context of genuine (critically thoughtful) inquiry. These shortcomings are partly the result of *epistemological* and *pedagogical* limitations in the three traditional approaches.

- *Epistemological limitations.* Epistemology deals with the basis or warrants for claiming that we know something. In the present context, it means asking whether the curriculum does justice to the established principles, standards and methods for good reasoning recognized in the field of study. For example, does the approach actually teach students how knowledge is constructed, justified and used in the various social science disciplines?
- *Pedagogical limitations.* Pedagogy refers broadly to theories of teaching and learning, and specifically to the style of instruction. In the present context, it means asking if the method of teaching fosters student mastery of the curricular content. This refers both to the coverage of topics and to the depth of student understanding of the subject matter. In a national review of history teaching in Canada, Ken Osborne writes, “It is possible, for example, for a student to master a whole lot of outcomes describing the First World War, but still have no real understanding of the War as a historical phenomenon” (2004, 4). In other words, an effective pedagogical approach will support teachers in addressing the range of topics that are articulated by the curriculum in a manner that fosters meaningful student understanding of this material.

## Epistemological Concerns

The generic thinking skills approach has been widely criticized for its inadequate attention to the particular dimensions that characterize thinking in various social science disciplines. The so-called generic skill of inferring, for example, is not a single intellectual operation applied to different bodies of information. The very nature and requirements of drawing inferences often depends on the disciplinary context. For example, reading a contour map to determine the most accessible route is not the same skill as reading a historical drawing to identify the artist's point of view. And both of these differ from reading data from demographic studies to surmise the daily quality of life of local inhabitants. Each of these tasks employs distinct strategies (using legends and interpreting mapping conventions; analyzing composition, shading and imagery; calculating ratios and averages and identifying correlations). As well, they presuppose different foundational concepts (elevation and slope, point of view, quality of life). In short, the one-size-fits-all orientation of the generic skills approach ignores the complexity and diversity of thinking in social studies.

Although there are clear differences in thinking among the various disciplines, ironically the unique forms of reasoning approach has been accused of exaggerating these distinctions. While some considerations are particular to specific disciplines (eg, historical significance and presentism are unique to history), other concepts are shared by many social science disciplines (eg, cause and effect, perspective, bias). Criteria such as accuracy, precision and reliability may be particularly relevant when interpreting maps and statistical data, whereas concerns for plausibility and relevance apply to any of the social sciences. Other features of good thinkers—often referred to as dispositions or habits of mind (eg, empathy, open mindedness, persistence, attention to detail)—are common to thinking in any domain. Thus, despite some differences, advocates of the unique forms of reasoning approach overlook many shared concepts and considerations.

The epistemological shortcoming of the direct involvement approach is that its treatment of disciplined-based thinking is incomplete. Certainly there is much to learn by undertaking tasks that practitioners and scholars in various disciplines would perform, but without adequate understanding of the standards of reasoning, students will likely misapply these tasks. For example, student interpretations of primary documents are typically distorted by the

presentist perspective they bring to the text (Seixas 1998). Students are not up to the task, because of their lack of historical empathy and inadequate knowledge of the period. In short, students can learn by doing only if they know what they are doing—and this presupposes instruction in the relevant background knowledge and standards. In short, a direct involvement approach that does not attend to the forms of reasoning is ill-conceived.

The direct involvement approach is epistemologically incomplete in another respect. Learning to think historically is not identical with learning to do the tasks performed by historical figures and historians. A primary reason for studying history in school is not to groom mini-historians but to prepare students as competent consumers of historical knowledge to guide their decisions and actions as members of society. This difference in purpose can be illustrated by contrasting preparation as a thoughtful patient and as a mini-physician. Rather than learning to act like a doctor by conducting medical procedures and reading technical laboratory reports, laypersons who rely on the medical system are better served by learning to assess the reliability of their doctor's advice (eg, Is it based on an adequate examination? Does the prognosis seem plausible? Is this doctor's opinion consistent with other sources of expert advice?). To avoid misunderstanding, I am not implying that learning to be consumers of knowledge in a field is completely divorced from knowing how practitioners and scholars think and construct knowledge in that field. Rather, my point is that they are not mutually inclusive.

Analogously, the need to think historically is not exhausted by learning to create historical accounts. Students need to learn to use and assess other people's historical conclusions to make sense of their world—past, present and future. For example, learning to think historically should prepare students to reconcile the recent enthusiastic celebrations of the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge with newspaper commentaries that characterize the battle as “one of the country's most enduring pieces of mythology—a minor battle for a French hill, transformed by alchemy into Canada's defining moment of nationhood” (Valpy 2007). In reconciling these divergent options, students need to understand the notion of historical significance and assess the battle's legacy in light of the recognized criteria for determining significance. These tools typically are not taught in a direct involvement approach, which tends to associate historical thinking with the interpretation of source documents and the re-enactment of historical events.

## Pedagogical Concerns

The direct involvement approach is the strongest, pedagogically speaking. Students can learn about and come to understand key curricular ideas as they work through the authentic tasks of mini-historians, geographers, political scientists and the like. Its pedagogical shortcoming arises because much of the subject matter we want students to learn cannot be addressed (or certainly not efficiently addressed) through document analysis, simulated digs and field studies. There is too much content to cover, and many concepts are not easily (or appropriately) acquired using direct involvement techniques. While the epistemological limitations of the direct involvement approach can be overcome by intermingling the unique forms of reasoning approach, this pedagogical shortcoming would still be problematic.

The main pedagogical difficulty with the other two approaches is their reliance on a content–process dichotomy that views teaching thinking as a separate part of the curriculum from teaching subject matter. This means that mapping skills or historiography are taught as stand-alone lessons that are reinforced only occasionally over the rest of the course. As a result, curriculum content typically is transmitted to students by text and lecture. In most textbooks, for example, after the content is presented, an end-of-chapter skill development activity invites students to apply the information they have (supposedly) just learned. Regrettably, teaching thinking skills or forms of reasoning is often seen to detract from the time available to teach subject matter. As a result, inadequate time is devoted to promoting historical and geographical thinking, and thinking in other social sciences is often overlooked entirely. If students are to learn to think, then thinking (rigorously and critically) about the content must be the means by which

subject matter is learned and digested. As Ken Osborne notes, “history should be treated as an ‘educational’ not an informational subject, emphasizing thinking rather than memory alone” (2004, 22).

## An Alternative Approach

An alternative—the *embedded tools* approach—is to some extent a hybrid of the other approaches, avoiding their limitations and building on their strengths. It is the approach that underlies the conception of critical thinking espoused by The Critical Thinking Consortium (Case 2005). The term *embedded* signifies that the purpose is not to teach thinking in the disciplines per se or as generic skill, but to teach students to think in the context of the kinds of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary issues and challenges that citizens need to address. In other words, it integrates instruction in thinking with the curriculum content that students are expected to master. Curriculum content is made problematic so that learning to think is not a stand-alone topic, but the means by which students work through the subject matter.

The potential to make any topic in the curriculum problematic—and therefore an opportunity for thinking—is illustrated by the following chart comparing sample comprehension questions with those requiring (critical) thinking.

In each of these paired examples, the critical inquiry goes beyond the content covered by the information-retrieval question by inviting students to use and make sense of—to think critically about—the topic. Not only do students learn to think in relevant contexts, their thinking through of the challenges enhances their understanding of the subject matter.

Information Retrieval Tasks	Critical Inquiries
According to the textbook, what are the five factors leading to the decision of colonies to join in Confederation?	Rank in order of importance the five identified factors leading to the decision of colonies to join in Confederation.
Describe John A Macdonald’s contributions as a leader.	Based on the evidence in the textbook, was John A Macdonald a great leader?
Compare life in New France with life in the American colonies.	What was the biggest difference between life in New France and in the American colonies?
What were the stated reasons for interning Japanese Canadians during World War II?	What were the real reasons behind the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II?

The term *tools* in the embedded tools approach identifies the diverse intellectual resources needed to competently think through a particular critical inquiry. As illustrated earlier, these tools include background information, criteria, habits of mind, thinking strategies and concepts. Rather than front-end load these tools as discrete topics, an embedded approach introduces specific tools as they are required to successfully complete an identified task arising out of the curriculum. For example, if we want students to learn about the impact on Canadians of World War I, we might ask students to assess the historical significance of Vimy Ridge. In preparing to think through this question, students would need support in acquiring the following tools:

- The concept of historical significance
- Criteria for judging significance (eg, prominence at the time, subsequent consequences, historical profile)
- Information about the battle's impact at the time and its legacy in the decades following
- An open-minded stance
- The use of a strategy such as assembling evidence on opposing sides of the question

Over time, as they address a representative range of curriculum-based issues, students would acquire a broad spectrum of intellectual resources to support them in thinking competently within and about the social sciences.

Although many of these tools have applicability across disciplines, others are central, although perhaps not always unique, to a particular discipline. For example, in a recent TC<sup>2</sup> resource, *Teaching About Historical Thinking*, we introduce a core set of tools in historical thinking. (Some of the concepts described below—most notably *cause and consequence* and *continuity and change*—have wide currency in other social science disciplines.) Based on the work of Peter Seixas of the University of British Columbia, the resource explores the use of the six concepts described below as portals or entry points to involve and support students in thinking critically about Canadian history.

- *Historical significance.* Behind the selection of what and who should be remembered, researched, and taught and learned about is the issue of historical significance. Questions of significance are foundational to thinking about history, because historians cannot include all that has happened in the past and students must be concerned to learn about and appreciate the most important events. Sample historical thinking questions:
  - Is Vimy Ridge a truly significant event?
  - Identify and rank order the five most significant leaders in New France prior to 1763.

- *Evidence and interpretation.* The concepts of evidence and interpretation are concerned with the validation, interpretation and use of primary and secondary sources of historical information in the construction of history and historical argument. Issues of evidence and interpretation invite questions such as: How do we know what happened? Which version of events should we believe? Is this a reliable source of information? Is the author's conclusion plausible? Sample historical thinking questions:

- Which of the two interpretations of the historical event is the more justified?
- What can we conclude about life at the time based on the clues in the image?

- *Continuity and change.* The concepts of continuity and change confront two historical stereotypes—either nothing really changes over time, or events that occurred long ago must by definition be completely unlike modern times. Sample historical thinking questions:

- What is the biggest difference between life in rural Canada in the late 19th century and mid-20th century?
- In what ways were the experiences of British and Chinese immigrants in the 1870s most similar?

- *Cause and consequences.* The concepts of cause and consequence focus on the contributing influences in history. Understanding these influences makes it possible for students to see the structural and individual factors that shape their world and to begin to imagine their own role as citizens in shaping history. Sample historical thinking questions:

- Rank in order of influence the following causes of World War II.
- Assess the impact of the building of the CPR on First Nations, Métis and European immigrants.

- *Historical perspective.* Entering into the perspective of historical individuals and groups requires understanding the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional contexts that shaped people's lives and actions. Without an appreciation of how people in the past saw themselves in time and place, students will be trapped in a simplistic viewing of the past exclusively through present experiences and values. Sample historical thinking questions:

- What was it really like to live on the prairies during the Depression?
- How would John A Macdonald view Stephen Harper?

- *Moral judgment.* Moral judgments in history arise in the context of drawing ethical conclusions about historical actions and people, or in assigning moral responsibility to historical figures or to contemporary individuals and groups for past actions. Students must learn to consider the complexities and dangers associated with passing judgment on historical events and people. Sample historical thinking questions:
  - Should the federal government apologize to Aboriginal people for the treatment they received in residential schools?
  - Was John A Macdonald's handling of the Red River uprisings ethically responsible?

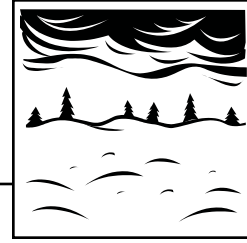
Clearly, a diverse repertoire of intellectual tools is needed to empower students to think competently in the social sciences. The traditional approaches do not adequately represent the nature or importance of the building blocks of thinking and do not systematically embed the use of these tools into the examination of subject matter. The results are reduced attention to the teaching of thinking and a continued penchant for transmitting facts without adequate student understanding of the content. The embedded tools approach offers a means to avoid both these pitfalls.

## Notes

1. I wish to express my appreciation to Penney Clark of the University of British Columbia for her thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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# Northern Exposure: One Canadian's Perspectives on the State of Social Studies in the United States

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*Tim Coates*

*Tim Coates is an Alberta educator and the current chair of the Assessment Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies (United States).*

## Background

When a colleague encouraged me to seek a position on the Assessment Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in the United States, I thought it would be a perfect fit, since I had already served for a decade as a social studies examination manager with the government of the province of Alberta. For better or for worse (probably for both), assessment has become my *raison d'être* in education. Through participation on this committee, I hoped both to learn more about social studies education in the United States and to provide information to American teachers about social studies education in Canada (or at least Alberta). Now that I am completing a third year on the assessment committee and have attended three NCSS conferences, I believe I have achieved these initial objectives.

Having had the opportunity to present at several NCSS conferences, I have found attendees to be both courteous and open to perspectives that may vary from those to which they are normally exposed. American social studies educators, like their Canadian counterparts, are keenly interested in gathering any and all information that can inform improvements to practices and results. For what I have provided,

I have been paid back in multiples by what I have received in insights into the state of social studies education in the United States.

First and foremost, I quickly realized that there are many commonalities between Canada and the United States. In both nations, education is principally the responsibility of state and provincial governments: federal encroachment on that responsibility is not typically well received by either state or provincial representatives. One consequence of this for both nations is a difficulty in establishing national standards, especially in a discipline such as social studies in which there is great regional variation in curriculum content. The situation is worse in the United States, since there are 50 states as opposed to 10 provinces and 3 territories. Further, in a number of states, curriculum, if not controlled, is shaped significantly by local authorities so that even within a state there may be distinct differences in course content. Thus, there is a danger in drawing conclusions about the state of American social studies from simply meeting with individual American educators, as I have done over the past three years. For example, the experience of one educator would leave me with a certain perception, which was then contradicted by the experiences of other educators from other states. As with

provinces in Canada, no two states are alike. This being said, there are certain issues in the United States that transcend political boundaries and create common concerns.

## No Child Left Behind

At my first assessment committee meeting in Baltimore, in 2004, it must have taken all of 10 minutes (probably fewer) to learn that all is not well with social studies education in the United States. I discovered very quickly that all one must do to summon a passionate response and initiate an extended discussion with an American educator regarding the problems of social studies was to mention the acronym *NCLB*.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the name of a federal law that has reauthorized a number of programs aimed at improving the academic performance of schools. States are expected to use standardized tests in language arts and mathematics to measure whether individual schools are achieving state standards. Rather than discuss my concerns about the efficacy of attempting to manipulate funding and/or to sanction schools based on measurements that are not constrained by universal standards, I would rather reflect on the impact of NCLB on social studies.

By selecting language arts and mathematics as the subjects requiring measurement, the crafters of NCLB have, apparently without forethought, diminished the importance of an education in social studies. I received significant anecdotal information about the plight of social studies when meeting educators in Baltimore; however, it was during a presentation at the NCSS conference in Kansas City, in 2005, that I received more precise and scholarly information that illustrated the profound problems facing American social studies professionals.

The information presented by a team that included a university professor and state social studies specialists was based primarily on survey data. It was distressing to learn how time spent in teaching social studies at the elementary school level was being eroded. With annual testing of students in Grades 3 through 8, the lion's share of the average elementary school day is now devoted to language arts and mathematics. Apparently, it is even quite common for elementary students to spend a portion of their day taking a test preparation course. Given that the length of the school day has not changed, it is clear that social studies education has been sacrificed. In some

instances, social studies is subsumed within language arts by having students read historical novels. In other instances, social studies time still exists, but that time becomes an opportunity to enhance reading skills or to strengthen mathematics skills. While there is nothing wrong with the integration of disciplines, it is unclear whether classes are really social studies classes or "mathematics-by-another-name" classes. In the worst-case situations, social studies has virtually disappeared from the timetable. Time and again the common phrase I hear from American educators—a phrase that succinctly explains the diminution in social studies education—is "if it isn't tested, it isn't taught."

The situation does, however, improve in the senior grades, where social studies remains a core discipline. Yet one cannot help wonder what is being lost when there is an absence of a comprehensive social studies education in the earlier grades.

There are other disturbing trends related to NCLB that are apparent in the United States. One is that a diminishing proportion of university graduates from education faculties are social studies specialists. A decline in the number of trained specialists is likely to have long-term implications for the discipline, especially as the baby-boom cohort of educators retires and there is a need to fill the void. A second trend is that in professional journals, the number of articles related to mathematics and language arts far exceeds the number of articles related to social studies. The obvious implication of this is that research in a non-tested discipline is less important. While neither of these trends should be a surprise given the information, they do serve as additional indicators of the decline in the importance of social studies.

So what do American social studies teachers want to do to restore the status of their discipline within the pantheon of core subjects? This is not an easy question to answer. When NCLB was initiated, many social studies educators were concerned that social studies education would atrophy from neglect since it was not among the subjects to be measured as an indicator of achievement of standards. There were many other teachers who, driven largely by their concerns about the merits of NCLB and the appropriate use of standardized test results, did not necessarily regard the exclusion of social studies as bad. With events validating the concerns of both groups, the NCSS faced a dilemma as to how best to proceed.

After extensive deliberation, the NCSS chose its position. At the annual conference in Kansas City, in 2005, NCSS representatives requested that the Assessment Committee create a position statement



regarding social studies and NCLB. This position statement was to support a broad effort to include social studies in a reauthorized NCLB. Doubtless, this position will not be universally embraced by American social studies educators. The NCSS, however, is taking a pragmatic approach which, given the current political climate in the United States, offers the hope of reinvigorating the discipline, even if this reinvigoration means becoming a part of a federal program of standardized assessment that many educators (and many noneducators) find flawed.

During the winter of 2005/06, the assessment committee drafted a position statement. At the 2006 assessment committee meeting in Washington both new and returning committee members offered revisions to the statement. At the time of writing, the statement has been submitted to the NCSS both for review and with the hope it will be adopted. If found acceptable, the statement should eventually be available on the NCSS website.

## **Standardized Testing**

As an examination-development specialist, I have an interest in the role and nature of standardized testing in the United States. Again, as with Canadian provinces, it is evident that the situation varies from state to state. Although a number of states operate their own testing agencies, a significant portion of testing is conducted by privately operated testing services. In some states, social studies testing is limited to machine-scored responses, whereas in others there is a written component. Teacher involvement in the testing processes also varies from state to state.

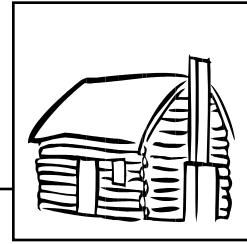
Given that many Canadians regard the United States as a nation more willing to embrace privately operated delivery of essential services (health care being the most obvious example of this distinction between the two nations), it should be no surprise that private industry plays a large role in American testing. I have not found this to be a significant issue for the American educators with whom I have had discussions—at least, it is not an issue they bring forward. There appears to be greater concern over what is (and is not) tested than over who delivers the service. While there is little doubt that privately operated testing services can deliver satisfactory products, a concern of Canadian educators that I have frequently heard is whether a competitive-bidding process is the ideal way to decide who will construct and score student examinations. In this matter, I feel safe in suggesting that there is a higher degree of

skepticism among Canadian teachers than their American counterparts as to the efficacy of private enterprise involvement in high-stakes testing.

As a member of a four-person panel at the Kansas City conference in 2005, I gave a PowerPoint presentation on the social studies examination program in Alberta. The central message of the presentation was that the successes of Alberta's examination program result in large part from the active involvement of teachers. Several slides showed Alberta teachers at a marking session where they were grading student written responses. Interestingly, one member of the audience questioned the ethics of having Alberta teachers mark the work of Alberta students; the suggestion being that this presents a conflict of interest. Frankly, in over 20 years of experience with high-stakes testing (first as a teacher-marker, then as an examination manager), I have never considered this an issue. In my response to the questions, I indicated that there is a great deal of trust and respect for the professionalism of our teachers. Social studies teachers are trained to mark to a standard, and our statistical data indicate that they do so consistently. Further, the experience of high-stakes testing in Alberta demonstrates that a high degree of teacher involvement in most stages of the examination development process creates opportunities for the professional growth of teachers and lends greater legitimacy to the examinations placed in front of students. Through close cooperation, examination-development specialists and teachers have the opportunity to form an amicable, collaborative and professional relationship.

## **Conclusion**

Although the social studies profession is experiencing challenging times in the United States, largely as a consequence of NCLB, there are many dedicated social studies educators leading the charge to restore the status of the discipline. If there ever was a time when America needs an informed, thoughtful and questioning population, this is it. In fact, it is hard to think of a time when such a population is ever unnecessary. The American experience with social studies in the early 21st century should serve as a cautionary tale to Canadian social studies educators. Maintaining the status of the discipline requires vigilant attention to, and constant contact with, political decision makers as well as constant effort to demonstrate to the general population that an education in social studies is a necessity, not an option.



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# Yesterday Shapes Tomorrow: Using the Past to Educate the Present

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*Lois Gluck*

*Lois Gluck is an active member of the ATA Social Studies Council. She has taught social studies for many years and at present is District Coordinator, Curricular Services, for St Albert Protestant Schools. She has been involved with Historica (Heritage) Fairs for more than 10 years and has participated at the school, regional and national level. At present she is chair of the Alberta Historica Fairs Provincial Council.*

Over the past 12 years, Alberta students in Grades 4 to 9 participated in Alberta Historica (Heritage) Fairs. The research projects students produced for these fairs allowed them to delve into a multitude of topics from Canada's past and present, as well as to tell the stories of their families. Historica (Heritage) Fair projects enable students to celebrate their place in history and encourage them to explore their identity and citizenship within the Canadian context. Students become engaged in projects that have personal relevance to them. These projects allow students to do not only secondary research but also, in some cases, primary research. The flexible nature of the projects allows students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways—videos, PowerPoints, dance and drama presentations, diaries, and models, to name a few. As a teacher, I found these learning activities to be among the most satisfying learning activities I ever did with my junior high students. I saw students who were previously uninterested in social studies become excited. Some students' projects were the best work they did. Why? Because they had choice, and the topics they chose were relevant to them.

With the new social studies curriculum, we are presented with an opportunity to revitalize the Historica

(Heritage) Fair projects. Critical thinking is one of the dimensions of thinking in the skills and processes outcomes of the new curriculum. Critical thinking is the centrepiece of the online guide to the new curriculum (<http://onlineguide.learnalberta.ca/>) and is defined as engaging "in deliberations with the intention of making a judgement based on appropriate criteria" (*Online Guide*, 3). Heritage Fair projects are a perfect way to promote critical thinking. Teachers can motivate students to use critical thinking skills while engaging them in a project that is fun, active, exciting, challenging and relevant. How do we do this?

Topics for Heritage Fair projects run the gamut from *Anne of Green Gables* to Canadian peacekeepers to Wayne Gretzky to the RCMP to Vimy Ridge to Avril Lavigne. Often topics reflect cultural or situational content. For example, in Alberta you might see students in the south doing a project on the Frank Slide; in Calgary students studying the Lougheed family; Edmontonians, Fort Edmonton; and northern students, caribou. Students can still do the same topics, but by taking the topics and putting a critical twist to them, students take these projects one step further. Students can explore their topics by adding a critical thinking question that guides their inquiry and

requires them to make a judgement based on criteria. For example:

- *Anne of Green Gables*—Should Anne Shirley be a model for today’s youth? Which element within the Lucy Maud Montgomery *Anne of Green Gables* series is most significant in fostering the universal appeal of the novel?
- RCMP—Should the Royal Canadian Mounted Police continue to be Alberta’s provincial police force? What is the greatest contribution the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has made to Canada?
- Wayne Gretzky—Is Wayne Gretzky the greatest Canadian hockey hero? What is Wayne Gretzky’s most significant contribution to Canadian identity?
- Canadian peacekeepers—What has been the most significant contribution of Canada’s peacekeepers?
- Lois Hole—To what degree did Lois Hole’s life reflect the changing role of women in Alberta society over the years?

An example found in the *Online Guide to Implementation* that would work for a fair project is

Instead of asking students to locate information to answer the factual question “What did the Inuit traditionally use to make tools?” the teacher might ask students to use this information to decide

“Which animal—the seal or the caribou—contributed more to meeting the varying needs in traditional Inuit life?” (p 4).

Also, if students decide to study a famous person or a member of their family, they could be asked to “assess which of several contributions made by their assigned individual produced the most significant, widespread and long-term impact” (*Online Guide*, 4). When students reshape their topics in such a way, they learn to think critically by making judgments based on what they know about the subject. The project then becomes an opportunity to teach the critical thinking skills while students are engaged in a topic that is interesting and relevant to them.

The following websites will be useful for teachers interested in becoming involved with Historical (Heritage) Fairs and for engaging their students in critical thinking:

- [www.histori.ca](http://www.histori.ca) (Historica)
- [www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca) (Alberta Teachers’ Association Social Studies Council)
- [www.tc2.ca](http://www.tc2.ca) (The Critical Thinking Consortium)

For an article on embedding critical thinking into teaching and learning, go to <http://onlineguide.learnalberta.ca>, click on English and enter Embedding Critical Thinking into the Search Resources box.



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# Exploring Connections

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## *Pamela Adams*

*Pamela Adams recently completed her doctoral dissertation, which was entitled “Transformative Faculty Development: Improving University Teaching Through Collaborative Inquiry Partnerships.” She is presently a teaching fellow with the University of Lethbridge’s Centre for the Advancement of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CAETL).*

This paper will examine the nexus between two current priorities of many educators. The first is the problematics of the well-intentioned recommendation that “every school operate as a professional learning community dedicated to continuous improvement ...” (Alberta’s Commission on Learning, 2003, 8). The second and more immediate one for many teachers of social studies is the implementation of a new curriculum that emphasizes critical inquiry, pluralistic democracy, multiple perspectives and active responsible citizenship. What themes and activities inhabit the area of intersection between the notions of a school learning community and the values and assumptions underpinning the new Alberta social studies curriculum? Perhaps more germane to this discussion, what role can present and future social studies educators take in ensuring that both notions are appropriately honoured in their professional practice?

## **Miss Geo’s Reflections**

In shaping an understanding of the priorities and cultures that constitute school communities, the experiences of preservice teachers can often serve as a canary in the coalmine. Social studies student teacher Miss Geo shares her impressions of her first day of practise teaching and, in doing so, presents us with a cautionary tale.

## **Monday, November 8**

7:39 AM

Arrive at practicum teaching placement eager with butterflies—or is it just some bad sushi I had last night? Anyway ... this is it! I’m excited, I’m itching to go, I can’t wait, I am about to change the world!

7:40 AM

*Note to self:* School doors don’t open until 8:01 ... sleep longer or get a key from the caretaker.

7:59 AM

Here comes the keeper of all secrets and wisdom: the lovely school secretary. *Ick. Cringe.* Might submit her name for *What Not to Wear*. After all, must do my bit to spread SOME fashion sense while I change the world!

8:00 AM

It’s ok ... probably just her having a bad hair day. Do all visitors have to sit in this chair in the “naughty corner?” Principal appears from thin air (*Ooh. Double ick.* Maybe I could submit the *whole* staff for *What Not to Wear!*). Now this is more like it—we’re off and running. Or at least out of the office!

8:06 AM

Suddenly bogged down with agendas, books, manuals, handbooks. Good thing I brought my new lululemon bag—probably spent a bit more than necessary,

but am sure students will be impressed with the new student teacher fashionista!

Rules to remember: do not leave your things in the classroom, do not copy without asking, do not wear inappropriate clothing, do not smile too much/frown too much. Do not park on north, south, east, or west side of school. Do not ... good grief!

8:11 AM

Standing by myself in front of Room 133—who is the mathematical genius who numbers these rooms, anyway? Am I not on the 4th floor? Knock on closed door—hear Mrs Zzz yell to eighth-graders to “SETTLE DOWN!” She quickly introduces herself and asks if the principal is with me. He is right here ... somewhere ... did the principal evaporate? Oh well, he probably just realized how extraordinarily mismatched his outfit was and went to change into something more Armani-like.

8:29 AM

Have settled into my 3 × 3 cubby that I proudly call my planning area—won’t fret about size as I’m sure most NASA engineers don’t have much more space than this and, like me, *they* are changing the world! Explain to Mrs Zzz that I’m ready to teach. Three-page lesson plan? Check. Learning centres laminated? Check. Candies for all students? Check.

8:32 AM

What does she mean my lesson plans are “just FINE”? And what does she mean “Don’t reinvent the wheel, sweetie”? I spent three days on these babies—doesn’t she know that I’m here to change the world? Okay, mental yoga break. Breathe in through nose, out through mouth, smile, repeat.

8:33 AM

Mrs Zzz is obviously unaware of the vast potential of my teaching brilliance (let alone my fabulous Nine West heels that are screaming to be noticed)! She’ll allow me to do one activity this afternoon as an ice-breaker *if* I get all my morning work done. “What work?” asks my inside voice.

8:46 AM

Standing in front of the copy machine. Apparently having access to a Xerox number is a big deal. Who knew it was like asking for Bill Gates’ ATM PIN? Mrs Zzz’s voice still in my head: “Then, when you have done all my photocopying for the year, come back up to the room!” How hard can this be? Press START. Close eyes. Mental yoga.

10:37 AM

Still in front of the copy machine. Tiny voice in my head tells me to cut and run. A nasty bout of E coli

suddenly sounds tempting. But NO! I will not be jaded. I will be strong, unbreakable, the best student teacher this school has seen! Keep reminding self: I’m here to change the world!

10:38 AM

Bell rings for recess. YAY! I’m off to the staff room for inspiration and joyous collaboration with colleagues whose wisdom will flow like a chapter from John Dewey! My first chance to participate in a real professional learning community they told me about back at the U.

10:39 AM

*Where is everybody?* I’ve obviously missed a meeting. A special event in the office. A celebration of some sort. A moment of profound educational bonding. *Phew*—one teacher walks in ... condescending laugh. “Just because we work together doesn’t mean we like each other. If you are looking for your TA you can find her in the Grade 4 classroom.” Have I stepped into a scene from *Mean Girls*? Oh well, coffee by myself gives me a chance to reflect on complex pedagogical issues: Wonder if I cleared Gates’ PIN number off the copy machine ...

10:40 AM

Hmmm ... notice that the sign-up sheet for the staff barbeque is empty. Starting to think that might not be a coincidence. Trudge back to the copy room.

12:50 PM

Finally! Time to greet my students with confidence and warmth. This is it; my time to shine. I can feel myself making a difference already!

1:31 PM

Feeling pretty great about how class went. Couldn’t help but feel a tad smug about the game and students’ responses to it. Look over with a smile at Mrs Zzz as I am doing a quick closure. What’s that look on her face? Disgust? Disdain? Some combination of the two? I admit the kids were wound up, but ...

1:32 PM

Mrs Zzz struts briskly to the front of the room and says through gritted teeth, “Well, kids, wasn’t it nice to play that little game with Miss Geo? Now let’s get onto some actual learning!” What? *Actual* learning? I had lessons planned! With objectives! And lots of learning! Lots of activities! Lots of fun! It was *her* idea to do the ice-breaker! I had stuff laminated, for God’s sake!

3:05 PM

Afternoon crawled by. My perma-smile and I have managed to survive. Maybe there are other staff

members in the hallway who can empathize. Hey, maybe we could organize an impromptu dinner and share some funny teacher stories! A relaxing little social gathering to buoy each other's spirits! It could be a real Oprah moment! The sign-up sheet in the staff room flashes through my mind ... oh, forget it. I don't pass another living soul on my way out. Sigh.

4:39 PM

Home with a tub of Double Fudge Cookie Dough and a spatula. Change the world? How could I be so naïve? Collaborative community my @^&\$(#%)\*!

4:40 PM

Walk to my calendar and stare. Only seven more weeks to go until I achieve educational nirvana. Take my new essential-oil-smelling pen (lavender) and cross off my countdown. What's that I remember seeing on Mrs Zzz's chalkboard? Oh yeah: only 47 days to go.

## Learning Communities Are Everywhere

The sometimes-poignant perceptions of this student teacher are not unique, nor are her reflections particularly alarming. Each day, teachers everywhere enter schools in which they spend a majority of their working hours grappling with some of the same anxieties, frustrations, and concerns as Mrs Zzz and Miss Geo. When asked to comment on what she expected on her first day, Miss Geo answered:

I thought it was going to be a place like you told us about in class, where everyone talked to each other and showed their commitment to teaching and learning. You know, a place where teachers could help each other, could collaborate in coming up with new ideas and ways to help students. I thought everyone would laugh, have fun, celebrate teamwork, and appreciate each other rather than just ignore each other. The feeling was supposed to be that everyone belonged and that other people actually cared. I guess I sort of expected a bit more attention to people—you know, where everyone would help energize each other.

Over the past decade, the metaphor of a learning community has emerged as a compelling characterization of schools. In fact, it is a rare school that hasn't declared itself a learning community in spite of evidence to the contrary. This miscalibration may be explained in several ways, most of which reflect particular adherence to external pressures and loci of control. On the surface, it may seem reasonable to

expect that school communities can create, promote, and sustain a collaborative and collegial work life that epitomizes an appreciation for learning. However, the focused effort and constant attention required to achieve such a goal have led many schools to abandon the ideal and embrace pragmatism. They have come to view the idea of a learning community less as a guide to the cultural journey of a school or jurisdiction, and more as a terminal destination to be checked off an accountability to-do list. This is problematic, mostly because this interpretation of the term does not acknowledge the complex processes and implications that accompany implementation of the precepts of a healthy learning community.

Learning communities, like families, are *not* all functional. They can be observed in many shapes and sizes to serve varying purposes, with often disparate values and beliefs. Importantly, their very existence is not synonymous with their effectiveness. Just as healthy learning communities, like healthy families, can be defined on a wide spectrum of characteristics and patterns of behaviour, so dysfunctional learning communities can be characterized by particular tendencies toward goal setting, decision making, problem solving and organizational hierarchy that are not absolute, but more likely will fall along a continuum of ineffectiveness, depending on a host of contextual factors.

For example, less effective *withdrawn learning communities* (Townsend and Adams 2003, 15) will vary in the extent to which importance is accorded student learning and expectations of student achievement; the strategies through which differences among members are mediated to maintain reasonable focus on the achievement of goals; the types and levels of effectiveness of communication among members and with other organizations; the degree to which members are supported in working with each other; the level at which the decision-making process is accessible, transparent, responsible and valued by members; and the spirit with which members accept responsibility for the work that must be done.

More effective *generative learning communities* (Townsend and Adams 2003, 15) can be evaluated against the same criteria. However, they more consistently demonstrate the spirit of enthusiasm, achievement, mutual respect and dynamism found in organizations that have embarked on journeys of learning and discovery. By definition, the very activities in which their participants engage are of the type that not only ensure learning but generate the next set of questions that will continue a process of ongoing inquiry.

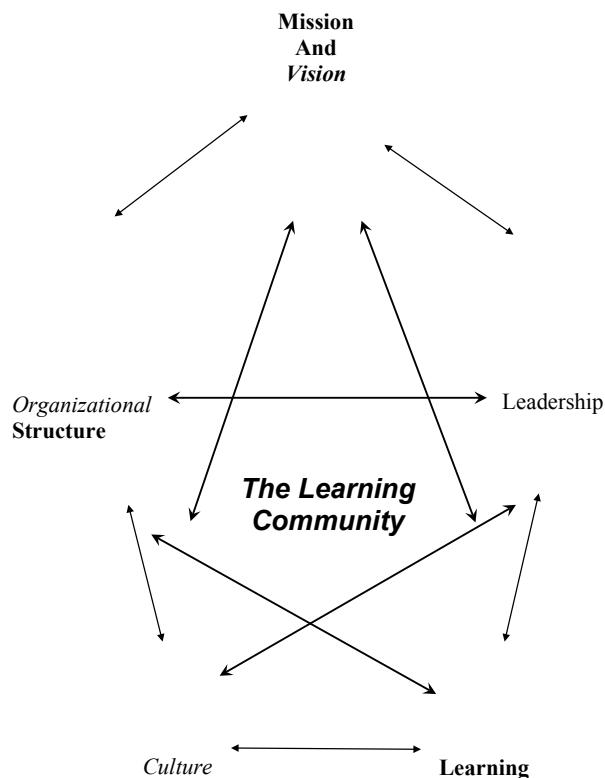
# Examining Generative Learning Communities

Continuous growth, progress, learning and inquiry are hallmarks of schools that are generative in their approach to education. Teachers, students, parents and community members actively participate in defining a clear purpose and focus; in accepting responsibility for assuming formal and nonformal leadership roles; in acknowledging that learning is a process rather than an event; in contributing to trust, respect and belonging; and in striving for organizational success. Figure 1 illustrates the complex relationships between these five components.

## Mission and Vision

In a generative learning community, the development and refinement of mission and vision statements is an inclusive, continuous process that produces documents that members use and refer to. Members are committed to organizational mission and vision because they have direct ownership of, and a heightened sense of responsibility for, these statements.

Figure 1. A Model to Guide Learning Communities



There are direct connections between mission and vision statements, organizational goals, and individual growth plans. All promote purposeful action that is frequently based on collaboration and reflection. Members engage fully and regularly in the clarification and refinement of guiding principles. Mission and vision statements accurately capture the blending of individual and group values and are acknowledged and honoured in ways that drive the desire for organizational effectiveness and sustained inquiry into improvement.

## Leadership

Generative learning communities provide explicit opportunities for leadership development that are distributed broadly and transparently throughout the organization; that is, many participants are seen as leaders who are actively involved in helping achieve the goals of the organization. Formal leaders are expected to be excellent teachers and lifelong learners who are approachable and accessible in a variety of forums. Calculated and intentful risk taking characterizes the way leaders approach their work. Their efforts produce a form of reciprocity. In practice, leaders accept responsibility for maintaining high levels of professional performance consistent with organizational mission and vision. Similarly, members of the community accept equivalent levels of responsibility.

## Learning

The emphasis on learning is widely acknowledged as the primary focus of the generative organization. All participants in the community are guided by the maxims that "all students will learn and achieve, no child will be left out, and the success of one is the success of all" (Townsend and Adams 2003, 53). Staff learning is often collaborative. Achievements are shared throughout the organization, and learning is a source of motivation and pride. Because learning and teaching are viewed as interdependent parts of a successful professional life, professional development is viewed as a responsibility, and opportunities for growth are often job embedded. The importance of teamwork and collaboration is consistently affirmed and, accordingly, members of the community acknowledge the contributions and strengths of others.

## Culture

Very high levels of interaction, trust and mutual respect are evident in all aspects of a generative learning

community. Resolution of conflict is characterized by high levels of productive engagement and action that affirms the goals of the community. Collaborative opportunities are frequent, encouraged and rewarded. For many members of the organization, collaboration is the key to success. Short-term and long-term teams are established to achieve different agreed-upon goals. Members share a strong sense of belonging to the organization. There is a climate of caring, with extensive use of symbols, icons, images and metaphors. Opportunities for celebration and recognition are fully integrated into the work lives of members. They occur frequently, for a variety of purposes, and are characterized by an ethos of authentic affirmation.

### **Organizational Structure**

Effective communication is an essential dimension of the success of generative learning communities. Expectations of clarity and purpose are very high. Misunderstandings are dealt with expeditiously, and mistakes are addressed and discussed. Leaders and members affirm the importance of listening and the appropriate use of personal voice. Throughout the organization, there is direct and constant interplay between policy and practice. People come first. Members expect to contribute to organizational planning that is linked directly to mission, vision, goals, principles and values. Decision making is a continuous process, fully integrated with communication structures and responsive to the needs of leaders and members. Because decision making is a highly valued element of organizational effectiveness, members participate fully in the process, and act responsibly when decisions are made. They work with enthusiasm and, whenever possible, through collaboration and teamwork. There is evidence of synergy in the results of focused community effort. The evaluation of performance is an affirming process that is constantly evolving and fully integrated with practice.

### **The New Social Studies Curriculum: Aligning with the Generative Learning Community**

The rationale, vision and definition of social studies outlined in the new Alberta *Program of Studies* (Alberta Education 2005) highlight several of the same notions of cohesion, inclusion, collectivism and

conflict resolution that characterizes a generative learning community. Social studies teachers in these types of schools “engage in the democratic process and [are] aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society, and world” (p 1), and one might expect them to actively model the very values, attitudes, skills and processes they are charged with fostering. References to belonging, identity, learning and responsible citizenship (pp 3–4) pervade the new social studies program foundations, to the extent that it is reasonable to expect that the new social studies teacher will empower students to activate positive progress in their own communities. It is similarly reasonable to assume that teachers-as-responsible-citizens will demonstrate similar involvement as they engage in their professional work, enhancing the learning community of which they are a part.

Several other areas of similar purpose are evident in the social studies program rationale and generative school communities. The exploration of individual and collective identity is a core expectation in both the new social studies curriculum and the generative learning community, as is the distributed leadership necessary to develop actively responsible teachers and students. As well, like members of a generative community, students in new social studies classrooms must understand and pursue a disciplined process of purposeful inquiry. Engaging in a reasoned dialogical process to arrive at decisions that demonstrate sensitivity to others’ differences and opinions is a hallmark activity of both responsible teachers and students. Through this process, teachers share ideas with other teachers, students ask questions and listen to the positions of other students, teachers create new ways to solve problems through collaborating with other teachers, and students make connections with other students to design a better future.

It is this last activity—students making connections with one another to design a better future—that produces the most successful school learning communities and the most valued and empowered social studies student. The program of studies contends that, “Through this process, students will strive to understand and explain the world in the present and to determine what kind of world they want in the future” (p 6). Similarly, Adams and Townsend (2006, 6) suggest that teachers in a generative learning community are part of ongoing *collaborative inquiry* (Adams 2006) that occurs when a group of individuals commits to exploring an answer to a compelling question through a cyclical process of generative inquiry, experimentation . . . . All participants bring with them a variety of experiences that are integral to success.



All experiences and knowledge are seen as equally valuable and provide alternative filters through which to view inquiry (p 6).

One teacher described this process of collaborative inquiry in a generative learning community as, “being like a pencil: instead of being worn down, I am being sharpened as we are involved in an aggressive pursuit of professional development in collaboration with other teachers” (p 76).

## **Back to Miss Geo: Creating That Better Future**

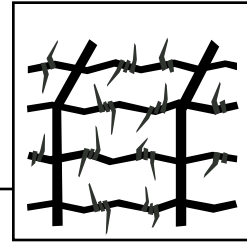
One important point of conceptual intersection for all these notions is the view that teaching and learning are reciprocal and sustained processes frequently indistinguishable one from the other. George Bernard Shaw touches on this relationship when he claims that, “I am not a teacher; only a fellow traveller of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead—ahead of myself, as well as ahead of you.” One critical aspect of this reciprocity is a belief that both teacher and learner can contribute to—and, in fact, may be responsible for—the teaching and the learning of the other. In other words, the process of *learning* is at the

heart of the matter, and *who* is teaching *whom* is often less important than the mutual pursuit of personal and professional growth.

The new social studies teacher recognizes that growth is inherent in progress and welcomes the challenges that accompany positive change toward a more inclusive future. By the very nature of the opportunities presented in the new social studies curriculum, that teacher is able to imagine and construct a future in which both teachers and students are better able to view their participation in society as a welcome responsibility.

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# Is There Justice After Half a Century? Doukhobor Incarceration in British Columbia, 1953–1959

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The institution of education should be recognized for what it is. It can be used either as a tool or a weapon just like an axe, or it can be used as a very efficient means of control.

—Alex Jamieson, 1972

The paramount factor in racial fusion is undoubtedly the school. It is the national melting pot. We must give it our undivided support. The great battle for better Canadian citizenship is being fought by our school teachers. They are the generals in the home field.

—Regina Leader, October 25, 1919

Canada has not always been kind to children of minority ethnocultural backgrounds, and government action in regard to children of the Sons of Freedom community (a significant Doukhobor community in British Columbia a half century ago) is a prime example. Minority children have often experienced a wide range of educational inequities in Canada, besides being subjects of prejudice, discrimination and outright hostility. Communities targeted have included Aboriginals (Cardinal 1969), African Americans

(Majors 2001), Chinese (Lai 1988), Hutterites (Hostetler and Huntington 1967), Japanese (Adachi 1976), Jews (Abella and Troper 1982), Mennonites (Epp 1974), Sikhs (Friesen 1993), Ukrainians (Swyripa 1978) and nonwhites generally (Ramcharan 1982).

In 1983 I published a book called *Schools with a Purpose*, in which I analyzed the role of the school in relation to some of the above-mentioned communities. I concluded that while the school is theoretically a neutral vehicle intended to promote learning, its primary function in the case of Canada's First Nations (and other groups) has been assimilation (Friesen and Friesen 2003). Separatist groups like Holdeman Mennonites and Amish, on the other hand, have very effectively utilized private schools as vehicles of cultural isolation and preservation. The Amish particularly have managed to promote a very synthesized form of education for their children, because the curriculum used in their schools coincides nicely with what is taught at home or in their church congregations. *Schools with a Purpose* included a chapter on the Doukhobor educational experience in

Canada entitled, "The School as a Cultural Wedge." In that study I argued that after an initial, somewhat positive, experience in Canada, members of the Doukhobor community were subject to a series of cultural wedges targeted at alienating them from the Canadian body politic. This action included five specific thrusts:

- First, forcing the requirement of registering land ownership, birth, marriage, and death without any attempt at explanation or negotiation
- Second, belittling and resisting the Doukhobor pacifist stance when the country was at war. This included incarceration of Doukhobor youth who took a stand of nonresistance (Jantzen 1992).
- Third, forcing Doukhobor parents to enrol their children in public schools even though the parents tried very hard to explain why they preferred to operate their own schools. Although they were quite in favour of educating their children, the Doukhobors were opposed to military emphasis and what they perceived to be a capitalistic, profit-making theme in public schools (Friesen 1995a). They argued that this kind of curricular emphasis could result in exploitation of the poor. The parents also noted that the public school curriculum ignored any mention of their Doukhobor Russian heritage and avoided moral instruction of any kind.
- Fourth, the most damaging wedge was effected when children of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor faction were forcibly taken from their homes and incarcerated in New Denver, British Columbia, with little opportunity for contact with their parents.
- Fifth, the final wedge continues in a somewhat milder version today in the form of media portrayals of Doukhobor culture. Jaenen (2000, 104) notes that until recently the Doukhobors were badly treated by the media. Initial assessments were particularly damaging; Bruce Hutchison, in *The Unknown Country* (1965), categorized them as "a people who defy the laws of Canada as stubbornly and dumbly as cattle." Simma Holt went so far as to ascribe to them terrorist tactics and a gangster mentality in *Terror in the Name of God* (1964).

Things are slowly changing, and today the Doukhobor way of life is a little more positively perceived, even though public ignorance prevails. James F C Wright, a Saskatoon author, is quoted by Koozma Tarasoff (2000, 294) as saying, "The persistent tendency of Doukhobors to philosophize, their stubborn

courage so often maintained in the face of material loss and physical hardship, may well combine with what is generally called common sense to make a valuable contribution to Canadian life."

Essentially, the matter of cultural understanding comprises a two-way street, a give and take between two parties, in this case the Doukhobors and the public. In the century since the arrival of the Doukhobors in Canada, their public image has changed somewhat, partially due to the nature of Doukhobor adjustment to the Canadian milieu. In fact, over the past century Doukhobors have significantly altered their cultural forms to coincide more nearly with that of dominant society, and assimilation has already been realized in important sectors (Friesen 1995b; Friesen and Verigin 1996). Through assimilation, the dominant group usually seeks to undermine the cultural basis of the subordinate group, transform its membership to dominant forms, and thus facilitate its entry into mainstream society (Fleras and Elliott 1992).

## The Issue

I would like to revisit the cultural wedge of schooling inflicted on the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor by the government of British Columbia, beginning in 1953. To begin with, the record shows that the Doukhobors did not generally reject public schooling per se. In fact, in 1912 Peter the Lordly agreed to the construction of a school at Brilliant, BC, and gradual acceptance of the institution seemed plausible, but provincial authorities jumped the gun. That year a local mining engineer, William Blakemore, was appointed as an investigating commissioner. After spending four months in Doukhobor communities, Blakemore acknowledged that Doukhobor resistance to public education was not based on entirely unreasonable grounds. The Doukhobors primarily objected to the military emphasis in schools and perceived the value system of the school to emphasize profit-making, cheating, and exploitation of the poor. Observers of the oral tradition, the Doukhobors were also a little uneasy with so much emphasis being placed on written forms, and they worried that their Russian heritage would be disregarded or downplayed by the school. Judging by the heavy emphasis on British history valued in BC schools at that time, they were not misjudging the situation on the latter point.

Perhaps the darkest chapter in Doukhobor educational history occurred in British Columbia in 1953,

when the provincial government grew impatient because children of Sons of Freedom were not attending public schools. Woodcock and Avakumovic (1977, 141ff) documented the events that took place at Perry's Siding, BC, that year. The Mounted Police carried out a plan to round up and arrest 148 adults and 104 children, many of them still young enough to be breast fed. The children, along with 13 parents, were taken to the old mining town of New Denver, where they were confined. This type of raid continued until 1959, when Sons of Freedom parents agreed to comply with government orders to send their children to school. When the Gilpin settlement was raided, for example, most of the children ran into the woods surrounding the village and only three were trapped. A raid at Krestova was more successful; there, 50 officers picked up a larger number of children. In all, during the six years that the raids continued, a total of 170 children passed through the institution at New Denver. As Woodcock and Avakumovic (1977, 341) state, "Some reached school leaving age and were released before 1959; the rest went on to day schools like Mount Central High School at South Slokan where, having learnt from experience, the authorities offered special curricula, including vocational training and the teaching of Russian, that met at least some of the criticisms the Doukhobors had made of Canadian educational methods."

Ashworth (1979, 149–153) observed that the traumatic experience of life in the New Denver boarding school took its toll on Doukhobor children. The children were robbed of the warm, caring environment of home and brought into perpetual contact with strangers who, though they may have been worthy people and good teachers, were still representatives of a society despised by the Sons of Freedom. Initially, some of the children objected to their treatment (having been encouraged by their parents to do so) and disobeyed virtually every school rule. Although very young, they tried to function in a web of conflicting values and political turmoil involving parents, religious leaders, police and government. In addition, they were forbidden to speak Russian, the only language they knew. Their protests included singing hymns at the tops of their voices, refusing to leave their buses when they arrived at school or refusing to prepare themselves for bed at the assigned time. Some children resisted passively, stripping and refusing to move unless carried. Others, particularly the older ones, remained sullen and withdrawn. Despite these setbacks, classes were organized and operated. Interestingly, some youngsters *did* develop a thirst for knowledge and pursued further learning on

their own after they had been discharged from the school.

During their stay at New Denver, Doukhobor children were not allowed to return home for Christmas or summer breaks during the years that they were confined. Visits by parents were restricted to two weekends per month, and children were forced to assist in the construction of a chain link fence through which visits with parents took place. No doubt the experience affected these children and their families in profound ways, since they were kept apart for lengthy periods of time.

## Emergence of Justice

Although a half-century late, there *is* good news! In April 1999, BC ombudsman Dulcie McCallum produced a report investigating the confinement of Sons of Freedom children from 1953 to 1959 (*Righting the Wrong* 1999). The report was long overdue and motivated by the New Denver Survivors Collective, made up of former Doukhobor New Denver students. Their claim of being mistreated was based on the following documents:

- *Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child* 1924
- *United Nations Charter* 1945
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 1948
- *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* 1951
- *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child* 1959
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* 1966
- *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child* 1990
- International Criminal Court: 1) Crime of Genocide, 2) Crime Against Humanity

McCallum's lengthy report begins with an open letter from the ombudsman, and, like most governmental documents, downplays the question of legal liability. The primary emphasis in the report is the welfare of the children affected by the experience, now adult survivors of New Denver, and the manner in which government should respond to the claim of physical and psychological maltreatment resulting from institutional confinement. The government response is couched in language that promotes healing, forgiveness and well-being for the individuals and families involved. The guiding principles of the report acknowledge the rights of children to be valued and to be treated with respect and dignity. Ten such principles are articulated at the outset of the report.

The ombudsman's report makes five major recommendations, the first of which is to acknowledge that government acted in a wrong manner in apprehending the children of the Sons of Freedom during the 1950s. The second recommendation requests that the BC government issue a full statement to complainants outlining the government's historical rationale for the above happening. Third is a request for a public apology to the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors for the apprehension with an acknowledgement that the Doukhobor children were treated unjustly and unfairly. To cover itself, the government report offers a somewhat paradoxical admission. It suggests that the BC government did not intend to harm the children by incarcerating them, but recommends that the government offer reparation for harm done. Fourth, the report recommends that government representatives consult with New Denver survivors about the nature and manner of compensation and jointly agree on measures to be taken to assure healing for adult survivors. Fifth, and finally, the ombudsman recommends that the report be forwarded to the commanding officer of the E Division of the RCMP and that he be urged to consider the role of the RCMP in the matter and take appropriate action.

The ombudsman's report was followed by an extensive study undertaken by the Law Commission of Canada in 2000 entitled *Restoring Dignity*. The main survivor need identified by the commission was an apology and documented evidence of historical wrongdoings by the BC provincial and Canadian federal governments. In addition, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation reviewed numerous reports pertaining to the New Denver situation and sent a letter of support backing the extension of an apology to former inmates of the New Denver institution. The letter affirms that the Canadian Race Relations Foundation is committed to the principle that progress towards the achievement of a just and fair society requires that Canadians acknowledge that they or their representatives have acted unjustly in the past.

As though these efforts were not enough, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies recently urged the BC provincial government to implement the recommendations of the BC ombudsman and affirmed that the issue is of great importance to their objective of seeing justice done.

The response of the BC government to pressures exerted by these agencies was noted by BC ombudsman Howard Kushner in April 2000. Kushner noted that while it took the government some time to respond to the 1999 ombudsman report, steps were being taken to address the needs and welfare of the

individuals involved in the situation. Kushner continued to have meetings with various government officials to determine what should be done to rectify the situation. On October 4, 2004, British Columbia Attorney General Geoff Plant issued a statement of regret in the legislature to Sons of Freedom Doukhobor children who were removed from their parents in the 1950s to attend school in New Denver. He noted that discussions about methods of healing and reconciliation with former Doukhobor residents of New Denver are ongoing. The Ministry of Children and Family Development arranged to provide family therapy and individual counselling to former residents and their siblings, spouses and children. The program began in 2000.

## The Psychological Dimension

The BC ombudsman's report found that Doukhobor children were alienated by their forced separation from their parents and denied access to their culture, religion and language. Although not necessarily physically or sexually abused (the report insists), the children were abused through neglect, lack of love and nurturing, and harsh discipline. The children, through no fault of their own, were treated as though they were criminals; now adults, many of them continue to suffer long-term effects of arbitrary discriminatory and unjust confinement (CBC 2005).

Space does not permit an analysis of the possible psychological effects on individuals involved in experiences like the New Denver incarceration. Obviously, the Sons of Freedom children suffered emotional abuse, which is based on power and control. Recognized forms of emotional abuse include rejection, degradation, terrorization, isolation (which results in such things as anxiety), corruption and/or exploitation, and denial of emotional responsiveness (Public Health Agency of Canada 2005). Saransky (1982, 190) points out that children who are isolated from their parents and socialized by institutions tend to view the world as *the world* instead of *a world of significant others*. Parr (1980, 118) adds that isolated children sometimes feel shame or resentment towards their own kin and hence animosity toward their background.

Anxiety, which is one of the possible consequences of isolation, is complex. The National Association of School Psychologists ([www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)) defines anxiety as both a developmental phenomenon and an adaptive mechanism that is constantly manifested throughout the lifespan. Chronic anxiety or

extreme episodes can have negative effects on personal, social and academic functioning, and may require professional intervention. Anxiety may be conceptualized as consisting of two proponents, worry and emotionality. Worry is the cognitive component, and emotionality is the physiological or affective component. Worry has developmental implications because it requires that individuals be able to anticipate the future and consider several possible outcomes. Because young children generally lack the ability to anticipate the future and consider multiple possibilities, their ability to worry may not be developmentally possible until they reach middle childhood. Emotionality is considered an involuntary response that involves changes in physiological states such as autonomous functioning. Suggested interventions that may assist with release from anxiety include relaxation therapy, imagery techniques, correcting maladaptive self-talk, problem solving, managing rewards, modelling, rehearsal and role plays, and exposure to the anxiety-producing situation.

Anxiety may originate from a variety of situations and may be identified in several types, for example, separation anxiety, something which the New Denver children definitely experienced. The International Association of Anxiety Management ([www.anxman.org](http://www.anxman.org)) points out that the extended implications of separation anxiety can be far reaching. In the very long term it can lead to anxiety and panic disorders in adulthood, and in the short term it may lead to social isolation, educational difficulties and/or communication difficulties. For example, a conflict between parent and child about going to school could cause a rift in that relationship.

Children with separation anxiety may display a whole range of behaviours, including

- feeling unsafe in a room by themselves;
- clinging behaviour;
- excessive worry and fear about parents or about possible harm to themselves;
- shadowing a parent around the house;
- difficulty going to sleep;
- nightmares;
- exaggerated, unrealistic fears of animals, monsters or burglars;
- fear of being alone in the dark; and
- severe tantrums when forced to go to school.

Only qualified therapists may be able to identify the extent to which these behaviours were later manifested by the individuals involved, what the consequences have been, and what might be done to alleviate the victims' suffering. It is a safe bet that

the process will take a great deal of time and involve very painful memories.

Government reparations to former Sons of Freedom children who are now in the sunset years of their lives are long overdue. It is doubtful that any action taken can in any way compensate for the suffering caused by their experience. Still, appropriate action *has* to be taken, if only to illustrate that Canadian society is maturing in our regard for individual differences and minority rights in a supposedly multicultural society.

## Implications for Schooling

It may be contended that, multiculturally speaking, things have not changed very much in the last half-century because many minority communities in Canada are still misunderstood, misjudged and treated unfairly in terms of public image. Often their children are deprived of equal educational opportunity in everyday school practice. Some educators actively promote the assimilation of ethnocultural communities into the Canadian mainstream and believe that the sooner this is accomplished, the better. After all, if incoming peoples intend to do well in the Canadian economy, they had better conform to the standards, procedures and expectations of a burgeoning economy that is apparently the envy of the world.

Obviously the platform of assimilation is deficient in light of awareness that cultural pluralism can be a rich source of knowledge for a nation, and we are gradually backing away from the principle of cultural absorption. As it turns out, the process of assimilation, forced or voluntary, is not always in the best interest of the country, and the best place to initiate this realization is in our schools. Fleras and Elliott (1992, 96) point out that multiculturalism is indeed good for Canada. They argue that central authorities regard multiculturalism as a useful resource in coping with political problems. Its usefulness can range from defusing public fears over growing assertiveness among major forces to blunting outside cultural forces on Canadian identity. Multiculturalism is also viewed as economically beneficial, in that many of our citizens have familial ties to countries with which we trade. On a more practical front, however, is the fact that multicultural *education* can promote intercultural understanding, provide a rich source of knowledge for students and assist them in learning how to function in culturally diverse environments. This may broaden student outlooks on life and, on their reaching adulthood, may motivate them to avoid hasty inappropriate actions (like that

of the New Denver example). Instead, they may devote their energies to enriching the Canadian lifestyle by promoting tolerance and understanding, and encouraging diversity as a legitimate aspect of Canadian democracy. For schooling this implies that serious changes must be made to curriculum, teacher training and methodology, and classroom functioning (Friesen 1993, 85–90).

## Implications for Canadian Multiculturalism

A popular conception of democracy is the idea that its functioning makes it impossible for individuals or subgroups to have any rights aside from those granted by the majority of people through their representatives in a given society. This has been the basis of democracy in both Canada and the United States, and if our leaders had their way, would probably be the ideal model for other nations to inaugurate. Of course we have built into this model the notion that if the will of the majority is to prevail, it is important that a well-organized and effective opposition will scrutinize and question any policy proposed by the majority. The opposition may not like the directions proposed by majority action but, while maintaining the right to protest, will still have to go along with decisions made.

An inherent difficulty with this model of democracy is that it is all too easy to quote John Stuart's Mill's phrase, "the greatest good for the great number" as a means of justifying majority-approved action (Friesen 1977, 29). Suppose the tables were turned, and instead, democracy was interpreted as a way of governing a social system in which individual and group rights were respected insofar as possible without immediately suspecting alternative beliefs and practices as a threat to the national interest. If anything, the New Denver case illustrates that the public, through their representative governments, acted too quickly and without appropriate consultation with the group in question. There was no national emergency, no risk to national security, and in retrospect there was no danger to the greatest good for the greatest number.

What can we learn from this half-century of ignoring minority rights? Perhaps governing leaders should be more sensitive toward the possibility of ignoring or abusing minority rights in Canada. It may also be a good time to reevaluate the oft-repeated notion that our nation is a multicultural one that respects the principles of cultural pluralism.

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# Parliamentary Treasure Chest of Educational Programs and Resources

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## *Lola Major*

*Lola Major is a master social studies teacher from the Lethbridge area. Lola has dedicated her life to social studies education; she was recognized with the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2001 and was the recipient of our council's Honorary Life Membership in 2005. Although recently retired from the classroom, Lola continues to work with the Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium in the implementation of the new program of studies and with the Library of Parliament, promoting their educational programs.*

Alberta Education's *Online Guide to Implementation* for social studies K–12 (<http://onlineguide.learnalberta.ca>) states, "The Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Program of Studies meets the needs and reflects the nature of 21st-century learners. It has at its heart the concepts of citizenship and identity in the Canadian context. Social studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens" (Program Rationale and Philosophy, 1).

Within the core concepts of citizenship and identity, learning is achieved through six strands reflecting on the interdisciplinary nature of social studies. The "Power, Authority and Decision Making" strand focuses on the critical examination of the distribution, exercise and implications of power and authority.

We teach our students that learning is a lifelong experience, at least in part because we know that the modern, interactive, technological workplace is constantly changing and we must be able to learn and adapt. How well do educators follow that advice? Professional development initiatives and participation

are teaching lifelines—taking advantage of the many professional opportunities that are available is definitely a win-win situation.

Recently, at the invitation of the manager of education outreach and the director of parliamentary public programs, Library of Parliament, twenty-two teachers and five teacher advisors from across Canada travelled to Ottawa to participate in and train for the Teacher Leadership Program. As teacher leaders, we will serve as ambassadors for educational programming developed by the Education Outreach Office. Specifically, my colleagues from across Canada and I will be responsible for promoting, explaining and familiarizing educators with the parliament of Canada's educational web-based and print resources and the annual Teacher's Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy. This promotion and education will be achieved through workshops at regional conferences, conventions and/or professional development events. Dynamic and interactive sessions will allow participants to experience relevant activities and to ask questions about the treasury of educational products and programs. Participants will receive sample resource materials.

The parliamentary treasure chest of educational programs and resources fits well with our social studies curriculum. It will help Alberta teachers to create and sustain multiple learning opportunities in active, responsible citizenship.

My experience with the Teachers' Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy (1997) and the Teacher Leadership Program (2006) was professional, exciting, intense and engaging. Why? I believe Eugene C Forsey said it best in his book *How Canadians Govern Themselves*:

Governments in democracies are elected by the passengers to steer the ship of a nation. They are expected to hold it on course, to arrange for a prosperous voyage, and to be prepared to be thrown overboard if they fail in either duty. This, in fact, reflects the original sense of the word *government*, as its roots in both Greek and Latin mean *to steer*.

There is nothing Canadians do in any given day that is not affected by how we govern ourselves. We cannot work or eat or drink; we cannot buy or sell or own anything; we cannot go to a ball game

or a hockey game or watch TV without feeling the effects of government. We cannot marry or educate our children, cannot be sick, born or buried without the hand of government somewhere intervening (p 1).

...

Actually, since our democratic government is really only the sum of ourselves, it grows and changes as we do (p 49).

Next to being on the Hill in Ottawa, what better way is there for teachers and students to learn and live Canadian democracy than to open and explore the parliamentary treasure chest of education programs and resources?

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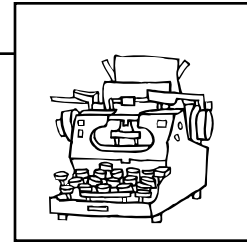
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Information on the mandate of the Teacher Leadership Program is at [www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/education/teachers/TWL%20mandate-e.pdf](http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/education/teachers/TWL%20mandate-e.pdf) (accessed May 28, 2007).

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# Guidelines for Manuscripts

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*One World* is a professional journal for social studies teachers in Alberta. It is published to

- promote the professional development of social studies educators and
- stimulate thinking, explore new ideas and offer various viewpoints.

Submissions are requested that have a classroom as well as a scholarly focus. They may include

- descriptions of innovative classroom and school practices;
- discussions of trends, issues or policies;
- personal explorations of significant classroom experiences; and
- reviews or evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials. (Due to lengthier publishing timelines and fewer issues of the journal, however, reviews of new materials have typically been published in the ATA Social Studies Council's newsletter, *Focus*.)

## Manuscript Guidelines

1. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced and properly referenced.
2. Manuscripts should be submitted to the editor as e-mail attachments. If the article's layout is complex, a hard copy should also be mailed to the editor.
3. Pictures or illustrations should be clearly labelled and a note to indicate where each should be placed should appear in the article. A caption and photo credit should accompany each photograph.
4. Contributors should include brief biographical notes (two sentences). These typically consist of teaching position and experience and current research or professional development interests.
5. Contributors should also include a mailing address. Each contributor will receive two copies of the journal issue when it is published.
6. If any student sample work is included, a release letter from the student's parent or guardian allowing publication in the journal should be provided.
7. Letters to the editor are welcome.
8. *One World* is not refereed. Contributions are reviewed by the editor(s), who reserve the right to edit for clarity and space.

Send manuscripts to Craig Findlay, 30 Squamish Boulevard W, Lethbridge AB T1K 7J7; phone (403) 328-9606 (bus), (403) 328-4002 (res), fax (403) 328-9979, e-mail [craig.findlay@lethsd.ab.ca](mailto:craig.findlay@lethsd.ab.ca).

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## **Social Studies Council *One World Website***

**[www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca)**



- A growing community with resources for social studies teachers across Alberta.
- Dozens of links to curriculum-related and professional development sites. Your source for the latest information on the annual Alberta social studies conference.

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