

One World



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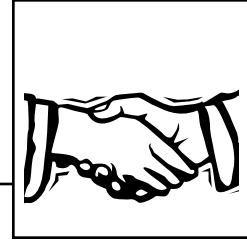
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From the Editor

Ron Jeffery

As we look forward to the next decade and full implementation of the revised social studies curriculum in our classrooms, it is important to obtain fresh ideas on classroom activities and instruction that will stimulate both teaching and learning.

In this issue, we have contributions from well-known social studies educators and collaborative submissions by professors and their undergraduate students—future colleagues who have a youthful yet articulate and grounded perspective on social studies as they prepare to enter the profession.

Carla Peck makes an important contribution to this issue of *One World* in her reflection on her experience as historian in residence at Fox Creek School, in Fox Creek, Alberta. Dr Peck has observed that historical understanding has most often been thought of as factual recall. What she believes, however, both from research and practice, is that “students are waiting and wanting to be engaged in active historical inquiry that challenges them to reshape their understandings of the past. A historical thinking approach that employs evidence and artifacts enables teachers to face this challenge and places learning squarely in students’ hands.” This article presents challenging and exciting ideas about how to maximize the potential of our new curriculum.

Susan Gibson and her students Isaac Macdonald, Jemma McDonald and Tess Belke collaborate on two articles that consider how technology can assist teachers and students in becoming more engaged in “learning through inquiry, opportunities for honing critical and creative thinking skills and collaborative knowledge building around authentic problems.” “Engaging

Children in Studying Current Issues Using Technology” and “Teaching Social Studies Through a Tele-collaborative Inquiry Project” provide many applied strategies and classroom-ready activities. These hands-on ideas will unleash the potential of technology to help teachers take advantage of what we know about how students learn in a 21st-century classroom. The application to local issues and democratic principles may surprise you.

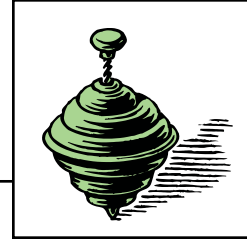
As we look at suggestions for how best to teach social studies and how to retain the integrity of historical discipline while using contemporary methodology in exploring contemporary issues, it is clear that no one approach will provide *the* answer. It is important to avoid assuming that current knowledge should replace past knowledge. John and Virginia Friesen’s contribution, “Bishop Hill: An Experiment in Communal Living,” provides a fascinating historical perspective on a utopian view of society and education that offers an example of how society might pass on knowledge to young people. Each of the 20 communes they examine is, in many ways, a microcosm of our own world and our vision of the future.

Finally, “Developing a Social Studies Imagination: Rabbinical Contributions to Filling in the Blanks,” by Jim Parsons, suggests that to bridge the past, present and future, we might consider the Jewish tradition of *midrash*, which means “to search out or to inquire.” This seems to me to encompass a great deal of what our new social studies curriculum sets out to accomplish. Considering the *midrash* approach, Parsons suggests that tradition might be all we need to create a connection between our students and their world.

Considering that the other articles in this issue focus on both history and technology in the teaching of social studies, bridging the past, present and future seems highly appropriate.

This is my last issue of *One World* as editor. It has been a privilege to work with such talented educators. I have been involved for the better part of 34 years with the Social Studies Council, and my association with so many wonderful colleagues and committed professionals has made a major contribution to my

abilities as a classroom teacher. As I look back in retirement at a wonderful career, I will cherish most the people I have met who have positively influenced my own life, and made sure that I never second-guessed my choice of profession. For those of you entering our profession, enjoy every moment—it goes by remarkably quickly—but most of all, get involved and contribute to your council and association. The people you will meet and work with will make your career successful and memorable.



Doing History at Fox Creek School

Carla Peck

Carla Peck is assistant professor of social studies education in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. Her research interests include students' understandings of democratic concepts, diversity, identity and citizenship, and the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their understandings of history. She is an executive steering committee member of the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project (www.historybenchmarks.ca).

As a university professor working in a faculty of education, I don't have as many opportunities to work with young children as I would like. Yes, research affords me certain opportunities to work with young students, but usually not in a teaching capacity. That's why the invitation I received from Dr Susan Nobes, principal of Fox Creek School, in (you guessed it) Fox Creek, Alberta, was so tantalizing and one I just couldn't turn down.

Dr Nobes and I met in the spring of 2008, when I presented a workshop on using artifacts to build students' capacity to think historically. A short time later, she invited me to be historian in residence at her school for a two-day period in the fall of 2009. Dr Nobes ordered three artifact kits from the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta (one on the Métis, one on the fur trade and one on the Blackfoot), and I brought with me a kit full of Inuit artifacts from the University of Alberta library as well as some old toys I'd picked up from an antique store in Edmonton. I planned lessons and developed data collection charts that I hoped would be appropriate for elementary school children, packed up my car and made the three-hour journey to Fox Creek.

What Is Historical Thinking?

Before continuing this narrative, it is important to explain what I mean by historical thinking (or

historical understanding). For decades, historical understanding has been thought of primarily in terms of factual recall. That is, how much could students remember (or forget) from their encounters with history in school or elsewhere? Even today, some researchers and organizations continue to think of historical understanding in these terms (Ravitch and Finn 1987). In Canada, the public regularly reads newspaper headlines that proclaim the demise of our historical understanding: "Canadian History, Corpus Delicti" (Francis 1998), "Woe, Canada: Survey Shows Majority of Canadians Could Not Pass Own Country's Citizenship Test" (Duffy 2001) and "Ignorance of Our History 'Appalling'; Historian Wants Mandatory Teaching of Achievements in Canadian Classrooms" (Poole 2002). But recall does not tell us anything about our—or our students'—ability to think historically.

Many historians and history educators alike have sought to redefine what is meant by the term *historical understanding*. In the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s, for example, the government funded a "history curriculum development project . . . which was charged with generating a new history curriculum for pupils aged between 13 and 16" and which "took as its starting point the nature of history and the needs of the pupil" (Booth 1994, 63). This was a radical shift from earlier practice. Researchers and educators began to

focus on “the particular nature of the discipline being taught” (Booth 1994, 62) and argued that “the object of the historian’s study—the human past—is incomparably different from the object of investigation of the natural scientist—the world of here and now—and the thinking it engenders is equally different” (p 63). At question is the nature of what is being taught. As Dray (1957) points out, “the logic of historical thought is not primarily deductive and there is little sympathy amongst historians for those who have tried to force the discipline into the clear cut framework of the natural sciences” (pp 7–12).

The unique nature of the discipline was also an important consideration from a pedagogical standpoint. The argument that pedagogical methods could be designed without considering what was being taught did not hold up under close scrutiny. In fact, the opposite was (and is) true. History education researchers then and now feel strongly that content and pedagogy cannot be separated because historical knowledge develops most successfully by doing history—or using the discipline’s (or historian’s) tools to construct historical knowledge. As Seixas (1999) writes, “content and pedagogy are inseparable in doing the discipline. Even conceiving of them as two different categories that must be united is no longer helpful” (p 329). Thus, *learning* history happens by *doing* history. By now, this is fairly common parlance in the history education community (Levstik and Barton 2001).

Educators and researchers who work in the area of historical understanding have outlined several concepts that underpin the discipline—concepts that are different from the *substance* of history (such as *revolution* or *World War II*) and instead provide a *framework* for investigating the past. These include evidence, historical significance, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspective

taking, and the ethical dimension of history. For the past four years I have been involved in a pan-Canadian project called “Benchmarks of Historical Thinking” (www.historybenchmarks.ca), and these concepts have proven to be very effective in helping both teachers and students better understand the nature of historical inquiry.

Toys, Toys, Toys!

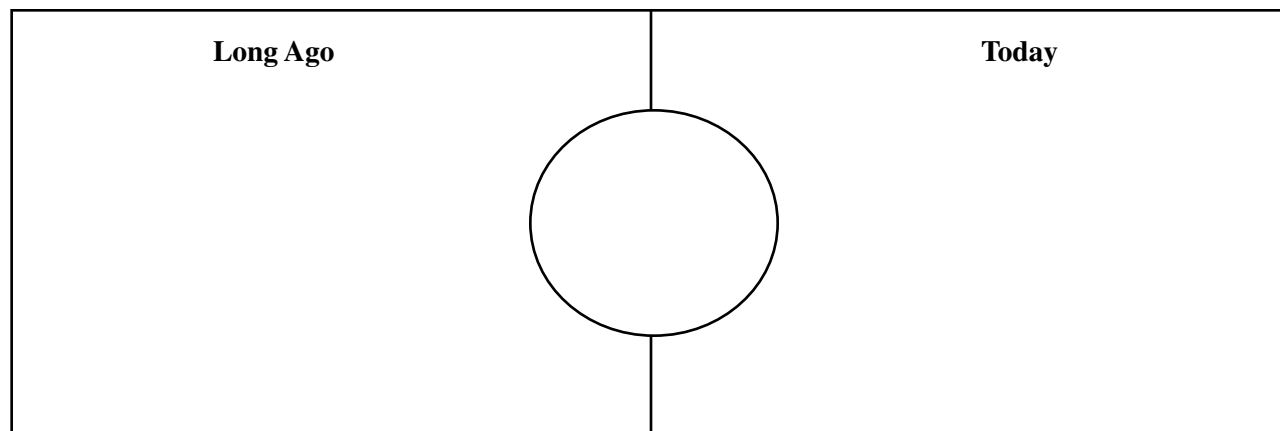
Knowing that I had only 40 minutes with each class, I had to figure out a way to quickly engage students while also equipping them with the knowledge and skills they needed to “do history” with artifacts. This was especially important with the six-year-olds—would I lose their attention after five minutes? What should I do?

I bought toys. Old toys and new toys, “boy” toys and “girl” toys. I set up the room with large sheets of coloured paper on the floor (oh, how I love elementary schools), with a line dividing the paper in half and *Long Ago* printed on one side, and *Today* printed on the other. I drew a large circle in the middle of the paper, put several toys in the circle and covered them with a cloth. As the students entered the classroom they were fascinated by the mysterious papers, and in their eyes I saw the question, “What could be hidden under those cloths?”

As the children gathered at the front of the room, I showed them a pillowcase in which I had stashed an old toy. Without showing them the toy, I asked them to guess what was inside. The students offered random guesses, which, of course, was all they could do. I wondered aloud, “Why is it so hard to guess what’s inside this pillowcase?”

“We need clues!” they responded. Of course they did.

Figure 1



“Without clues,” I said, “it’s too hard to guess.” After showing them the toy inside the pillowcase, I told them that I needed their help to solve a *big* problem. “My toys are all mixed up,” I said. “I can’t tell which ones are from a long time ago and which ones are from today. Can you help me?”

Twenty eager faces nodded and said “yes” in unison. So far, so good.

Drawing on their knowledge of Blue’s Clues and Scooby-Doo, I asked them to tell me what a *clue* is, and what clues they could use to tell that something is from a long time ago. We used the old toy from the pillowcase to deduce some likely clues. I recorded their answers on chart paper. They said things like: “It’s rusty,” “It’s dusty,” “It’s got scratches,” “It’s dented,” “Paint might be missing,” and so on. I didn’t have to tell them a thing—they knew how to tell when something is really old. What about clues to tell us that something is from the present? “It’s clean,” “It’s got all its paint,” “It’s still in a package,” “You get it as a present,” they replied. Pretty good for six-year-olds. As we get older we gain more sophisticated notions about the evidence one can use to determine if an object is from a long time ago or not (so when we encounter a mint-condition, vintage comic book or toy encased in plastic we aren’t thrown off), but for Grade 1 students, the clues they offered would prove to be quite helpful in the activity that followed.

After activating the students’ prior historical knowledge, with the help of their teachers I divided

the children into four groups and asked them to solve my problem: Using the clues we’d just brainstormed, they had to decide which toys were from a long time ago and which ones were from today. The children worked together to examine the toys for clues and sorted them into two groups. As I’d hoped, they dove into the task with gusto. With encouragement, they worked together, compared the toys they were given and sorted them into two categories: Long Ago and Today. Their teacher and I circulated, cuing them to remember their clues and asking them to explain why they categorized the toys in the way they did. Once the children finished sorting the toys, I asked one child from each group to show the class one toy from long ago and explain to us what clues were used to determine that it was from the past. The children were spectacular—not at all shy, they were eager to show everyone what they’d discovered. After the presentations, we regrouped and reviewed what they had learned, and I sent them back to their classroom, where they were asked to draw a toy from a long time ago and one from today, on a handout.

Treasures from the Past

My first question for the older children (Grades 3 to 6) was, “How do we learn about what happened a long, long time ago?” Students at all grades offered a multitude of responses: books, television, parents/grandparents, old diaries or journals, old newspapers,

Figure 2

Toys, toys, toys!	
Draw a picture of a toy from LONG AGO, and one from TODAY.	
Long Ago	Today
This is a toy from LONG AGO because	This is a toy from TODAY because
_____ _____	_____ _____

museums and (the word I was hoping to hear) *artifacts*. “What are artifacts?” I asked.

“They are like treasures from the past,” one girl in Grade 5 responded. “Sometimes there’s only one of them, and we can learn from it.”

I began each class with the same type of discussion, both to assess the students’ prior knowledge and, I hoped, to pique their curiosity about what we were about to do.

Figure 3

Working with Artifacts

1. Artifacts are very fragile. It is important to treat them very carefully.
2. Always wear gloves.
3. Always hold the artifact with both hands.
4. Take your time.
5. Keep the artifact in a safe place.
6. Do not stack artifacts on top of one another.
7. Be gentle and respectful.
8. Always pack the artifact in protective material when you are done with it.

Before we could begin handling the artifacts from the Glenbow and U of A, we had to set some ground rules. First, we discussed the proper way to handle artifacts (see Figure 3). Next we discussed the questions one can ask about an artifact to gain insight into the person, people and/or society that might have used/created the object. Finally, we discussed some basic cooperative group work strategies: In each group of four students, one student would be the organizer, who was responsible for collecting and returning all materials; one would be the recorder, who was responsible for recording information in the data collection chart; one would be the time keeper, whose job it was to keep the group on task; and one would be the reporter, who would report the group’s findings to the whole class. I had name tags for each student with their role written on it, and the students decided who would have what responsibility. Okay, finally. Now we were really ready to have some fun!

Figure 4

Research Questions

1. What is it?
2. What is it made of?
3. Who might have used it?
4. Where might it have been found?
5. How/why was it made?
6. What does it do?
7. Why was it needed?
8. What does it remind you of?
9. What else do I know that can help me figure out what this is?

To make things even more interesting, I offered the students the use of hand lenses (magnifying glasses)—they felt like real history detectives using them! The use of hand lenses wasn’t necessary, but using them reinforced the fact that the students were looking for clues to determine what the artifacts were and that they were responsible for determining an answer that they could support with evidence.

Each cooperative work group received one artifact, several pairs of white gloves, several hand lenses and one data collection chart on which to record their answers to the research questions shown in Figure 4. The chart was divided into three columns: the first column listed each of the research questions, the second was labelled *Conclusion* and the third was labelled *Clues*. The students displayed an intense curiosity about the artifacts they examined and worked together to solve the mystery held within the artifact. Even with limited instructional time on cooperative group skills and working with artifacts, the students engaged with and felt challenged by the task. They wanted to find the clues and offer conclusions. They wanted to know more about the past.

After each group examined an artifact, I asked several of the reporters to tell the rest of us what they had deduced from their investigation. The students used the language embedded in the research questions when they addressed the class. This drove home for me the importance of using historical thinking vocabulary with students of any age. If we want students to think historically, we need to equip them with the knowledge, skills and language to do so.

Finally, with all of the students (Grades 1–6), I ended each class by asking them a question that would

connect the particular to the general: What can we learn about [the Inuit, the Métis, the fur trade, boys and girls from long ago, etc.] by examining these artifacts? By doing this, I was able to help students make some generalizations *based on the evidence they'd collected* about the group/time period under study. For example, one student in Grade 4 noted that the Blackfoot used many different resources from the land in order to live. Using her background knowledge of the fur trade, another student suggested that beaver pelts similar to the one in the artifact kit she worked with would have been very valuable because of the high demand for felt hats in Europe. A student in Grade 1 noted that boys and girls must have also liked to play with toys “back then,” and that the toys they played with weren’t all that different from his toys. Had I had more time, I could have launched into a lesson on continuity and change with this young student.

Concluding Thoughts

I won’t forget my experience at Fox Creek School. I left the school feeling exhilarated and excited by the possibilities of developing young children’s interest in and ability to investigate the past. If everything I described above could happen in a 40-minute class (per grade), what could be achieved in a whole unit of study—or, better yet, a whole year—of such investigations? What could be achieved in succeeding years, as younger students move up through the grades? My mind shivers with excitement!

Why teach historical thinking? To what end is history education the means? Historical understanding is not only about learning to think like a historian—it is also about how we use historical knowledge to understand how things used to be and why things are

the way they are now, and to decide what shape we want our future to take (Seixas and Clark 2004). If my experience at Fox Creek School is any indication, students are just waiting to be engaged in active historical inquiry that challenges them to reshape their understanding of the past. A historical thinking approach that employs evidence and artifacts enables teachers to face this challenge, and places learning squarely in students’ hands.

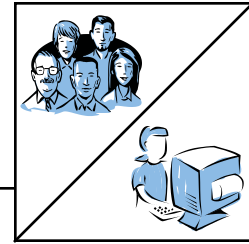
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Dr Peck won the 2010 Pat Clifford Award, which is awarded by the Canadian Education Association (CEA) in recognition of innovative research and contributions to improving educational policy, practice and theory development in Canada. CEA made the award to Dr Peck for the potential impact of her research and practice on transforming the teaching and learning of history across Canada. For more information about the award, visit www.cea-ace.ca/cliffordaward.



THE PAT CLIFFORD AWARD



Engaging Children in Studying Current Issues Using Technology

Susan Gibson and Isaac Macdonald

Susan Gibson, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Elementary Education of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. Dr Gibson is a frequent contributor to One World and has also served on the Social Studies Council as a university representative. Isaac Macdonald is an undergraduate education student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

Teaching social studies today requires not only adopting the latest technologies but also using these tools to develop digitally literate citizens who can locate, evaluate and ethically use information, think critically and creatively, problem solve, and make informed decisions. According to Leu et al (2004), digital literacy includes not just the traditional literacies of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also “the skills, strategies and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives” (p 1572). Digital literacy incorporates “the ability to read and interpret media (text, sound, images), to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments” (Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan 2006, 9).

In addition to developing digital literacies, students also need experiences that lead to deeper understanding of social studies content. Such experiences include active engagement in learning through inquiry, opportunities for honing critical and creative thinking skills, and collaborative knowledge-building around authentic problems.

In social studies there are numerous avenues for incorporating inquiry-based learning supported by technology. One such avenue is the study of controversial issues. According to Alberta Education, “Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree” (Alberta Education 2005, 6). Providing opportunities for students to engage with controversial issues assists “in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to openmindedly and respectfully examine different points of view and to make sound judgments” (Alberta Education 2005, 6).

Learning to consider multiple perspectives on issues is an essential outcome of social studies education. Equally critical is recognizing the importance of consulting a variety of sources in any investigation to ensure the accuracy of the information presented. A key source for topics for study and for finding diverse perspectives on them is current events. The Alberta program of studies for social studies identifies the study of current affairs as a central component of the program because

Ongoing reference to current affairs adds relevance, interest and immediacy to social studies issues. Investigating current affairs from multiple perspectives motivates students to engage in meaningful dialogue on relevant historical and contemporary issues, helping them to make informed and reasoned decisions on local, provincial, national and global issues. An issues-focused approach that incorporates multiple perspectives and current affairs helps students apply problem-solving and decision making skills to real-life and controversial issues. (Alberta Education 2005, 6)

Using current events in social studies creates an opportunity for students to become more engaged and interested in their learning. This interest leads to inquiry, which is of utmost importance for successful learning.

The following example demonstrates how an online inquiry can be set up to examine an issue in the news of relevance to the elementary social studies curriculum. An interactive scrapbook about the issue was created using Zoho Notebook (<http://notebook.zoho.com>), which is an online application that allows the user to add pages as well as audio, video, text and weblinks. Although the teacher designed this example, students could also use this tool to create their own scrapbook on a current issue. Other examples of similar user friendly applications are Glogster (www.glogster.com) and Mixbook (www.mixbook.com).

Why Was This Issue Chosen?

The issue under investigation in this online scrapbook is whether the Oilers should have a new downtown arena. It has been designed for use in Grade 6 social studies but could easily be adapted for other grade levels. This issue was chosen because it is both appropriate and relevant; it is an issue that will undoubtedly affect the future of many Edmontonians as the rink could still be in the red when today's Grade 6 students grow up and start paying taxes. The majority of Edmontonians and Albertans know who the Oilers are and are aware of this issue. This issue receives a lot of media attention in Edmonton, which makes it very accessible for all students. It is also one that many students will be enthusiastic about exploring. This issue is also complex and is a great example for demonstrating the importance of considering different perspectives within the community. There are many different opinions about the arena, which gives the teacher a lot of resources and viewpoints to present to a class. It also allows the children to experience decision making for themselves.

It is important for students to understand their role in democracy, and studying issues such as this one can help to solidify this understanding. Students need to learn how to become active citizens, and one way for them to do that is to think critically and develop understanding about local issues that affect their lives. Because the issue has a strong presence in the media, including local TV channels, sports and talk radio shows, newspapers, and the web, students get the chance to explore the role of the media in their community.

How Does This Issue Fit with the Social Studies Curricular Outcomes?

The Alberta social studies curriculum in Grade 6 requires students to understand how citizens and the government work together in a democracy and specifically how this relationship works in their local community. The many issues associated with the proposed new downtown arena in Edmonton can provide students with an excellent opportunity to observe and experience these complex relationships.

The chart on page 11 shows the connections between the social studies curricular outcomes and the activities that the students are engaged in.

What Are the Different Perspectives on the Issue?

There are three main groups involved in this issue: the Katz Group, run by Oilers owner Darryl Katz, which is lobbying for the new arena; Edmonton Northlands, a not-for-profit organization that has been a part of Edmonton for years and currently leases Rexall Place to the Oilers; and the largest group, Edmonton city council and the people of Edmonton.

The idea of a downtown arena in Edmonton has been around for years. After Darryl Katz purchased the Oilers in 2008, he made it clear that he fully intended to relocate the team to the downtown core. He has proposed a project that would cost approximately \$450 million, of which he would contribute \$100 million. Katz suggests that the rest of funding be provided by taxpayers. The problem is that Katz and his partners want 100 per cent ownership of the new facility. This would mean that the citizens of Edmonton would need to pay for the majority of a privately owned building while receiving no interest on their investment.

This has greatly upset some Edmontonians—in hard economic times, most Edmontonians do not feel that paying for a new arena for a losing team makes much sense. Many advocate for more responsible spending, especially if taxpayers will see no return on the new arena. Many consider that Rexall Place, the current home of the Oilers, is fine and that money should be spent on renovations rather than relocating the rink to the downtown core. Some residents feel that the new arena would not have the structures around it to be successful. They have voiced concerns about the traffic problems a new downtown arena would cause and the lack of parking.

City council sees some advantages to building the complex. They feel that it will further development of the downtown area and provide economic benefits by encouraging new businesses to open and people to spend more time and money in the downtown core. The plans for the new arena include restaurants, a casino, a practice facility and residences. There has also been a suggestion that a downtown arena would help Edmonton’s image change from blue-collar working town to busy metropolis similar to Vancouver or Toronto. So far, the City has made no commitment monetarily to the project, although Mayor Mandel has said that he would be open to using taxpayer money if the city maintained a percentage of ownership in the project.

Some Edmontonians are in favour of a new arena. They argue that the Oilers are a major cultural influence in Edmonton and a major point of pride for many Edmontonians, so they should have a top-notch arena in which to play. A downtown rink would undoubtedly reinvigorate the area, but at what cost? A new arena could really benefit the downtown and be a major point of pride for Edmontonians, but should they pay for it in these hard economic times when the money could be spent on much more necessary services like road cleaning?

Maybe the most interesting aspect of this issue is the position held by the owners of Rexall Place, the Northlands Group. A keystone in the local affairs of Edmonton, the Northlands Group comprises some of Edmonton’s most influential people. Northlands is a not-for-profit organization that owns Rexall Place, which is used for conferences, concerts and, of course, as a home for the Oilers, the Oil Kings (Edmonton’s Western Hockey League franchise) and the National Lacrosse League’s Edmonton Rush. The arena has proven to be an excellent venue and recently placed tenth in a world poll for concert venues. Northlands has been home to the Oilers since they entered the NHL in 1979 and is arguably best recognized as the team’s home. Northlands wishes to continue with this association and is very interested in owning a piece of the arena, but if that is not possible the group has

Outcomes	Description (students will)
communication/ technology skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use technology to gather information
communication/ expression (6.1.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write letters to representatives/ councillors (language arts tie-in)
technology skills, critical thinking, coming to conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create video responses to the issue
critical thinking/ technology skills/social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use technology to come up with a solution to the problem
social/ peer skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work effectively in groups
decision making, research skills, media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore different media sources
6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make connections with the current events in students’ community
6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make decisions about local issues that will be relevant to students’ future in the city
6.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question the responsibilities of councillors through interviewing
6.1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research the goals of the Katz Group and Northlands and how they lobby City Hall • create school polls to gather and analyze opinions • campaign positively or negatively for the issue within the school, and have the school vote

stated that they believe that Rexall Place is a suitable home for the Oilers. Katz is very much against this group owning any part of the new complex.

How Could This Issue Be Addressed in the Classroom?

This issue could be addressed in the classroom in a variety of ways. The investigation of the issue could begin by discussing the relevance of the new arena to the city of Edmonton. The students could brainstorm a list of questions that they would like to have answered in order to feel better informed about the issue. Students could then be divided into three groups, representing each main interest group and working to research the various perspectives on the issue using the resources provided in the Zoho Notebook scrapbook (see <http://notebook.zoho.com/nb/public/isaacam/book/26162200000005661>).

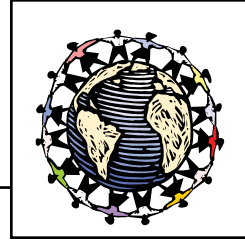
The students would need to be encouraged to track the issue as it continues to develop. A class bulletin board could be set up to post relevant newspaper articles and a class blog could be used to house related videos and weblinks. Students could write letters to their city councillors, or arrange to interview them. Students could also poll their families and their neighbours to get a broader opinion on the issue. When the three student interest groups feel that they have sufficient information to argue for their position, a class debate could be held. Possible debate topics might be, Should Edmontonians pay for the arena through their taxes? Is a downtown arena the ideal solution? The information presented in the debate could be synthesized using a Venn diagram. Following the debate, the class could be encouraged to come to a consensus on the issue based on the evidence presented and to come up with a proposal. The class could create videos campaigning for or against the arena using information from the debate and share the videos with the school. Students could also undertake schoolwide polling and campaigning for or against the arena. The class proposal could be presented

to city council. Cross-curricular connections could be created by including a diorama as well as a financial plan as a part of this presentation. If speaking to the actual city council isn't feasible, a panel of teachers, experts, parents and elected officials could be set up to hear the students' arguments and vote on their proposed solutions. These are just some of the recommended possible activities for engaging the children in an inquiry about this important issue.

Investigating current controversial issues can teach students the importance of getting involved in their community and how to effectively make their opinions heard. Exploring an issue such as the one presented in this article also provides opportunities for students to explore the intricacies of local government, see how the relationship between lobby groups and government can change and develop a better understanding of how civic government functions. The debate is an excellent teaching strategy for demonstrating the importance of considering a variety of perspectives on any issue and of consulting a range of sources on each viewpoint. It also teaches understanding of the importance of making informed decisions. Having the majority of materials to guide the students' investigations available in an online scrapbook format such as Zoho Notebook makes the resources easily accessible for students and allows easy updating of sites by the teacher.

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Teaching Social Studies Through a Telecollaborative Inquiry Project

Jemma McDonald, Tess Belke and Susan Gibson

Jemma McDonald and Tess Belke are undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. They cowrote the following article with Susan Gibson, PhD, who is a professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, in the Department of Elementary Education. Dr Gibson is a frequent contributor to One World and has also served on the Social Studies Council as university representative.

Today's children are growing up in a world where technology is pervasive, making the world a much smaller place. Social studies teachers need to take advantage of the opportunities that the latest technologies provide for children to make global connections in their learning. It's no longer enough to simply read second-hand information about other countries in a textbook when opportunities exist to acquire that information first-hand. According to Alberta Education (2005), "Information communication technology provides a vehicle for communicating, representing, inquiring, making decisions and solving problems" (p 10). Extending this ability to communicate, collaborate and learn with others beyond the classroom walls is a powerful benefit of access to technology.

This article presents a telecollaborative inquiry project designed to engage Grade 3 children in an open-ended inquiry that encourages collaboration with others, both within and outside the classroom, using electronic technologies. It is built on the principles that effective inquiry should engage children with a problem to solve or an essential question to answer related to the curricular topic; that it should encourage children to critically examine and evaluate evidence while consulting a variety of sources and examining different

viewpoints on the problem/question; and that it should involve learners in deciding on how to resolve the problem or answer the question in consultation with other learners. The inquiry project presented here uses several different technologies to support this collaboration, including ePals, Google Earth and blogging.

What Are the Goals of This Project?

This telecollaborative project is designed to encourage Grade 3 children to gain an understanding and appreciation of diverse traditions, celebrations and stories from around the world. For most students, the Grade 3 social studies curriculum is their first opportunity to examine social studies in a much broader context. By immersing students in an in-depth investigation of four diverse contemporary communities, in this case India, Tunisia, Ukraine and Peru, this inquiry teaches the students how a variety of factors affect quality of life. Through the study of geographic, social, cultural and linguistic aspects of these communities, students begin to understand how people live in other places and learn to appreciate the role of

global diversity in their own lives. At the same time, students also learn about Canada's involvement with these particular communities, and ultimately expand their concept of global citizenship.

Through an electronic pen-pal database, a connection is made with classrooms in each one of the four locations being studied. Each of the selected classes will be responsible for composing a blog entry to be posted on a central blog that highlights specific cultural traditions. All of the students will then use this blog to communicate with the other locations, to share information about their own traditions and to ask questions in order to learn more about others' traditions. As this blog exchange continues, the local classroom will be divided into four smaller groups that will each communicate with one area more specifically so that the students can specialize in a specified country. Becoming knowledge experts for each of their locations will allow the students to share the diverse traditions that they learn about with the rest of their class in a culture fair at the conclusion of the project.

What Curricular Outcomes Are Met by the Project?

Primarily, this project helps students learn about the traditions, celebrations and stories of different communities from around the world. Entwined with this, however, are a number of key social studies ideas. Learning about these aspects of one's community also allows the students to learn about other aspects of a place and how connected people are to the past and to one another. Understanding how to look at something from multiple perspectives and identify the similarities and differences that create global diversity is also central. While the students come to appreciate this diversity, they also learn about the concept of global citizenship and what it means to be a good citizen of the world. Important skills such as collaborating with others, using the research process and developing media literacy can also be taught through this project.

General Outcome:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities in the World (3.1) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how geographic, social, cultural and linguistic factors affect quality of life in communities in India, Tunisia, Ukraine and Peru.
Specific Outcomes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will examine the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics that affect quality of life in other parts of the worlds by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry (3.1.2) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the traditions, celebrations, stories and practices in the communities that connect the people to the past and to each other? (e.g. language spoken, traditions, customs) (3.1.2.4)
Skills and Processes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building: (3.S.5) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate cooperative behavior to ensure that all members of the group have an opportunity to participate Demonstrate willingness to seek consensus among members of a work group Consider the needs and points of view of others Work and play in harmony with others to create a safe and caring environment Share information collected from electronic sources to add to a group task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the research process: (3.S.7) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop questions that reflect personal information needed Follow a plan to complete in an inquiry Access and retrieve appropriate information from electronic sources for a specific inquiry Formulate new questions as research progresses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop skills of media literacy: (3.S.9) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key words from information gathered from a variety of media on a topic or issue. (Alberta Education, 2005)

What Does This Project Look Like in the Classroom?

Before Beginning the Project

Prior to introducing the project to the Grade 3 children, the teacher must take certain steps to ensure that students are able to connect with other students around the world. Using the classroom match function in ePaLs (www.epals.com), the teacher will need to find classrooms to communicate with in India, Tunisia, Ukraine and Peru. The teacher will need to log in (there is no charge) and will be asked to indicate the location, topic, language and age group that the class is interested in. Be sure to find classrooms where the children speak the same language as yours and whose size and age level are comparable. Give the international teachers an overview of the project and review the guidelines for using the project with them so that the requirements of the project are clear. Once these connections have been made, set up a central blog through which students from the five classrooms (India, Tunisia, Ukraine, Peru and Canada) will communicate. Blogger (www.blogger.com) is recommended, because it has high security features and blog entries can be password protected. Create a welcome message with the project overview and information about your location. The teachers from the other locations should be encouraged to do the same.

Introducing the Inquiry in the Classroom

The novel *Peiling and the Chicken-Fried Christmas*, by Pauline Chen (2007), is a good resource for introducing the project to the class. It is a good starting point for a discussion about the many ways that different cultures celebrate different holidays. Facilitate a discussion about the different holidays that the students in your class celebrate and the specific customs and traditions that are associated with these holidays. Keep a record of them for future reference. The class should then participate in a discussion about what they know about the holidays that are celebrated by other cultures and how these holidays compare to their own. It is important to emphasize that no culture is wrong in their celebrations or customs. The novel would be a good reference in this area, as the class can discuss how Peiling's family did not understand Christmas, just as we may not understand other cultures' holidays. You can use Google Earth (www.earth.google.com) to point out the places in the world

that are being discussed. The international classrooms should be encouraged to go through this process in a similar manner, brainstorming and developing a working idea of the various unique celebrations and traditions that are important within their culture.

Communicating with the World

Using the list created during the brainstorming session in the previous step, help the students create a blog entry about a common celebration that is practised in Canada. If there are a variety of diverse traditions within the class, a number of separate blog posts can be used to explain them. The blog entries do not have to be limited to text only. Enhancing them with photos and video clips is helpful for further explanation. It's recommended that you spend some time with the class establishing appropriate procedures for communicating with people from different locations. Being open minded to other peoples' ideas, asking good questions, and making thoughtful and appropriate comments are some of the more important topics that could be touched on. Because the teacher will already have established lines of communication with the international classrooms, each one of these classrooms will also be creating a blog entry(s) on the celebrations and traditions that are relevant to their culture. Each of the classrooms will respond to the others' blogs, using questions and comments to gain more information about the unique celebrations that are being represented, and will as respond to the questions and comments that are posed about their own celebrations.

Researching and Collaborating

Divide the class into four smaller groups, each composed of a mix of students with a balance of abilities to help each other through the remainder of the project. Assign each group to one of the countries being studied. These groups then take over the communication with the children from their corresponding country, asking more specific questions so that they can become experts in the traditions of this country. Explain that as experts, they will be asked to describe the diverse traditions that they learned about with the class as part of a culture fair. The students should already have a working knowledge of the celebrations they will be researching from the initial blog responses that were posted by the country they are investigating, as well as from the communication that was done in the previous step. At first, each group should spend some time considering what information they will need—for example, why is the

celebration held, what food is eaten, what clothing is worn, what decorations are used, what rituals are involved, what stories are associated with the celebration and so forth. The students then post questions to the class blog to form the basis of their continued communication with the other country. An additional resource to support their research is the book *World Holidays: A Watts Guide for Children*, by Heather Moehn (2000). At all times, the teacher should carefully monitor the use of the blog.

Showcasing Student Learning

After all the questioning is complete and the groups have the information they need about the celebrations from their assigned country, the students use this information to plan a re-creation of the celebration that they learned about. The aim of this is to showcase the tradition that they learned about. The students can choose to teach their classmates about the celebration in whatever way they wish, as long as it represents the celebration in an accurate and appropriate manner. For example, they may decide to do a dramatic re-enactment, create a storybook that tells about the celebration or use art to depict the celebration (paintings, photograph/storyboard), and so forth. Once the re-creations are complete, each group will present its re-creation of the celebration of the country that they studied to the rest of the class at a culture fair. In this way, all the students will learn about each of the various countries' celebrations and traditions from their classmates.

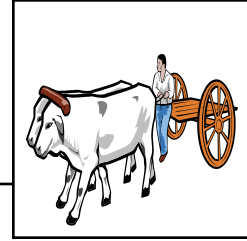
Concluding Remarks

This telecollaborative inquiry project gives Grade 3 students the opportunity to communicate

with classrooms around the world and work directly with other children who are also learning about the unique traditions, celebrations and stories of these particular places. Communicating with children in other places in this direct and personalized manner encourages in-depth, student-directed inquiry. The ongoing conversation between the students at the various locations about these cultural factors will also help students learn about how traditions are related to the quality of life of people in other places. As the students share their own traditions and ask questions about others, they will come to see how the lives of children in other places may be both similar to and different from their own lives, and will expand their knowledge of and appreciation for how people live in other places. Ultimately, the children will come to understand diversity and how they are intricately tied to people around the world. As they use the inquiry method, a strategy that is central to powerful social studies learning, to collaborate with others and learn how the traditions and celebrations of a community connect people, the students will also be engaging in active citizenship, which is a central goal in any social studies learning. Being involved in such personalized learning is very powerful and meaningful for the children in today's classrooms.

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Bishop Hill: An Experiment in Communal Living

John W Friesen and Virginia Lyons Friesen

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The greatest intrigue about teaching social studies is that it is all about people. This includes studying their history, cultural practices, traditions and customs; foods, festivals, fun and finery; values and belief systems; and their unique and sometimes quite unusual lifestyles. This is particularly true of historical communal groups, only a few of which have survived to the present time.

Over the past decade we have visited and researched many historical communal sites in North America and discovered that during the 17th and 18th centuries, literally dozens of such communities were established by incoming pioneers. The only ones still active are the very active and growing Hutterian Brethren and a handful of Shakers, who still cling to their old ways. Our travels have taken us across the four western Canadian provinces, and from California and Oregon to Pennsylvania and New York. During our field work we discovered 20 former communal sites that contain preserved buildings. We studied and photographed each of them and the result will, hopefully, soon be a published pictorial directory.

The last commune we visited was Bishop Hill, in the state of Illinois, and along with this description

of the experience, we include some photographs. Readers who are interested in a litany of our travels might find the following list of value.

List of Sites

Below is a list of the 20 communes we have documented.

Amana. Also known as the Community of True Inspiration, the Amana people were German Separatists who migrated to America in 1842 and eventually settled in the state of Iowa, where they built seven villages, each located a one-hour drive by ox-cart from each of the others. For a long time the Amana people engaged in the manufacture of Amana appliances and operated 26,000 acres of the best farmland in America. The membership rose to a high of 1,813, but decreased to 1,365 by the time the commune dissolved, in 1932.

Back-to-the-Landers. This was the label assigned to groups of young people who tried to develop a less complicated lifestyle during the 1960s. Composed of former hippies, draft dodgers and Vietnam War protesters, the Back-to-the-Landers were actually a

mixed group; some of them lived in rural areas outside of urban areas, but worked in nearby towns and cities; some formed small communes, while others cooperated with regard to sharing work, tools and implements, and conducting home schooling. Also included in the movement were groups that simply tried to make their living entirely off the land. Many of them still do.

Bethelites. This commune grew out of a dispute with its parent group, the Harmonists, who will be discussed later. Led by a German Separatist leader named Wilhelm Keil (1812–1877), Keil’s followers settled in Bethel, Missouri, where they engaged in a number of farm-related occupations. In May 1855, Keil led 75 of his 500 disciples to Aurora, Oregon, where the group thrived mainly on the operation of a hotel and restaurant. Both communes were dissolved shortly after Keil’s death in 1877.

Bishop Hill. The ruins of this Swedish Separatist village, the subject of this paper, are still very visible in Illinois.

Cannington Manor. In 1882, Captain Edward Mitchell Pierce placed a notice in a British tabloid advertising for young men to join him in learning how to farm in southeast Saskatchewan. Some youth *did* show up, but too many good times—sports, literary discussions and afternoon teas—brought about a quick end to this experiment.

Doukhobors. In 1899, some 7,500 Russian Doukhobors arrived in Canada and constructed 57 communal villages in the Yorkton, Saskatchewan, area. Problems with government regulations took the pacifist Doukhobors to the British Columbia interior, where they built sawmills and planted orchards. In 1938, two banking firms, influenced by government support, brought sudden and unexpected foreclosure action against the Doukhobor commune and dealt a quick death blow to what was once the largest commune in North America.

Ephrata Cloister. Founded in Pennsylvania in 1733, this unusual commune was under the governance of Conrad Beissel (1691–1768). Somewhat mystical in terms of its theological beliefs, the community was noted for its German architecture, calligraphy, five-part singing, publishing and celibacy. Its end came in 1796 after Beissel retired, and then tried to take back the leadership.

The Farm. The 1960s saw the rise of such social movements as hippies, draft dodgers and anti-Vietnam War protesters. Stephen Gaskin, an instructor at San Francisco State College, attracted 63 busloads of hippies and set out to build a commune in Tennessee on 1,000 acres of land. By 1977, there were more

than a thousand people living at The Farm, and the commune adopted the theme “going green” long before that slogan was popularized. Today some 125 people live on The Farm, but most of them hold jobs in nearby towns.

Fourier’s Phalanxes. Charles Fourier (1772–1837) envisaged a very complex form of communalism in which groups of 1,620 people would occupy buildings known as phalanxes. Each phalanx would be six stories high with a long base, two wings and an inner courtyard. Inhabitants would be divided into groups and assigned various essential tasks. Although several phalanx experiments were built in America (the best known was Brook Farm, in Massachusetts), none of them lasted more than a few years.

Harmonists. Easily one of the most economically successful communes, the Harmonists built three towns in Pennsylvania and Indiana. Fulfilling the dream of a German Separatist preacher named George Rapp (1757–1847), the Harmonists built the town of Harmony, in Pennsylvania, in 1805, then sold it to a Mennonite enterpriser, in 1815, and relocated to Indiana to build New Harmony. When that town was completed, they sold it to British industrialist and utopian Robert Owen (1771–1858), but the project went sour within three years. In the meantime, the Harmonists returned to Pennsylvania, where they built the town of Old Economy. By 1898, due to economic factors, there were no more Harmonists.

Hutterites. Most people in western Canadian have heard of the Hutterites, who operate some 700 communal colonies in the three prairie provinces and several American border states. Originating in the Anabaptist movement in Austria in 1530, Hutterite history shows that because of religious persecution this group lived in a number of European countries before being lured to Russia during the 1770s, at the invitation of Catherine the Great. A century later, they migrated to North America and built their first colony, in southern Alberta, in 1918.

Icarians. This group could best be described as a 19th-century secular commune founded on a platform of rational democracy. Their story began in France with the writings of Etienne Cabet (1788–1856), who came under the influence of Robert Owen. Cabet’s first commune was built near Dallas, Texas, but the group soon found it necessary to relocate. Their subsequent wanderings took them to Louisiana, Illinois, Iowa (where they split into two factions) and California. By 1895 there were no more Icarians.

Koreshian Unity. Influenced by Shaker communalism, Cyrus Teed (1839–1908) founded this unusual community in 1903 at Estero, Florida, where the

inhabitants engaged successfully in a number of ventures. Teed and his followers believed that the earth was hollow, with the sun and all the earth's inhabitants inside it. Teed tried unsuccessfully to build communes in San Francisco, Denver, Baltimore and Boston, but the movement did not catch on until he moved to Florida. Teed's Messiah complex led him to predict that after his death he would be resurrected. When this did not occur, his followers disbanded. Interestingly, the Koreshian magazine, *American Eagle*, is still being published.

Oneida. This very unusual commune was the brainchild of a Unitarian minister, John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886). After several attempts to establish his desired community, in 1848 Noyes was successful at Oneida, New York, where the community manufactured animal traps. When that industry faltered, they switched to the manufacture of silver tableware. Constantly criticized for their practice of group marriage and “mutual criticism,” Noyes and a few of his followers found it necessary to flee the country in 1879. Noyes lived out his last years in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Shakers. At their peak, the English Shakers in southeast America numbered nearly 2,000, living in 19 communes. The movement arose in England, inspired by the vision of a blacksmith's daughter, Ann Lee (1736–1784). Constantly at war with local religious leaders, Lee and a small group of followers immigrated to New York in 1774 and built their commune on celibacy, hard work and an austere lifestyle. The Shaker population grew mainly by attracting unhappily married women and adopting orphans from Britain. Changing economic conditions during the 1850s brought about the end of the movement, although today four Shakers remain at the Sabbath Lake Shaker Village, in New Gloucester, Maine.

Silkville. A French aristocrat, Ernest de Boissiere (1811–1894) envisaged the formation of a communal settlement in central Kansas dedicated to the production of silk. His dream came true in 1873, when dozens of workers applied to join the project. For a few years the organization *did* manufacture fine silk that was rated as equivalent in quality to that manufactured in France, Italy and Japan. Despite this success, de Boissiere's workers soon left to homestead, and the project came to an end in 1881.

Trappists. This commune is owned and operated by the New Melleray Monastic Order in eastern Iowa—in other words, it is presently owned by 36 monks. Established by 15 monks in 1849, the specialties of the order are farming and growing special woods—black walnut, red oak, white oak,

ash, maple and pine—with which to manufacture coffins and urns. Visitors are welcome.

Underground Railroad. Few Canadians are probably aware that one of the most unusual underground railroad “stations” in Canada was an African-American commune in Dresden, near London, Ontario. The commune was initiated by a lay preacher named Josiah Henson (1789–1883), who inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; he headed the commune in 1840, but lost the leadership a few years later. The settlement folded in 1868 due to financial failings.

Women's Commonwealth. This all-female commune was founded in 1867 in Belton, Texas, because of a dream had by Martha McWhirter (1827–1904). McWhirter operated a very successful commune, economically speaking, although many husbands who lost their unhappy wives to its operation would have disagreed. Nicknamed “the Sanctified Sisters,” these very enterprising women operated a laundry and hotel in Belton that was the envy of critics for miles around. When the sisters decided to retire in Washington, DC, the citizens of Belton begged them to stay. The last Sanctified Sister, Martha Scheble, died in 1983 at the age of 101. Her estate was valued at \$250,000.

Zoar. Yet another vision generated the birth of this Ohio commune, this one by another German Separatist preacher named Joseph Bimeler (1778–1853). Essentially an agricultural organization, the Zoarites held to a rather orthodox Christian theology that attracted many adherents. Their participation in the construction of the Ohio-Erie Canal, the operation of a very successful hotel and their travelling band gained them many admirers—even President William McKinley travelled to Zoar. Although the Zoar commune officially came to an end in 1898, today many of the homes are owned by descendants of the original pioneers.

Meanwhile, Back to Bishop Hill

The first thing that stands out as one enters the village of Bishop Hill is a striking sense of permanence. The Swedish communalists who developed the site clearly intended to remain for a long time in their desirable location, but it was not to be. But let us start at the beginning.

The Bishop Hill commune is located some 200 kilometres southwest of Chicago. Founded in 1846 by a Swedish Separatist preacher named Erik Jansson (1808–1850) and his followers, the village contains a series of elegantly constructed classic structures. Each building was constructed to fulfill a

unique purpose for a communal people, and included a large dormitory, a general store, a schoolhouse, a church and many other vocation-related edifices. Today the architecture seems somewhat out of place in an otherwise contemporary Midwest farming community. Bishop Hill lasted only 15 years, but it is well preserved as a state historic site and was designated a US National Historic Landmark in 1984. Sixteen of the original buildings have been restored.

It all began in 1830, when at the age of 22, Erik Jansson fell from a horse and through the experience received a vision from God telling him to become a preacher. Jansson was a charismatic but uneducated Swedish farmer and travelling wheat salesman, but he had the ability to fire up the spirits of listeners across several counties in his home country. The Janssonites quickly grew tired of being told what to believe by the state-sanctioned clergy, so they held illegal religious gatherings. State officials sent police officers to break up their meetings, but the group persisted; eventually, their members were excommunicated from the state Lutheran church.

The Swedish clergy considered Jansson's Separatist ideas false and dangerous, particularly his habit of calling himself "the prophet endowed with all the perfections of God." Jansson was twice imprisoned, and his preaching sites were often interrupted by state authorities. Jansson's self-made doctrines irritated the clergy. Jansson, for example, proclaimed that people could actually become perfect by being transformed through God's Holy Spirit. He originated this doctrine on the basis of having often been tempted to be unfaithful to his wife. Based on his personal triumph over temptation, he proposed that Christians who had been sanctified by God's spirit—as he had been—could forever be free from sinful actions. Jansson also burned all religious books other than the Bible, another action that did not sit well with state-appointed religious leaders.

It soon became evident that the Janssonites were not welcome in Sweden, so Jansson sought an alternative location in which to continue his ministry. One day he came across the Constitution of the United States, with its guarantee of religious freedom. Immediately he decided that this was the country in which he would build a New Jerusalem. A friend of his, Olof Olsson, travelled ahead to America to find a location for the experiment, and soon reported that he had found the ideal place.

Between 1846 and 1854, some 1,500 people followed Jansson to Henry County in Illinois. They sold their goods and properties in order to pay for passage and boarded a ship to New York, then travelled on to

Chicago by steamer. A third of the group decided to remain in the New York and Chicago areas, and the rest walked the last 100 miles (160 km) to Bishop Hill. The immediate plan was to purchase and manage a sizable farm and engage in a variety of related occupations. Jansson gathered the sum of \$10,000 from his adherents. This was money they had left over after selling their property in Sweden and paying for their passage to the United States. The money was enough to purchase 200 acres of choice farmland in the heart of Illinois, but it was not enough to sustain the entire community. To meet that need, commune leaders also developed a series of related industries. Sadly, in September of 1849, many adherents lost their lives in an outbreak of cholera.

Within five years, Bishop Hill, named after the Swedish town in which Jansson was born, became prosperous and had a population of 800 souls. By 1859, the society owned 10,000 acres of land and had a debt load of less than \$100,000. They constructed an impressive town. In addition to farming, the settlement boasted a variety of trades—carpenters, wheelwrights, shoemakers, carriage builders, millers and harness makers. The commune also earned a great deal of income from weaving flax into linen and carpets.

In order to keep population numbers under control, Jansson insisted that celibacy be practised. He also ruled that married couples refrain from having marital relations. In order to curtail courtship, he assigned single men and women to live in separate dwellings and supervised their interactions. In 1848, when prosperity seemed likely, Jansson lifted the marriage ban; shortly thereafter, 59 couples entered the blissful state of matrimony.

The largest building at Bishop Hill, named Big Brick, contains 72 family rooms with several dining rooms. The 600-seat church occupies the second floor of another dormitory. According to protocol mandated by Jansson, all meals were to be eaten in silence, punctuated by prayers said by Jansson at the beginning and end of each meal. Each morning, after devotions, everyone set about their assigned tasks; laziness was not tolerated. Occupants engaged in growing cotton and flax, Indian corn and broom-corn, and other crops suited to the local soil and climate. Commune leaders arranged for the construction of a four-mile railroad extension to the nearest railway depot so they could ship sale goods easily. They were successful cattlemen and boasted a highly skilled labour force of men and women who could take on virtually any agricultural task. By 1862, the commune owned assets worth \$846,278, all of which was soon dis-

solved with the sudden unexpected death of their leader in 1850.

The events leading to Jansson's unplanned demise have to do with the marriage of Charlotta Andersson, his cousin. Charlotta was wed to John Root, a recent convert to Jansson's utopian ideas. About a year after their marriage, Root decided to leave Bishop Hill with his wife and baby because he did not agree with Jansson's hypnotic control over Charlotta. Charlotta refused to leave the colony, but when Root took their child and walked away, Charlotta quickly agreed to go with him.

When Jansson heard what had happened, he organized a posse, which returned Charlotta to the colony. Root found it necessary to hide out from Jansson's men and was, naturally, very angry. Later, Root organized a posse of his own, and the group arrived at Bishop Hill to retrieve Charlotta. At first they were unsuccessful, but after a series of visits, they managed to reunite Root and Charlotta. During these raids it was Jansson's turn to go into hiding.

In 1850, Jansson had to attend court over a colony matter in the nearby town of Cambridge. John Root was in attendance at the court on another matter, and while Jansson was standing at a window watching some children at play, two shots rang out. One hit Jansson in the heart and the other in his shoulder. John Root, gun in hand, stood nearby and watched Jansson die. When Jansson's followers arrived, they took Jansson's body back to Bishop Hill and placed the corpse on the church altar hoping that he would be resurrected as he had promised. Soon, however, for obvious reasons, his body had to be buried.

Meanwhile, John Root was arrested, tried and found guilty of manslaughter. He was sentenced to two years in the state penitentiary. His lawyer successfully argued that Root was defending himself against a man who had stolen his wife and threatened to kill him. Root was eventually granted a governor's pardon, seven months before his prison term ended. It was reported that he moved to Chicago and engaged in unknown activities until his death a few years later. He remained angry with Jansson to the day of his death, alternately cursing and requesting things of God. He never saw his wife or son again. After Root's imprisonment, Charlotta moved to a farm located two miles from Bishop Hill, where she lived until 1905, when she died at the age of 80.

After Jansson died, the people of Bishop Hill appointed a group of seven trustees to run their affairs. Among the trustees were two of Jansson's closest confidants, Jonas Olsson and Olof Johnson. For a time the colony continued to grow and flourish, better

than it had under Jansson's leadership. No one had to work particularly hard and when the day's chores were done, everyone enjoyed a fair measure of leisure time. Visitors commented on the kind and receptive spirit that prevailed in the settlement. In 1857, however, financial problems arose stemming from accusations of mismanagement against Olof Johnson. Johnson had privately made several large investments without colony approval, all of which ended in financial disaster. Bishop Hill was headed for economic ruin, and without trustworthy leadership to guide them, the colonists voted to end the communal system. The lure of mainstream American life also drew many away from communalism and weakened the hold of leaders on their membership.

In 1861, Bishop Hill was dissolved and many families were forced to move away. Some joined a nearby Shaker colony and others united with the Seventh Day Adventist movement. Still others followed noted American agnostic Robert Ingersoll in determining new direction for their lives.

Interest in restoring Bishop Hill dates back to 1875, but at that time little effort was made to achieve that goal. Finally, in 1962, the Bishop Hill Society took steps to restore the site. The government of Sweden contributed to the effort and even issued a postage stamp to commemorate the life of the community.

In 2003 the state of Illinois declared Bishop Hill a historic site in an effort to preserve an intriguing part of America's past.

Role of the School

It seems somewhat ironic that a beautiful schoolhouse would be built at Bishop Hill, which was founded by a man who ordered that all books except the Bible be burned. Jansson promoted the teaching of English because he believed that it was the best way for future generations to conduct business in America. Colony officials usually hired outsiders to teach the children English. A Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Mr Talbot, was one of these teachers, as was a medical doctor, Nelson Simons. Jansson's own 14-year-old daughter, Mathilda, also took on this position and taught spoken English, writing skills and arithmetic. A schoolhouse was built in 1859, long after Jansson's death, but in the meantime classes were held in the church and in the steeple building. Children were required to attend school until the age of 14, when they were shunted into a work unit.

One of Erik Jansson's concerns was evangelism; that is, trying to gain new adherents through missionary endeavours. In 1849, he set up a school for apostles and trained would-be missionaries in his

interpretations of the Bible. The ploy failed, however, because Jansson's missionaries spoke only Swedish and their efforts in the surrounding communities were in vain. Not a single convert was gained through these measures. This led Jansson to establish a school for illiterates, since half of the colony dwellers could neither read nor write. Classes began in a tent, then relocated to a dugout and later to the church.

Knowledge is power, and as was the case with several other communes we studied, information about life outside the commune often influenced members to consider finding out more about it for themselves. Amana and Zoar are two specific cases in point. Jansson's belief that a second language could be taught without gaining knowledge of its related culture and lifestyle inevitably led to the exodus of well-informed people. Jansson's practice of employing well-educated outsiders to teach English to colonists was, in fact, an arrangement that worked against his philosophy of keeping his followers ignorant of anything other than his interpretation of biblical content. By becoming familiar with the language of the land, the Bishop Hill colonists felt more at home, more American. This knowledge and familiarity undoubtedly led the people to question Jansson's authority and contributed to the demise of the colony after Jansson's death.

The Utopian Lure

Why are some people attracted to alternative lifestyles? Why do people join cults or communes or newly established religious movements?

We can only partially answer that question on the basis of information gained from studying Bishop Hill and other experiments like it. First of all, a desperate need must draw people toward alternative lifestyles, like communalism. Promised economic prosperity is one such possibility. Many of the groups that in past centuries chose North America as the land of milk and honey were pursuing just such a dream. The push factor was also a reality with many of the separatist groups, which were actually no longer welcome in their homelands. Utopian visions tend to flourish in times when political and social patterns grow tedious.

Second is the charismatic element. In most of the 20 communes we visited and studied, it became obvious that a single person with great charisma was responsible for initiating the promised recipe for success. These charismatic leaders usually invented new messages that influenced their questing and disillusioned followers to rally to the cause.

A third factor is the tendency of human beings to want to belong to something that matters, some cause to unite with. Sociologists sometimes define this as the utopian need. The human desire to join with others in a cause often provides needy people with the feeling that they can become part of something that matters—something that could make a difference. They also probably hope that their new alignment will also offer a more reliable interpretation of truth.

The study of these kinds of endeavours makes social studies so interesting.

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This building contained Bishop Hill Church on its top floor and family living suites on the ground floor.



The Bishop Hill Hotel, now a museum



Interior of Bishop Hill General Store



Traditional broom-making



Bishop Hill School



A young school visitor takes part in a typical Bishop Hill activity as John Friesen looks on.



Developing a Social Studies Imagination: Rabbinical Contributions to Filling in the Blanks

Jim Parsons

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Jazz, a uniquely North American invention, begins with a theme or tune. Without departing from the chord structure of that theme, a jazz musician then embellishes the musical composition in ways that both remain true to the original and creatively extend that original. Good jazz doesn't actually mimic, but it doesn't leave the original behind either. A good jazz composition is *both-and*.

Music, of course, is not the only art form to employ a creative process. In Jewish tradition, the *midrash* is such a creative form. *Midrash* is a method that Jewish rabbis created to fill in the blanks, as it were, to bridge between the general and the particular (what we might call theory and practice), and to purposefully link past and present. For social studies teachers, *midrash* offers a creative pedagogical possibility. This short essay offers background into *midrash* and suggests why social studies teachers might consider it to “jazz up” their classes and help their students build bridges between the past, present and future.

Here's some historical background. After the return of Jewish refugees from their diaspora in Babylon, the Torah was central to Jewish life. Jewish authorities worked to ensure compliance with the Torah's commandments, but Mosaic Law had been written for

specific past circumstances and Jewish people were living in the present. They needed to adapt the Torah to the circumstances of contemporary life.

For Jewish people, religious texts have been handed down through histories of discussion and interpretation. In fact, rabbis have created a rich, complex process for understanding text that relies on artistic interactions with the text of the Torah. These methods of interpretation, called *midrash*, are used to open imaginative possibilities to both enliven and extend a text's usual understanding.

The Hebrew term *midrash* literally means “to search out, or to enquire.” It denotes an exposition that contrasts to literal understandings and attempts to reach the spirit lying beneath the text. It is usually characterized by subjective, imaginative textual treatments that can serve two functions: (1) advice on how to walk the faith and (2) a purposeful narrative with a deep allegorical intent—that is, it intends to teach. This second teaching function became a popular way to embrace historical traditions found in stories, legends, and parables—basically creating a Jewish folklore in which narrative form and function become almost more important than the laws themselves.

Midrash narratives encouraged reinterpretations that deduced new teaching and understanding in ways that connected the present with a sacred past to guide the future. In essence, people came to understand the law better because they could engage almost innumerable examples of how the law worked in action—as a story—in the practical lives of people. Thus, *midrash* grew to become an important aspect of rabbinical literature. Jesus, being a rabbi, used parables to make points about how one should live.

One who is “*midrash-ing*” is not strictly interested in dividing fact from fiction. Instead, one is interested in building a greater understanding of the past to create a bridge of understanding between the past, present and future. The work of *midrash* is fundamentally ethical, because the method informs present and future actions.

In studying such traditional Jewish or Oriental religious narratives, one must realize that the content and lessons of the teaching are more essential than the presentation. In other words, teachers of social studies gain a great opportunity to teach about citizenship (how one should live ethically and creatively in imagined futures; how possible actions might affect futures; or how one should comport oneself within community). Such is the practical power of story that, used wisely, can help social studies teachers create engaging teaching methods. Given the power and possibility of story, it is almost unthinkable to sit students down, shut them up and lead them through history and citizenship.

Although essentially useless for factual historical investigation, *midrash* is exceedingly fruitful for casting light upon past events or shaping the thought patterns of students. Typically, Western historical criticism is more concerned with the reality of *events* and less concerned with the reality of *ideas*. But ideas are worthy of study, especially as they unfold in historical narratives. Such stories can enlighten and help us understand both the history of a period and how that history speaks to our present and future. Thus, *midrash* encourages big-picture thinking.

How Midrash Might Work in a Social Studies Classroom

At its core, *midrash* asks social studies students to create dialogues or interactions between historical characters—both real and invented—that would embed human feelings, insights and emotions to the characters who are acting. In a recent example, Canadian Paul Gross writes, directs and stars in the

Canadian war drama *Passchendaele* (2008), a movie recounting his grandfather’s war experiences. In the movie, Gross, playing Michael Dunne, and several members of the Canadian Corps in France are pinned down by German machine gun fire. Dunne watches the Germans gun down his comrades, but he successfully kills most of the machine gun crew. One horrible event haunts his dreams for months after he is shipped home; he bayonets a German teenaged boy through the forehead.

Although the movie is about the Battle of Passchendaele, the history of the battle is secondary to what the movie is really about. Gross’s movie is about Canada’s coming of age at Vimy Ridge, a turning point both in the First World War and in Canadian national mythology. By telling the story of his own grandfather, Gross personalizes the war in ways that allow viewers into the lives of those who experienced it. The movie becomes telling for contemporary life because of its ironic similarities to stories of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans (for example, *The Hurt Locker*). The point: war changes people.

Obviously, Paul Gross—a University of Alberta graduate—is no typical social studies student and *Passchendaele* no typical social studies assignment. But, like the rabbis of the *midrash* and students in today’s Alberta social studies classrooms, Gross creates stories, dialogues and interactions that grapple with and help us better understand events of the past and what those events might mean to our present. If such *midrash*-type student projects can be done thoughtfully, they can push students towards more enlightened understandings of past, present and future events and the values that might inhabit them. Such assignments can enlighten student futures.

The word *midrash* might seem foreign to today’s social studies students, but most of them have experience dealing with the tenets of *midrash*. As with *Passchendaele*, any historical movie creates truth by inventing actions between characters that drive the movie’s drama. Such inventions might not be factual, but in the broadest sense they contain truth. The same goes for the rich North American tradition of historical novels. One can never engage the past without bringing one’s contemporary interests to that engagement. Social studies students who engage historical events carry with them insights and meanings; their treatment of history is always grounded in their own present realities.

Social studies students have probably experienced *midrash* already. Social studies and literature contain many examples of *midrash*-type activities. I recently saw two examples: (1) *Liberty Letters: The Personal*

Correspondence of Elizabeth Walton and Abigail Matthews—The Story of Pocohontas (1613) and (2) *Liberty Letters: The Personal Correspondence of Hannah Brown and Sarah Smith—The Underground Railroad (1858)*. Both books, by Nancy LeSourd, are part of an American series that explores the lives of teens who lived in historical times. The series invents letters between friends to reveal how these young people might have made a difference in history. Although these books are American, Canadian examples are likely easy to find and use—Louis Riel, for example. Such stories give students examples of how people in the past might have lived and suggest how citizens of the present and future might also live.

Conclusion

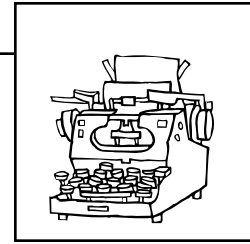
Imaginative social studies teachers can use *midrash* to help students create links between past and present.

Similar to Jewish rabbinical tradition that uses *midrash* to search, investigate, comment on and interpret history, stories in social studies can start with fixed texts and create a locus of understanding for social life in Canadian communities. *Midrash* need not be limited to religious life. With a little ingenuity, social studies teachers can create assignments that help students invent past actions and dialogues that provide insights into the present and future. Such ideas could become testaments to how humans understand the meanings and importance of their lives.

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