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# A Message from the Editor

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*Craig Harding*



## In This Issue

Welcome to the latest issue of *One World in Dialogue*. Our ATA Social Studies Council endeavours to provide relevant and up-to-date scholarly articles to keep social studies teachers informed and to ensure that our subject remains as an innovative and enlightened force in our province and across Canada. The quality of this publication is evident, as several other provincial associations provide their members with a link to the journal as a way to expand their subject-specific knowledge base. With a broad reach, we receive submissions that reflect the diversity of ideas and interests of scholarship across Canada.

While not intentionally seeking submissions on a particular theme, I hope that readers will be inspired to reflect on their practice. In his most famous essay, *What Is a Nation?*, Ernest Renan poignantly describes a nation as “a soul, a spiritual principle.” I think for most teachers this phrase would aptly describe teaching, as well. Renan notes, too, that a nation is “*un plébiscite de tous les jours*”—a daily plebiscite—a metaphor I suspect most readers would agree is applicable to teaching. Instead of citizens providing feedback on Renan’s “clearly expressed desire to continue a common life,” it is our students. Our practice evolves, ever attuned to the daily plebiscite our students provide. The articles in this edition of the journal provide a framework for this reflective evaluation.

This edition of the journal begins with Kent den Heyer’s thoughtful exploration of futures thinking. The purpose of education must be to benefit society; therefore, considering the common good is explicit. In fact, the Jules Ferry Laws of 1882, in France, established civics education as a primary goal of public education. While civic education is relevant to both present and future behaviour, the University of Alberta’s den Heyer specifically notes that states justify the demarcation of subjects as a necessary preparation for the future. With this in mind, den Heyer takes readers on a journey exploring what is meant by futures education. He distinguishes between tacit, token and taken-for-granted uses of the future that educators may utilize in their practice.

Citing comparative research, den Heyer investigates young people’s futures reasoning, noting despair as a common theme. Yet, this theme reflects their probable vision of the future, not their preferred view. The Alberta program of studies is noted for providing teachers with an opportunity to move beyond the dystopian view of a “divided,” “unsustainable,” “corrupt” and “violent” world, to instead consider ways to “arrive at decisions for the public good.” Intrigued by the conflict between what the program of studies describes and the attitudes of students, den Heyer embarked on research that explored teacher perceptions of futures education that provide us with an insightful *principe spirituel*, or spiritual principle, around which we can consider our practice. No doubt, the preferred future for students would reflect Renan’s notion of a “clearly expressed desire to continue a common life” rather than one that is unsustainable, violent and corrupt.

An intriguing article from graduate student Teresa Pigot-Upshall has us consider what happens when our educational philosophy confronts our reality. Pigot-Upshall has taught students ranging from prekindergarten to Grade 12 both in Canada and internationally. Her international experience prompted her to reflect upon how education is perceived and produced in such culturally responsive and diverse ways. As part of an independent qualitative research project, Pigot-Upshall explored divergent understandings of the differences between how teachers perceive their work and how their work is managed and controlled by various factors outside of their control. Her fascination with this topic is centred upon the interactions of student socioeconomic status and home life, as well as current policies in application around the world, such as standardization and accountability in education. This work has led Pigot-Upshall to pursue a second master's degree investigating how people interact with social policy.

Pigot-Upshall uses her experiences teaching in Asia as an anchor for juxtaposing what she was taught at university with the reality of experiences in the classroom. While recognizing that her education and experiences in Canada had little to do with her teaching reality, Pigot-Upshall describes the growth that occurred as a result of the daily plebiscite of teaching, especially the awakening understanding that behaviourism is not a theory that can guide the complex classes she faced. Instead, she describes the need to make teaching have a *soul*, a *spiritual principle*. As well, Pigot-Upshall wrestles with the tenets of neoliberalism, especially standardization, that seem to run contrary to the spiritual principle so essential to challenges she faced. Behaviourism and neoliberalism offered no solutions to the inequities her students faced.

Pigot-Upshall's reflections led her to espouse the need for a more holistic view of education, as opposed to the factory model around which much of schooling is organized. Although her article is not specific to social studies, the themes should be apparent to us, as the notions of equity, social justice and the common good are explicit in her work. Her conclusion is a testimony to the need we all have to reflect on our practice in order to have our students "desire to continue a common life." She notes that "To view all members of society through the neoliberal lens of 'survival of the fittest' reduces complex human social and economic issues to simple behaviourism and cruel simplicity."

Our consideration of education as a daily plebiscite takes us to considering what it means to have real or

authentic learning in the classroom. With a focus on the notion of developing a global classroom, the University of Calgary's Jennifer Lock and Sandra Duggleby relate two different projects that sought to explore what is necessary to develop a classroom that is participatory, collaborative and connected in an authentic manner to facilitate the development of global citizens. In the first instance, Lock and Duggleby describe research that investigated the cultural learning experiences of students in two different schools as they engaged in a technologically mediated inquiry that incorporated social studies and science goals. By using social media and other technologies, students from the two schools shared their thinking about issues in their own communities as well as global issues. Technology was not only used to communicate ideas but was central in knowledge building. Online discussions, data collection and sharing of images allowed students to interact with others in a way that was engaging and authentic.

The second ambitious enterprise, a six-week cross-institutional inquiry-based project, involved preservice teachers from Canada and Australia engaged in online discussions with peers, inservice teachers and teacher educators. Using a four-stage model, Lock and Duggleby outline that students "shared experiences, observations and resources as they investigated the topics of diversity and inclusivity within a global classroom environment."

Lock and Duggleby conclude their paper with meaningful ideas around which teachers can reconsider their practice—their *daily plebiscite*. With technology being affordable and ubiquitous, new opportunities exist for engaging students in authentic learning activities on a global level. While this requires teachers to take risks to reconsider their practice and provide opportunities for students to explore real world problems and cocreate knowledge by working with others, perhaps even in distant locales, the benefits are vast.

DJ (Daniel) Timmons, secondary social studies teacher in the Kativik School Board, in Nunavik, Quebec, submitted the final article. "Citizenship, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Addressing Core Concepts Through an Examination of Japanese Canadian Internment and Deportation During World War II" investigates many of the themes germane to social studies and provides us with a final look at themes Renan makes explicit. Renan explained that the two elements of our soul or spiritual principle "[lie] in the past ... (and) in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage

that one has received in an undivided form.” For Renan, history is central to our desire to continue a common life. He notes, “Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.” Timmons explores concepts central to social studies such as critical thinking, historical thinking, citizenship and social justice through the lens of Japanese internment. The past actions of Canada’s government lead to exploring the need for a “common effort” and duty to address historical injustices, not only of the Japanese but also of other aggrieved peoples in Canada.

Timmons provides us with a comparative look at how the topic fits into the curriculum across Canada and a justification for exploring it in a meaningful manner. His approach embeds critical literacy into a class inquiry that supports the core concepts of social studies—and provides a *soul*, a *spiritual principle* to our practice.

The concluding submission is not an article, but rather an example of a teacher taking to heart an issue or grievance so challenging to the national soul that many

educators seek to find ways to rebuild bonds between conflicted communities. Inspired by the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Lacombe teacher Suzanne Williamson had her Grade 9 classes investigate Aboriginal rights, Indian residential schools and the legacy of those schools. Students soon realized that the project could become a way to share their dedication to promoting understanding toward Canada’s first people. As a result, students created two Reconciliation Quilts. The project culminated in hanging one quilt at École Lacombe Junior High School and presenting a sister quilt to Ermineskin Junior/Senior High School in Maskwacis, the site of a residential school. Students at both schools hope these quilts will symbolize compassion and empathy for all cultures and provide a strong bond between the two communities.

## Reference

Renan, E. 1996. “What Is a Nation?” In *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed G Eley and R G Suny, 41–55. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at [www.nationalismproject.org/what/renan.htm](http://www.nationalismproject.org/what/renan.htm) (accessed October 12, 2016).

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## ***One World in Dialogue***

The purpose of the journal is to provide professionals with relevant and scholarly literature with which they can engage colleagues in dialogue on current social studies concerns. Fifteen colleagues who specialize in one or more aspects of social studies have volunteered to act as blind reviewers. They are listed, with their brief biographies, at the end of this issue. Reviewers hail from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge and Mount Royal University. The ATA Social Studies Council thanks them all for their support and expertise.

The hope of the ATA Social Studies Council is that the journal remains one to reach for when social studies teachers are looking for latest scholarship related to curriculum, engaging pedagogies and deep understanding of how to support students’ learning in the multiple dimensions of our very progressive social studies curriculum. As well, the journal is a source of articles that creatively and critically take up important pedagogical issues and events in local, national and international contexts. The Guidelines for Manuscripts say:

*One World in Dialogue* 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. While *One*

*World in Dialogue* welcomes articles relevant to all components of social studies, those interested in making a submission should be cognizant of the classroom and scholarly focus.

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;
- explorations of significant classroom experiences; and
- extended evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials.

We welcome articles that take up all aspects of social studies: learning in any of the social sciences that weave together to form social studies, including citizenship education, Aboriginal issues and education, peace education, global education, economic education, history education, social justice, immigration issues, multicultural education, intercultural issues in second language teaching, comparative education, intercultural communication and education, innovative uses of educational technologies to promote learning in social studies, and environmental ethics, environmental education and/or ecological teaching or teaching for sustainability.

Manuscripts can be submitted for consideration via e-mail to Craig Harding at [jcharding@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:jcharding@cbe.ab.ca) or [jcharding@shaw.ca](mailto:jcharding@shaw.ca).