

More Than Just Games
A Model for Developing Historical Thinking
REPORT February 2010

Introduction

As a complement to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre (VHEC) developed an exhibit and school program examining the controversies, achievements and consequences related to Canada's participation in the Olympics held in Nazi Germany. To extend the "teachable moment" presented by the Vancouver Games, the VHEC developed an innovative teaching website as a legacy for teachers and students.

Results

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, working with 7th Floor Media, developed a web site that combines the content from the exhibits *More Than Just Games: Canada & the 1936 Olympics* and *Framing Bodies: Sport & Spectacle in Nazi Germany* with the teaching / learning strategies of the teacher's resource and school program.

The website brings the project to a wider, online audience, framing the exhibits as an educational opportunity for students of Canadian history, and a model for developing historical thinking. This online resource gives students a context and a lens to look at the Olympics and Canada's intersection with the 1936 Games from a critical historical perspective. The target online resource is Grades 6 - 12

The site facilitates student interaction with primary sources that foster historical and critical thinking about the 1936 Olympics, Canada's participation in the international boycott debate and the Games themselves, and the visual culture of this era. The learning activities are directly linked to the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking concepts.

Opening Page

Video interviews introduce the site from the unique perspectives of three individuals who offer insight into the educational and historical importance of the website. Richard Menkis speaks to the uncovering of a little known story of Canadian history through primary research and source documents. David Halton reflects on the pivotal role played by his father as a witness and communicator of the events surrounding the rise of Nazism from 1933 to 1936. Peter Seixas endorses the site as an exemplar of historical thinking concepts including: historical significance, primary evidence, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimensions of history. He states that students who work with the site, and respond to the issues and questions raised in the teaching materials "will come away with a different understanding of what history is."

Site Structure and Interface Design

The site is divided into 5 sections: The Nazi State, The Boycott Debate, Canadian Athletes, The 1936 Games and Bodies & Pageantry. Each section is then sub-divided into relevant topics that tell the historical story. The sections include associated graphics and video that further enhance the content.

The site architecture makes it easy to use by teachers and students. In each section, the historical material is presented alongside the teaching and learning materials making their

relationship explicit and interconnected. The site also offers teachers flexibility and discretion in their teaching approach and allows them choice in how to use the material. Printable PDFs of the materials have been made available for teachers.

 VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

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MORE THAN JUST GAMES Canada & the 1936 Olympics

[INTRO](#) | [THE NAZI STATE](#) | [THE BOYCOTT DEBATE](#) | [CANADIAN ATHLETES](#) | [THE 1936 GAMES](#) | [BODIES & PAGEANTRY](#)

The Nazification of Germany

[Racial Policies](#)

[The Aryanization of Sport](#)

[A Canadian Observer](#)

The Nazification of Germany



In 1931, the International Olympic Committee chose Germany to host the 1936 Summer Olympics, signaling Germany's return to the international community after its defeat in the First World War.

The liberal democracy of the Weimar Republic collapsed shortly afterwards. By January 1933, National Socialist (Nazi) leader Adolph Hitler had been appointed Chancellor. On March 23, 1933, the Enabling Act was forced through a Reichstag purged of political opponents, turning the fragile democracy into a dictatorship. Also in March, the Nazis established Dachau concentration camp to imprison political dissidents.

Hitler's Nazification of Germany by "coordination" – the enactment of laws and policy guidelines to ensure that all areas of public life were in alignment with Nazism – affected every aspect of society, including sports.

Adolf Hitler addresses a rally of the SA (Sturmabteilung - paramilitary stormtroopers), North Rhine-Westphalia, 1933.
USHMM, courtesy of William O. McWorkman

Teach & Learn

The Nazi State

Lesson Plan
Students learn about the Nazis' early policies of persecution and consider what the reports of one Canadian journalist reveal about the Nazi state.

Student Reading:
The Nazi State
 PDF | 1.2 MB

Document:
Matthew Halton Reports
 PDF | 645 KB

Complete Teacher's Guide to More Than Just Games
 PDF | 21.5 MB

Teaching Materials

The Teacher's Guide, both in its design and placement within the site, carries equal weight to the content presented within the website. The lessons in the teacher's guide, which can be adapted for grades 6 to 12, provide links between the online exhibit and the classroom. Five lessons - which can stand alone or grouped as a unit - provide an excellent complement to the study of the Holocaust and Canada's response to Nazism, as well as a consideration of individual and collective moral decision-making.

An investigation of primary source material fosters historical thinking, critical thinking and media literacy skills in students. In addition, the stated objectives of each lesson correspond explicitly to the six concepts integral to historical thinking outlined by the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project: *historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspective and ethical dimensions of history.*

For example, here is the objective of Lesson 2, The Boycott Debate:

OBJECTIVE

Students examine primary sources reflecting different perspectives on the Canadian debate to boycott the 1936 Olympics in order to develop an understanding of the issues at stake.

Links to Historical Thinking Concepts:

- *Analyze Cause and Consequence* - Students discuss the effects of boycotts as a form of activism.
- *Use Primary Source Evidence* - Students analyze a political cartoon, a petition and an op-ed piece conveying different perspectives on Canada's participation in the 1936 Olympics.
- *Take Historical Perspective* - Students consider the boycott debate from the perspective of Canadians in 1935/6.
- *Understand the Ethical Dimensions of History* - Was Canada's decision to attend the 1936 Games justifiable?
- *Identify Continuity and Change* - What other Olympics have been the subject of boycotts and controversies?

The skills and historical thinking concepts brought out through the lessons makes this a teaching resource that lives well beyond the specific Olympic event.

Promotion & Marketing

The web site is hosted on the VHEC's server at http://vhec.org/1936_olympics and will be launched on February 12, 2010, timed for the opening of the 2010 Olympics. The site will be showcased at the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking National Meeting in February, with a prominent link to the site placed on the Benchmarks site's Homepage.

The site will be promoted in the spring 2010 issue of the VHEC's quarterly newsletter *Zachor* and on its website. Teachers will be invited to use the site through an e-invite sent to teachers on the VHEC's e-list and it will be promoted at the VHEC's Shafran Teachers' Conference on the Holocaust in 2011.

7FM will issue a press release to the media on February 12th, and will promote the site within the university community. The website will be featured in the Continuing Studies newsletter, published in March, 2010. 7FM will also feature it on its website & through its blog.

The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN/HiER) is fully credited on the site along with its logo.

With links to the Benchmarks and THEN/HiER sites, the online exhibit and teaching resource will reach a network of educators, giving it a lasting presence for teachers and students.