

Final Report

“Making It Meaningful: Historical Thinking Concepts and the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum”

Mount Royal University

February 14, 2013



Mount Royal University

Organizers: Dr. Scott Murray and Dr. Jennifer Pettit, Mount Royal University

Summary:

“Making It Meaningful: Historical Thinking Concepts and the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum” was held at Mount Royal University (MRU) on February 14, 2013. Building upon the success of the two previous conferences held in 2011 and 2012, this is the third annual event hosted by MRU in conjunction with the Calgary City Teachers’ Convention with the support of THEN/HiER. The one-day History teaching conference was a resounding success, attracting seventy participants, the majority of whom were elementary, junior and high school Social Studies teachers from Calgary. Education students from MRU also attended, as did MRU faculty members and student volunteers.

The event succeeded in meeting its principal goals:

- Examine the unique place history occupies in the Alberta curriculum at both the junior and senior high school levels
- Consider how history can be made more meaningful for students and teachers alike through the use of the six historical thinking concepts developed by the Historical Thinking Project
- Strengthen the teaching of history at both the secondary and post secondary level
- Promote The History Education Network—three information items were distributed and THEN/HiER was discussed

- Strengthen ties between secondary (and, to a lesser extent, elementary) and post secondary teachers in Calgary

Keynote Address and Closing Session:

The day began with a keynote address by Tom Morton who has taught for over 30 years in Kabala, Sierra Leone, Montréal, and Vancouver at the high school and university level. He is the author of numerous articles and books on education, and has received the British Columbia Social Studies Teacher of the Year award, the Governor-General Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History, and the Kron Award for Excellence in Holocaust Education. In his keynote address Mr. Morton discussed themes from his book *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* – a new guide to teaching history that proposes we help students “to see history as a mystery to be solved, an interpretation to be challenged, and a way to see themselves in the larger fabric of human experience.” Specifically, Mr. Morton’s presentation examined historical thinking concepts and teaching strategies to suggest ways teachers can connect the history that they teach to the lives of their students. The talk posed broad questions such as "What is important to learn about the past?" and "How can the past help us live in the present?" The session also outlined classroom activities to explore these questions. Mr. Morton’s presentation sparked a spirited discussion that set the tone for the rest of the workshop.



Tom Morton Delivers the Keynote Address

The closing session, delivered by Professors Kirk Niergarth and Scott Murray of Mount Royal University, consisted of a roundtable discussion of the Alberta Social Studies curriculum and the influence of standard textbooks on the curriculum. The session examined the following questions:

How well is the thematically-based Social Studies curriculum working in the classroom? How is history, as a distinct body of knowledge, positioned in the curriculum; and can it (or should it) be seen as separable? What skills does the curriculum require and/or cultivate in teaching students about history? And how might applying the six "historical thinking concepts" facilitate in students a deeper understanding of history, or of the main themes of the curriculum generally? The roundtable session studied these and related questions in order to both help teachers better manage the multidisciplinary demands they face in their Social Studies classrooms, and clarify what students can reasonably be expected to know if and when they take history at university. The session provoked a wide-ranging discussion on how and why we teach students history, and the uses we expect them to make of it in the classroom and beyond.



Audience Members at Making It Meaningful: Historical Thinking Concepts and the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum

The rest of the day consisted of concurrent sessions delivered by faculty members from Mount Royal University. Professors from a variety of areas presented, including faculty members from the disciplines of History, Canadian Studies, General Education and Indigenous Studies. In response to teacher feedback from earlier years, we opted to finish the day ½ hour earlier and to have fewer concurrent sessions.



Student Volunteers from Mount Royal University

Detailed Schedule:

Time	Presenter/Title of Presentation
9-10:30am	Keynote Address by Tom Morton
10:45-12:00 (2 concurrent sessions)	<p>Prof. Liam Haggarty <i>Insiders and Outsiders: Teaching Indigenous Studies as a Non-Indigenous Instructor</i></p> <p>Prof. Roberta Lexier <i>Historical Perspectives on Social Change: Understanding Continuity and Change</i></p>
12:00-12:45	Lunch
12:45-1:45 (2 concurrent sessions)	<p>Prof. Jarett Henderson <i>YYC's Street History: Taking Curricula to the Curbside in Calgary</i></p> <p>Prof. Glen Ryland <i>Vanishing and Turning Points in history: Continuity and Change in Grade 11 Social Studies Curriculum</i></p>
2:00-3:30	<p>Prof. Scott Murray and Prof. Kirk Niergarth <i>The View from the Textbooks: A Roundtable Discussion on History in the Curriculum</i></p>

Response and Future Events:

To gauge the success of the event, evaluation cards were distributed to participants. As has been the case at earlier events, feedback was very positive. Themes that dominated responses included support for creating a venue in which secondary and post-secondary teachers could interact and the relevance of the sessions to their teaching.

Since the event, we have met with representatives from the Calgary City Teacher's Convention who have indicated that they would like to see the event moved from Mount Royal University to a downtown location. We are currently in discussion about how we would like to proceed with future events.

In conclusion, we sincerely wish to thank THEN/HiER for their generous contribution which helped make this event a success.

Expenses:

Mount Royal University (through the Office of the Vice President Academic and the Arts Scholarly Events Council) provided: the venue for the conference; technology; handouts for participants; and the honorarium and hotel/taxi for the keynote. Our partner in this project, the Calgary City Teachers' Convention Association, assumed the responsibility and costs for advertising the conference among Calgary-area teachers and registering them for the event, as well as the flight for the keynote presenter.

These remaining expenses were funded by the \$2500.00 grant received from THEN/HiER (receipts attached):

Honoraria Fees

Accommodation for Keynote Speaker at MRU	\$98.10
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Publicity and Event Materials:

Printing of event materials/program	\$241.50 (158.25 and 30.75 and 52.50)
Items for bags for participants (from Staples)	\$161.83
Additional registration items (from Staples)	\$41.99
Seven T-shirts for student volunteers	\$54.98
Two Gift Cards for Feedback Cards Draw	\$50.00
Printing of promotion material for THEN/HiER	\$160.50 (53.50 and 53.50 and 53.50)

Food and beverages:

Breakfast and breaks	\$591.02
Lunch	<u>\$1137.89</u>

TOTAL:	\$2537.81
FUNDING FROM THEN/HiER	\$2500.00