

*Our monthly e-Bulletin provides quick updates on activities of THEN/HiER and its partners.*

## What's new with THEN/HiER?

### \* Canada and the American Curriculum

**Stéphane Lévesque**, THEN/HiER executive board member, attended a national conference on *Canada and the American Curriculum* organized by the Center for the Study of Canada at SUNY-Plattsburgh at the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC, May 24-25. The conference brought together national stakeholders in the fields of history, geography, social studies, and Canadian studies education. Professor Lévesque, a history educator,



Bill Reid carving outside Canadian Embassy

was invited to participate and represent THEN/HiER's views on Canadian content in the American curriculum. The various thematic panels and objectives of the conference were to heighten the importance of Canada in the American K-12 curriculum, profile and distribute the newly completed K-12 National Directory on Canada – a state-by-state examination of the role/place of Canada in the American K-12 curriculum – analyze and discuss the current role/place of Canada in curriculum standards at the national level, network among key representatives from leading education organizations, and develop opportunities for future collaboration on education initiatives that prioritize teaching about Canada. The success of the conference was such that the organizers are already working on a follow-up meeting to further the discussion and exchange.



Dr. Daniel Abele  
Head, Research and Academic Relations  
Embassy of Canada, Washington DC

### \* So What IS the Story? Exploring Fragmentation and Synthesis in Current Canadian Historiography

This panel was organized by and included **Ruth Sandwell**, THEN/HiER executive board member, at the Canadian Historical Association's Annual Meeting in Montréal, May 28-June 1. Other participants were **Peter Baskerville**, University of Alberta; **Lyle Dick**, Parks Canada; **Steven High**, Concordia University; **Alan MacEachern**, University of Western Ontario; and **Adele Perry**, University of Manitoba. The panel provoked a lively discussion with the audience, not only about the relationship among historians' different sub-specialties and different methodologies, but about Professor Sandwell's paper "To the Undergraduates" that encouraged historians to see the history they do in the form of undergraduate teaching to be as valuable as the work they do as specialist researchers. The topic of Professor Sandwell's paper will serve as the basis for a THEN/HiER panel at the upcoming joint Association for Canadian Studies (ACS)/Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association (OHASSTA) conference November 5-6, 2010, *Canada's Diverse Histories*.

### \* Historical Thinking in Schools in Canada: A Validation Study

THEN/HiER executive board member **Peter Seixas** and **Kadriye Ercikan** (of UBC's Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology), presented findings from this study at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting in Denver on May 2. The study sought to refine questionnaires that can establish how central a place "historical thinking" occupies in history classrooms. Questionnaires given to a sample of teachers and students asked what pedagogical strategies were used in their history and social studies classrooms, ranging from those which cast the students as passive receivers of historical information, to those which demand more active engagement with interpretive demands of history. Teachers were also asked about their goals in teaching history. Preliminary findings indicate that, although in most cases teachers' and students' responses were closely aligned, they differed on a few points: students reported that much classroom time was devoted to "textbooks and worksheets," while teachers said that they tended to use more creative activities such as "projects" and "role-plays." The researchers will use this study to refine the questionnaires for use in a large scale, longitudinal study of the impact of history curriculum reforms across Canada.

### \* Repertory of Primary Source Databases

**Lindsay Gibson**, PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC, and BC Social Studies teacher, has updated this page on our website to make it more useful to people looking for online primary source documents related to history, especially social studies and history teachers looking for materials on a particular subject in history. He has sorted the sources into three categories:

- Repertory of General Databases for Canadian History
- Repertory of Regional and Provincial Databases for Canadian History
- Repertory of Online Collections of Primary Sources: Specific Topics in Canadian History



**\* Small Projects Grants Program**

THEN/HiER has awarded two Small Projects Grants this month:

***Understanding Power, Appreciating Difference:***

***Building Historical Understandings of Mental Health through E-Learning***

Diane Purvey of Thompson Rivers University and Megan Davies of York University will lead this project to revise existing curriculum materials on mental health issues in history (e.g., "World War I and Shell Shock"), topics which are not normally covered in traditional curriculum resources. THEN/HiER funds will be used to make the revised materials available online at the History of Madness in Canada website.



***Black History Theatre Project***

This project led by Prince Edward Island historian Harry Baglole and theatrical writer and director Ron Irving will revise and enhance a play about Black history in PEI, *The Old Stock*, and develop associated multimedia companion resource materials for educational purposes. THEN/HiER is providing part of the seed money for the development stage of this project.

## What's new with our partners?

**\* Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, May 28 to June 1, 2010**

The CHA Annual Meeting at Concordia University in Montréal was a great success, and with 499 in attendance broke the previous record of 484 delegates set at last year's meeting at Carleton University in Ottawa. Next year's CHA Annual Meeting, *History, Memory, People, and Place*, will be in Fredericton, New Brunswick at the University of New Brunswick and Saint Thomas University. Read the call for papers.

**\* Canadian Museums Association Awards 2010**

Each year the CMA presents *Awards of Outstanding Achievement* to museums for exceptional projects. Among this year's recipients are three THEN/HiER partners:

CANADIAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION



- The **McCord Museum** for *Les aventuriers nomades*, a bilingual educational program for recent immigrant students.
- The **Museum of Vancouver** as a striking example of effective innovation to meet the challenging economic times.
- The **Glenbow Museum** for *Vistas: Artists on the Canadian Pacific Railway* as a visual and critical record of the growing popularity of mountain scenes in Canadian landscape painting of the post-confederation period, and as a record of the exploration of Western Canada. Read about the different awards.

**\* Multicultural History Society of Ontario**

With a grant from the federal government's *Community Historical Recognition Program*, the MHSO has begun work on a two-year project, *Chinese Canadian Women 1923-1967: Inspiration-Innovation-Ingenuity*. The aim of the project is to develop a public online portal of exhibitions, digital resources, learning materials and interactive activities using various sources, including oral history interviews from across Canada. Learn more.



## Graduate Student Corner

Graduate Student Coordinator **Jennifer Bonnell**

**First Approaching the Past event in Toronto**

On the evening of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 21 historians, graduate students and public history professionals gathered at Toronto's Black Creek Pioneer Village for the inaugural event in THEN/HiER and Active History's new series, *Approaching the Past: A Series Connecting People Teaching History*. Guest workshop coordinator Ruth Sandwell began the evening with a brief presentation on the state of history research and teaching in Canada. We then stepped out into a blustery Toronto evening to partake in a tour of several 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, led by Wendy Romney, Black Creek's Supervisor of Historic Programs. Participants then split into groups to examine selected artefacts in two of the historic buildings, and surmise what these artefacts could tell us about the nature of their initial creation and use, the social relationships that surrounded that use, and the priorities and values of the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century museum curators who used them to tell particular stories about the past. The evening concluded with a lively discussion about reading artefacts as evidence of the wider societies within which they were created and preserved. Thanks to Black Creek Pioneer Village for hosting the event, and to event sponsors THEN/HiER and Active History. The next event in the series will be held September 30<sup>th</sup> at Montgomery's Inn Community Museum in Toronto.



## Research Snapshots

*This section of our monthly e-Bulletin highlights our members' research projects. If you would like to submit a snapshot of your research, please contact [annemarie.goodfellow@ubc.ca](mailto:annemarie.goodfellow@ubc.ca).*

**Kevin Kee**  
**Department of History**  
**Brock University**

**Shawn Graham**  
**College of Liberal Arts**  
**Grand Canyon University**

### Teaching History in an Age of Pervasive Computing: The Case for Games

Historians have always been “interactive” with the content that we study, constantly challenging, reworking, and indeed, “remixing” information to “do history.” And we have incorporated that “interactivity” into our teaching, analyzing primary and secondary sources with our students in seminars, and helping students draw on those sources to craft their own historical narratives. But we also need to become interactive in the way that we teach with computer technologies.

There has always been a World Wide Web for the undergraduates in our classes. Personal computers were first introduced *en masse* into primary and secondary education in the 1980s, and those students have already graduated from university. Computers went, in the span of a few years, from being a rarity to commonplace. We now live in an age of pervasive computing, in which digital devices proliferate into every corner of our lives.

How can we most effectively teach history in an age of pervasive computing, where interactivity with (rather than consumption of) media, in the context of social networks (rather than in isolation) is key? Not through “Web sites” or “bulletin board forum posts.” These are interim technologies – what historian John Lutz called the “horseless carriages” of the computer revolution. Instead, we need to progress to “the automobile.” One phrase expressed the new invention in terms of existing technology; the other coined a completely new idea to describe the technology. Just as the arrival of “the automobile” coincided with mass production and mass access, the new way of interacting with digital media has started to create its own idioms and metaphors, such as social apps, Facebook, MySpace, Machinima, and MMORPGs.

These last two terms are connected to computer games, the most exciting, technically demanding, computing applications today – the digital media “automobiles” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Game technologies drive the development and evolution of computer hardware, artificial intelligence, database management, and a host of allied technologies. Game studies are growing, but the nascent discipline has been dominated by computer science and psychology research.

The humanities have much to offer as well. Games, for their part, have shown great interest in the humanities, and especially in history. A substantial portion of PC-based games that have sold at least one million units have been based on a historical theme, or have employed historical tropes. Clearly, given that many all-time best selling computer games have historical themes, there is room for humanities- and history-based analyses of computer games, and consideration of how best to use this popularity to further the teaching and learning of history.

We believe that the best way to teach history in an age of pervasive computing is through collaborative learning with computer games. Games should be used in our undergraduate courses in much the same way that we have used texts. While the academic literature has championed games as a teaching “tool,” we take a different view: that these are artefacts that should be deconstructed, in the manner of historiography. We know that students can build on their analysis of games by creating their own histories through game “mods” (modifications of commercial games). Through this process students can move beyond analysis, and modding, to collaboratively developing their own games, in much the same way that they write research papers. In these ways, historians can tap the potential – whilst avoiding the pitfalls – of learning with games.

**Read the draft of this chapter, and others, for an upcoming book based on the  
*Playing with Technology* symposium.**

Please note that THEN/HiER Director, Penney Clark, is on medical leave until October 31, 2010. For any inquiries related to THEN/HiER, please contact Anne Marie Goodfellow, Network Manager, at [annemarie.goodfellow@ubc.ca](mailto:annemarie.goodfellow@ubc.ca).

**\* MORE TO COME NEXT MONTH!**

