

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



What's new with THEN/HiER?

*** Approaching the Past. Bridging the Gap between History Teacher and History Student, February 24, 2011.** The latest event in THEN/HiER and Active History's collaborative workshop series was held at the Duke



of York pub in Toronto. A panel comprised of York University teacher educator Peter Flaherty, OISE Ph. D. candidate and award-winning teacher Rose Fine-Meyer, and current and former York B. Ed. students Polina Aizenberg and Garry Smolyansky discussed the topic of bridging the gap between history student and history teacher. The panel was moderated by Active History representative Tom Peace. Twenty-one people attended, including faculty and students from OISE's B. Ed. program and York's Faculty of Education, Ontario Ministry of

Education staff, and representatives from Toronto community museums. The discussion that followed the panelists' presentations was one of the most rewarding of the series to date. The next *Approaching the Past* event will be held April 27, 2011 at Fort York National Historic Site. The subject for the evening will be *Teaching the War of 1812*, and will include presentations on teaching the war from an aboriginal perspective. **Jennifer Bonnell**



*** THEN/HiER member Sabrina Moisan**, Education Coordinator for the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, is organizing a training day for teachers at the MHMC on October 27, 2011. This year's theme is *Teaching the Holocaust and Other Genocides: Opportunities, Challenges and Successes*. The goal is to discuss the theoretical and educational issues raised by the use of a comparative approach to teach about the Holocaust and other genocides, and to offer best practice tools to educators. The MHMC invites education specialists, educators and teachers to submit their proposals for workshops for this training day before April 29, 2011. More details.



British Columbia HISTORY



*** THEN/HiER Director Penney Clark** is guest editor of the Spring, 2011 edition of *British Columbia History*, the journal of the BC Historical Federation, a THEN/HiER partner. Topics in this theme issue on education range from elementary to postsecondary, rural to urban, curriculum policy to classroom practice, curricular to extracurricular, and public to private. Articles include discussions of rural school Christmas concerts; New Westminster May Day celebrations; art learning at Van Tech and Kitsilano schools; the popular BC Heritage Fairs; the commercial course at St. Ann's Academy at the turn of the century; and the early years of what is now the University of the Fraser Valley. Order your copy.

*** Think Chinese Canadian history in BC is all about building the railroad?** Learn much more about Chinese Canadian history at the Chinese Canadian Military Museum in Vancouver, and



tour Vancouver's Chinatown with THEN/HiER member and historian Judy Lam Maxwell. You will discover areas not frequented by the typical Chinatown visitor. Chinese Canadians have not only served Canada in both world wars (prior to achieving full citizenship rights), since the early twentieth century they have also served as Canadian statesmen and were very successful local entrepreneurs. For group tours contact Judy Lam Maxwell.



Judy Lam Maxwell

What's new with our partners?

* **The Association for Canadian Studies** is hosting a forum on *Governance, Attachment and Identities in Federal States: Comparing Canada, the United States, Germany, Spain and Argentina*. The forum will take place on April 6, 2011 at Minto Place Suites (Vanier-Stanley Room), 185 Lyon Street North in Ottawa, and will be of interest to policy-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders. More information and registration.

* **The Manitoba Social Science Teachers' Association** announces The Red River Regional Heritage Fair which will take place on May 5, 2011 at the Duckworth Centre, University of Winnipeg. Student projects will be evaluated through an oral presentation, interview, and project evaluation. More details.



McCord Museum unveils its new visual identity! Celebrating its 90th anniversary, the McCord Museum has adopted a new logo and signature: *McCord Museum, Our People, Our Stories*. Read more.

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* **Parks Canada** is turning 100 this year! On May 19, 1911, the Government of Canada created the Dominion Parks Branch, known today as Parks Canada, the very first national parks service in the world. To celebrate Parks Canada is adopting "theme months," and various activities kick off on May 19. Read more.

Graduate Student Committees

Changes are afoot with the THEN/HiER anglophone Graduate Student Committee. The coordinator Jennifer Bonnell has recently accepted a SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Guelph, and will be leaving her work with THEN/HiER to focus on her research. We'd like to extend a warm welcome to Rose Fine-Meyer, an award-winning history teacher and doctoral candidate at OISE/UT, and Samantha Cutrara, a doctoral candidate at York's Faculty of Education, who will be working jointly to coordinate a growing number of initiatives of interest to graduate students.



Rose Fine-Meyer



Samantha Cutrara

There are recent posts on our *Teaching the Past* blog by Laurence Abbott on looking for outcomes in undergraduate history courses, by Samantha Cutrara on useful articles in history education research, and by Active History contributor Tom Peace on whether or not Canadian universities are academically adrift. If you'd like to submit a post or blog with us more regularly, contact Samantha.

As well, a new collection of resources for teaching assistants of undergraduate history courses is now available on the THEN/HiER website. The goal for this collection is to build a "one-stop-shop" for useful articles on pedagogy, ideas for group activities, multimedia demonstrations of teaching strategies, and websites containing useful teaching resources for the undergraduate classroom. We'd like to continue to expand this collection with suggestions from current and former history TAs. Please contact Samantha to submit your suggestions.

This month the francophone Graduate Student Committee welcomed a new member, Marie-Hélène Brunet, a doctoral student at the Université de Montréal. Ms Brunet's research interests focus on the areas of training and teaching in women's history. We are delighted that she has joined us!



Catherine Duquette

The committee is also very pleased to announce the launch of a new French-language blog on history teaching. In the coming weeks bloggers will discuss research, methods, and issues related to the teaching of history. We hope to attract a large readership! *Catherine Duquette*.

Research Snapshots

This section of our monthly e-Bulletin highlights our members' research projects.

Sabrina Moisan, Ph.D.
Education Coordinator
Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre



Historical Thinking in Quebec History Education

I realized late in my education the importance of history in thinking about and understanding the world. I was in college in Quebec when I learned the historical method for the first time. It was a real revelation! It was also a very frustrating time because I wondered why my earlier history teachers did not teach these methods, and why they had taught me history through memorization of disconnected historical facts. I continued this questioning throughout my history studies in university. Because I was skeptical about the potential of memorization to enrich individuals' understanding of the relationship of the past to the present, I decided to do a Master's degree on the results of this teaching style on Quebec students. With Jocelyn Létourneau as my advisor, for my thesis titled *Mémoire historique de l'aventure québécoise chez les jeunes Québécois francophones : Coup de sonde et analyse*, I investigated young francophone Quebecois' historical memory. I found great uniformity in the narrative story of the past, and, in particular, a lack of any type of critical or historical thinking in regards to this story. I hypothesized that part of the explanation for this phenomenon resides with teachers' practices and their own history teacher education experience. Several studies also demonstrated the preponderance of traditional teaching methods.

So, in spite of high quality teacher education, and in-depth studies concerning historical thinking within their training, teachers continue to use more lecture-centred methods based on a narrative from a single point of view. I was convinced that teachers' epistemological foundations and portrayals of society within their discipline constituted an element of response that was worth investigating in order to improve teacher training and better understand the dynamic of a history class. This was the purpose of my doctoral research which resulted in my dissertation, *Fondements épistémologiques et représentations sociales d'enseignants d'histoire du secondaire à l'égard de l'histoire et la citoyenneté comme objets d'enseignement et d'apprentissage*.

I found that the history teachers in my sample (18 from Montreal and two First Nations communities) see history not as a social science, but as a common culture. They readily teach different interpretations (usually those of francophones, anglophones, and sometimes of First Nations), but these are presented as if they were monolithic stories shared by all members of a particular group. When they spoke of interpretation, teachers were not referring to those that students could make themselves by working with the sources. In reality, they privileged basic historical knowledge acquisition over the transmission of a historical method. Through this they hoped to give their students a knowledge of history to allow them to form an idea about the evolution of their society. This was the main objective of their teaching.

In addition, the teachers I met arrived at the conclusion that lecture-based teaching is the most effective way to keep student interest in a topic. While in theory they were not against historical thinking and methods, they did not believe that secondary students could develop these skills and at the same time acquire the necessary knowledge of what they considered to be a good history education. Thus, the absence of teachers' epistemological foundations, coupled with their convictions about teaching that went against research findings in the field of history education, posed serious challenges in teacher training.



Today I have the opportunity to continue reflecting on and applying the principles of history teaching in my new position as Education Coordinator at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre (MHMC). My responsibilities include providing professional development sessions for teachers, creating education materials, and conducting research with universities in the Montreal area. I am in the process of developing an educational tool to promote the development of students' historical thinking based on Canadian and Quebecois intervention (by both the state and individuals) during the Holocaust and the genocide in Cambodia. For this task I have access to superb archival documents and close to 500 testimonies of Holocaust survivors now living in Montreal. I use life stories and documents of five survivors who came to Canada as refugees during the war.

All of them crossed the Atlantic on the famous Portuguese ship *Serpa Pinto*. I will demonstrate the use of this tool to teachers next October during a teacher colloquium organized by the MHMC. In sum, my passion for history teaching and those who pursue this profession has enriched my own profession!

*** MORE TO COME NEXT MONTH!**