

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

## What's new with THEN/HiER?



\* **Ruth Sandwell and Jan Haskings-Winner, THEN/HiER Executive Board Members**, recently participated in a curriculum review session organized by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education on proposed revisions to the Grades 9 through 12 History and Law curricula. Participants examined part of the draft documents pertaining to specific courses and provided focused feedback on them.



\* **Jocelyn Létourneau, THEN/HiER Executive Board Member**, gave a Trudeau Lecture, titled History and Social Hope, on February 14 at McGill University.



\* **Penney Clark, THEN/HiER Director**, gave a video conference presentation called "Cliffs and Chasms: History Education in Canada" to 100 students at Lakehead University on February 7. Dr. Clark gave an historical overview of history education in Canada, including the "history wars." She discussed her favourite historical female educator, Dr. Donald Dickie, and her role in the progressive education movement. Finally, she reviewed historical thinking concepts and how they can inform history education.



\* **Penney Clark, THEN/HiER Director, and Peter Seixas, Executive Board Member**, invite you to help celebrate history education. There will be a reception following the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Teaching History Special Interest Group (SIG) Business Meeting, on Saturday, April 14 from 7:15 to 9:15 pm, at the Vancouver Convention Centre. More details.



\* **Amy von Heyking, THEN/HiER Executive Board Member**, gave the keynote address at Mount Royal University's workshop for history and social studies teachers on Thursday, February 16. The title of her talk was, "Perspectives on the Past: Teaching and Learning for Historical Empathy."

\* *Approaching the Past*. The next event in this series is Places and Their Stories: Recognizing the History Around Us, which will take place on March 7 from 5 to 7 pm at Artscape Wychwood Barns in Toronto.

## Funding Opportunities

The deadline for THEN/HiER's Visiting Doctoral Student Program and Bursaries for the Historical Thinking Project Summer Institute in Toronto is March 5, so there are only a few days left to submit your application. More information and to apply.

## Small Projects Grants

THEN/HiER has awarded a Small Projects Grant to the Single Thread Theatre Company to support its project, *The Campbell House Story*, a play that will be produced in partnership with the Campbell House Museum in March 2012. The museum, located in Toronto, is the ancestral home of the fifth Chief Justice of Upper Canada, Sir William Campbell, who was a central figure in pre-Confederation history. The theatre company will create and distribute educational resources based on the production.



## What's new with our partners?

\* **The Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness.** The Historical Thinking Project held its Annual General Meeting and Conference, *Assessing Historical Thinking*, January 18 to 20 in Toronto. The meeting was attended by educators, ministry of education officials, museum and heritage officials, federal agency representatives, heads of provincial teaching associations, publishers, and graduate students, and presentations were given by academics from across as well as outside the country (Leeds University, UK; Malmö University, Sweden; Stanford University, USA.; and College Board, USA). The presenters will be collaborating on a book edited by Peter Seixas, to be part of the THEN/HiER series.



\* **The Begbie Canadian History Contest** announces its new publication, *Great Canadian Political Cartoons, 1946 to 1982*. In this collection some of the best cartoonists in the country present an inclusive view of Canadian history from the Gouzenko affair and the early years of the Cold War to the patriation of the Constitution and the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Along the way they deal with such matters as aboriginal affairs, feminism, human rights, labour, multiculturalism, nationalism, regionalism and separatism, and with the ever-present challenge of how to deal with Uncle Sam. How to order.



\* **Canada's History** is accepting nominations for the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award aims to recognize, inspire, and promote the great work of our country's history teachers. Each year, six recipients are honoured with a medal, cash prize, and a trip for two to attend the awards ceremony at Rideau Hall and the National History Forum in Ottawa. Nominations are due April 1. To apply or nominate a teacher.



## Graduate Student Committees

The Anglophone Graduate Student Committee held two "Let's Talk History" events in celebration of National Heritage Day where history graduate students and social studies and history teacher candidates, in an informal setting, reflected upon how historians think historically. Two events were hosted: one by Rose Fine-Meyer at OISE/University of Toronto on February 21, and the other by Cynthia Wallace-Casey at the University of New Brunswick on February 22. After brief introductions,



Rose Fine-Meyer

participants engaged in discussions about how to integrate the historian's craft into classroom instruction. It gave students an opportunity to network, make friends, and share across disciplines. In March we will be hosting our first blog event for the Book Reading/Responding Club based on THEN/HiER's *New Possibilities for the Past*, edited by Penney Clark. Three graduate students will read the collection



Samantha Cutrara

and have an e-conversation about it by responding to questions developed to generate discussion. If you are interested in being involved please click here for more details. The deadline to apply is March 5. Visit our Graduate Student Committee page to hear about other opportunities and events of interest to graduate students! Contact Samantha Cutrara or Rose Fine-Meyer.

During the month of February, the Francophone Graduate Student Committee's web page was updated with biographies of our new members Vincent Boutonnet, Chantal Rivard, and Bruno-Pierre Guillette. Please have a look to become familiar with their research interests. We are still working on making additions to the



Marie-Hélène Brunet

page and recruiting students who are interested in sharing their passion for history education. You will also find two articles on our blog by Bruno-Pierre Guillette suggesting excellent websites for history teachers that provide (usually copyright-free) various types of documents (primary sources, graphic images, videos, etc.). I posted an article about historical agency, where I explore methods historians use to present the role that Stalin and Hitler played in history. We are also preparing for our meeting in Trois-Rivières to discuss plans for the International Didactics of History, Geography and Citizenship Education Symposium which will take place October 26 to 28, 2012. Contact Marie-Hélène Brunet.

## Research Snapshots

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

**Amy von Heyking, Associate Professor**  
**Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge**



### Exploring Classroom Perspectives on the Past

I was in Grade Five when I first understood the challenge for many people of coming to terms with multiple perspectives on the past, when I realized that the stories about my family's history did not have a place in the classroom. My teacher was leading a discussion about the importance of Remembrance Day and she asked if any of us had family members who had participated in the Second World War. I said that my father had been captured in North Africa and spent most of the war in prisoner-of-war camps in Louisiana and Texas. My teacher said, "But Amy, the Americans were our allies." I responded, "I know. My relatives fought on the German side." There was silence for what seemed like an eternity, and then my teacher said, "Oh. We all make mistakes."

So, like many students, I learned that there were at least two stories about the past that were essentially irreconcilable: there was the national story, a "master narrative" about Canada's past that we learned in school; and there was my family story. The master narrative was interesting, but it wasn't very meaningful. There didn't seem to be a place for me to "fit into" that story. Much of the research I have done in the history of school curriculum and history teaching has been a result of that early insight that the historical perspectives presented in school curriculum not only reflect our identity, but also shape our identity. In my scholarly research, I have posed questions that were provoked by that fifth grade episode and by my experiences as a social studies teacher: whose stories have we included in school curriculum? How was school curriculum created and implemented? How did schools shape our understanding of national identity? What impact did the perspectives presented in school curriculum have on the learning experiences of children?



In *Creating Citizens: History and Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980* (University of Calgary Press, 2006), I explored the changing nature of citizenship education in the province. I was particularly interested in the way the school curriculum embodied messages about the province's unique regional identity, as well as evolving understandings of Canadian identity. I also addressed how and why the province, led by relatively conservative governments, endorsed very progressive social studies programs. Since then, I have published articles that examined the images of Americans in Canadian curriculum and textbooks, and the nature and impact of notions of "Britishness" in Canadian schools in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In all my work in curriculum history I have attempted not just to analyze the official curriculum in programs of study and textbooks, but also to explore how that curriculum was communicated to and experienced by students in classrooms. Teachers have always negotiated and even challenged curriculum reforms, adopting or adapting new programs to suit the needs of their students and their own contexts and values. It is an enormous challenge for historians to understand curriculum beyond the rhetoric of official programs of study and within the reality of classrooms. Rare primary sources, such as students' schoolwork and teachers' planning materials, help me address what historians have called the "black box" of curriculum history, *i.e.*, The Classroom. My current research project examines the extent and nature of the implementation of child-centred, progressive innovations in schools.

I have also begun to research how students grapple with history instruction that allows them to explore multiple perspectives. The Alberta Program of Studies in Social Studies requires that teachers facilitate students' understanding of diverse and often conflicting perspectives of people in the past. There is, however, limited research to indicate the extent to which children can understand and articulate the perspectives of the people of another time and place. My study of sixty Grade Four students explored the basic characteristics of their expressions of historical empathy, and assessed the impact of specific instructional strategies such as novel studies on their ability to articulate a range of historical perspectives. The students initially demonstrated all the presentist assumptions other researchers have found. Over the course of the school year, the students explicitly engaged with the concept of historical perspective, researched their family history, and completed a range of learning activities about their community's and the province's past. At the end of the year, they still struggled with some perspectives, particularly those they had encountered in novels rather than informational text. Students grew in their ability to articulate historical perspectives, but their ability was affected by their emotional development, the specific historical topic they were studying, even specific events in their own lives. While there is no question that history instruction that attends to a range of perspectives is challenging for students, I believe that it is key to nurturing attentive, respectful, responsible and caring citizens.

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