

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

## *What's new with THEN/HiER?*



\* **New THEN/HiER Executive Board Member.** THEN/HiER would like to welcome Catherine Duquette as our most recent Executive Board member. Dr. Duquette has been involved with THEN/HiER for several years, most recently as a Graduate Student Committee Coordinator. She is currently Assistant Professor in Didactics of History and Geography at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC).



\* **Kevin Kee, THEN/HiER Executive Board Member,** has been given a Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching at Brock University. He also gave a convocation address at the Faculty of Education graduation. Read more.



\* **Peter Seixas, THEN/HiER Executive Board Member, and Tom Morton, THEN/HiER Member,** are pleased to announce the publication of *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*, published by Nelson Education. In the foreword, Ken Osborne describes it as "a welcome blend of theory and practice that will be of great service to history teachers while also making history more accessible and thus more educationally rewarding for students."

\* **Jan Haskings-Winner, THEN/HiER Executive Board Member, and Ian Pettigrew, Instructional Coordinator for the Peel District School Board,** facilitated at the Literacy GAINS Camp in Ontario this past month. Their group of nineteen teachers focused on historical thinking and using learning conversations.

## *THEN/HiER Funding Programs*



THEN/HiER has recently awarded a combined Small Projects/Graduate Student Projects grant. Graduate student organizers of the 2012/13 *HerstoriesCafe Series* will provide extension materials, event summaries and links for use in classrooms based on this Toronto-based series of talks. They will also create a step-by-step model for others to set up similar events in their own communities.

### *Upcoming Deadline - THEN/HiER Graduate Student Projects Program*

THEN/HiER supports projects related to history teaching and learning in Canada initiated, organized, and carried out by graduate students in history and history education. We will consider requests for support up to a maximum of \$2,500.

The next deadline for submissions is September 4, 2012.

## What's new with our partners?

### \* Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN)

CHIN's TechWatch Summer 2012 provides information on the use of technology in museums. This issue discusses trends in mobile technology through *Research and Best Practices* and *Mobile Technology in Action* using examples from museums in Canada and around the world.



### \* Museum of Vancouver (MOV)



MOV is holding a conference titled *City Museums: Collisions/Connections* from October 24 to 27, 2012, to discuss city museums and their engagement in city life. Themes include aging infrastructure, the need for urban regeneration, economic and environmental crises, demographic shifts, global diasporas, and immigrant and urban Aboriginal populations. Early bird registration by September 1.

### \* The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

The current exhibition titled *Shaping Canada: Exploring Our Cultural Landscapes* highlights Canada's cultural landscapes through seven case studies around key ideas like family, faith, food, recreation and neighbourhood. The result shows aspects of how people create, maintain and experience cultural landscapes across Canada.



Members of the Sikh Motorcycle Club, Surrey, BC  
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## Graduate Student Committees

The end of the summer and the beginning of another academic year bring excitement about ongoing projects, new memberships and networking. The Anglophone Graduate Student Committee is pleased to announce that we are currently finalizing the details for a number of committee initiatives. Bloggers on *Teaching the Past* are poised to begin in September and are excited about addressing the new monthly themes which cover a wide range of current topics in history education in Canada. The *Read/Review/Respond* blog will begin again in the fall with new posts. The *Artifact of the Month* feature (monthly photos of objects posted on Facebook and Flickr) should generate much interest in object-based learning and will offer tips for educators about how to engage critically with the past. Contact Kate Zankowicz about our web initiatives. The THEN/HiER October conference in Quebec City is much anticipated: several members of both Graduate Student Committees are looking forward to participating on panels, as well as blogging and tweeting about what is sure to be a fantastic event. We look forward to seeing everyone there. Contact Rose Fine-Meyer.



Rose Fine-Meyer

In August I had the opportunity to travel to Vancouver and visit the THEN/HiER offices at the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness at UBC. This visit allowed me to establish even greater ties to people who work for THEN/HiER and discuss several future projects with them. Vincent Boutonnet, a Francophone Graduate Student Committee member, was also in Vancouver this past month participating in THEN/HiER's Visiting Doctoral Student Program where he was studying with Penney Clark. The report of his visit is available on the THEN/HiER website. On our blog, *Enseigner l'histoire*, please have a look at the poster and information about our fast-approaching Regional Annual Conference, which will take place on October 25, 2012 in Quebec City. Marc-André Lauzon, a teacher in Quebec and Master's student studying with Professor Catherine Duquette at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, will co-chair one of the panels on historical empathy in the history class. We hope to see many of you there! Contact Marie-Hélène Brunet.



Marie-Hélène Brunet

## Research Snapshots

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

**Mills Kelly, Associate Professor**  
**College of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Director, Global Affairs Program**  
**George Mason University**



### Having Fun With History

Several years ago I decided that university level history students just weren't having enough fun in their classes. By not having enough fun I don't mean to say that history majors aren't enjoying their studies of the past. I see plenty of evidence that the students in my department like what they study, get a high degree of personal satisfaction from their work, and are glad to be history majors. But I don't see them having very much fun.

It seems reasonable to ask whether we should even be worried whether or not a university education in history is fun or not. If the object of our endeavors as educators is to stimulate learning among our students, why do they need to have fun at the same time they learn? One reason for having fun in a history class is that the more we are enjoying something, the more we tend to be engaged with it. We look forward to things that are fun and dread those that feel like drudgery. The more students are having fun in a course, the more actively they will be engaged with the material they are studying, and I think we can all agree that active engagement has some sort of positive learning outcome. I would also ask, "Why not have fun?"



Several years ago, I decided to deal with the "fun deficit" in my courses. I rewrote my historical methods course to make it more challenging, more research focused, and more "outdoorsy." Students in that class (titled *Dead in Virginia*) now spend time out in the field and in the archives researching local family cemeteries. They publish the results of their work online for the benefit of other historians, and they tell me they really enjoy getting their hands dirty (quite literally) in the pursuit of answers to mysteries posed by what they find (and don't) in their research.

I also created a new course called *Lying About the Past*. In this course my students work in teams to create plausible historical hoaxes that they then turn loose online for two weeks (and no more) to see if they can fool anyone. When I created the course, it seemed to me that historical hoaxes were, in and of themselves, fun to study. By creating a hoax of their own, the students would be not only having fun, but would exercise their creative energies in the online environment. Given that they are now just as much content creators as content consumers in the digital world, this latter point has been especially important to the course.

Both courses are very rigorous and require more work from the students than they expect when they sign up. In each, my students are challenged to think about the past in ways they have not before. They have to find it, get face to face with it, touch it, fake it, and publicize it to a wider audience.

Do they have fun doing all of these things? What I see in the classroom and what they report back to me at the end of the semester is that they have lots of fun. Do they learn more? I think "more" is the wrong metric, because it implies that there is some sort of universal standard for measuring more or less historical learning in a particular course. So much of what we are trying to do in our work as educators is to help students develop their own ways of knowing about the past. Instead of "more," I would say they learn many of the same things we've been teaching them for years, but in different ways. And at least in the case of the hoax course, they also learn a degree of skepticism about the veracity of online sources that they do not learn anywhere else.

What I do know for sure, though, is that they come to class early, stay late, and display the highest levels of engagement with the substantive aspects of the courses that I've seen in almost twenty years of college teaching. And they laugh and chuckle their way through the entire semester.

What could be wrong with that?

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