

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



## What's new with THEN/HiER?

\* **Peter Seixas** is the recipient of the 2015 Jean Dresden Grambs Distinguished Career in Research Award from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Peter will be honoured at the 96th NCSS Annual Conference, December 2 to 4, 2016 in Washington, D.C. This annual award recognizes professionals who have made extensive contributions to knowledge concerning significant areas of social studies education through meritorious research over the course of their careers.



\* **Ruth Sandwell** was part of Canadian Energy History, a panel that took place on November 24, with Steve Penfold (University of Toronto) and Andrew Watson (University of Saskatchewan). Panelists discussed changes in Canadian energy sources and consumption since Confederation. A podcast of the panel appears in the Network in Canadian History and Environment (NiCHE) *Nature's Past* series.

\* **Jennifer Pettit, THEN/HiER member**, has sent out a call for papers for the symposium, "Historians Teaching History: What Works and What Needs Work?" which will take place at Mount Royal University on May 28, 2016, just prior to the Canadian Historical Association Meeting at Congress. The deadline for submissions is January 29.



\* **Kristina Llewellyn, THEN/HiER member**, participated in a BBC World Service panel titled *Reconciliation: Healing a Nation* at the Spur Festival in Ottawa on November 7. Other panelists were Justice Murray Sinclair and Torsten Klengel, MD and Research Fellow at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School.



Roedde House Museum. By Torecles (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

### Approaching the Past (ATP)

The December 7 ATP event in New Brunswick, *À qui l'histoire? Identité et témoignages francophones dans l'étude des guerres mondiales*, was postponed until January (date to be determined) due to illness of one of the speakers. It will take place at the Musée acadien de l'Université de Moncton and feature speakers Greg Kennedy (Université de Moncton) and Jeanne-Mance Cormier (Musée acadien). The final Vancouver event of the 2015-2016 season will take place at the historic Roedde House Museum on March 2.

### Website Update

#### New Materials for Teaching Canadian History

Links to new teaching resources have been posted on our *General Instructional Resources for Teaching Canadian History* webpage:

- ArcGIS Online provides resources which include story maps such as Canada's Nation Builders, Canada's Participation During World War I, and Black History Canada; and web maps and lessons such as Canadian Confederation, Aboriginal Peoples of North America, and The Changing Face of Canada.
- The Ontario Genealogical Society has developed Family History Lesson Plans that support the elementary and secondary Ontario curriculum. The lessons include primary source documents from the Archives of Ontario.

## Feature Blog



By SqueakyMarmot from Vancouver, Canada (Kellogg's® Tony the Tiger™ camera Uploaded by tm) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

In They're Gr-r-r-eat! Cereal Box as Serial Docs, guest blogger Koral LaVorgna describes a research trip to the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York. While there Koral was able to access the museum's collection of children's cereal boxes. Her examination of these primary documents, which are usually overlooked, is interesting in and of itself, but her blog also points to the pedagogical possibilities of everyday artefacts.

## What's new with our partners?

\* **The Canadian Museums Association (CMA)** will hold its 2016 National Conference in Halifax from April 11 to 15. Keynote speakers will be Wade Davis, Bruce Dearstyne, Ursula Johnson, Laura Penny, and René Rivard. Program information including pre-conference study tours and registration is available on the CMA website.



\* **Canada's History** has published reviews of several books in its December-January magazine, including *The Bastard of Fort Stikine: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Murder of John McLouglin, Jr.* by Debra Komar, *Along a River: The First French-Canadian Women* by Jan Noel, and *More Than Just Games: Canada and the 1936 Olympics* by Richard Menkis and Harold Troper. See a list of all books reviewed.

CANADA'S  
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\* **The Museums Association of Saskatchewan (MAS)** is offering an online certificate program on Museums and the Community. Participants will explore the changing place of museums in communities by investigating current practices in planning, assessing, and implementing collaborative initiatives. For more information and to register.

\* **BC Heritage Fairs Society (BCHFS)** launched its first Facebook volunteer feature post on December 5, which coincided with International Volunteer Day. Gail Sumanik was the first volunteer to be featured, and over the next 13 weeks BCHFS will post profiles of heritage fair volunteers from across BC. Please "like" these posts and share them on your own Facebook page.



## Graduate Student Committees



Scott Pollock

In *Teaching the Past* this month, Anglophone Graduate Student Committee bloggers covered a wide range of topics. Cynthia Wallace-Casey writes about the challenges of teaching with history museums and I offer an analysis of Ontario's new history curriculum. Former committee members Lindsay Gibson and Heather McGregor have written blogs for our "Where are they now?" series that provide updates on their latest work. Contact Scott Pollock.

The final blog posts for 2015 are available on *Enseigner l'histoire*. Alexandre Turgeon, who recently became a postdoctoral fellow in history at the University of Ottawa, describes the demands of his new life in La vie après le doctorat ou le postdoctorat en quelques images. Invited blogger Catinca-Adriana Stan announces the availability of a book that she edited, *L'histoire nationale telle qu'elle est enseignée dans nos écoles* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2015). It includes chapters written by Francophone Graduate Student Committee members Marie-Hélène Brunet, Alexandre Joly-Lavoie and me. Finally, Katryne Ouellet has reviewed *Becoming a History Teacher: Sustaining Practices in Historical Thinking and Knowing*, an edited book in the THEN/HIER series. Happy Holidays! Contact Raphaël Gani.



Raphaël Gani

## Research Snapshots

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

**S. G. Grant**  
Professor of Social Studies Education  
Graduate School of Education  
Binghamton University

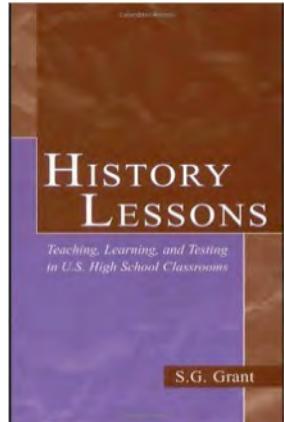


### Big Ideas and Ambitious Teaching

Cursed with a short attention span, I was fortunate to land in a career that has allowed me to follow my academic's nose. That nose has led me into the varied worlds of educational policy, standards, curriculum, and assessment, but always with a sense that it was teachers' classroom practices that mattered most.

Apart from a brief flirtation with literacy and mathematics policy and practice, my work has been broadly defined by the field of social studies. My particular focus has always been in history, but my interests in policy, curriculum, and the like have meant that I needed to look beyond that single discipline.

Over much of the last 20 years, I have researched and written about history teachers' views of and their classroom practices around state-level standards and high-stakes tests. That work allowed me to spend time with teachers and their students, to look deeply into the twin acts of teaching and learning, and to explore the many ways that teachers construct their classroom pedagogies in an era of increased accountability.

In the first book that came from that work, *History Lessons: Teaching, Learning, and Testing in U.S. High School Classrooms* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), I examined the cases of two high school history teachers against the backdrop of the wider scholarly literature on teaching, learning, and testing. My initial impulse was to frame the book around Lee Shulman's notion of *pedagogical content knowledge*. And I might have done so if I had focused only on teaching and learning history. However, I was equally interested in looking at the teachers' responses to state-level testing. Shulman's construct resonated with me, but something seemed to be missing.

That missing something was the idea that teaching always occurs in a particular context. Many factors can influence a teaching context, but not all support teachers' best efforts. Interested in capturing the interaction among teaching, learning, and context, I developed the construct of *ambitious teaching*. My definition of that idea focused on the degree to which teachers a) know their subject matter well and see within it the potential to enrich their students' lives; b) know their students well, which includes understanding the kinds of lives their students lead, how these youngsters think about and perceive the world, and that they are far more capable than they and most others believe them to be; and c) know how to create the necessary space for themselves and their students in environments in which others (e.g., administrators, other teachers) may not appreciate either of their efforts.

In talking with colleagues about the *History Lessons* book, the conversation inevitably turned to the need for more exemplars of ambitious teachers. The edited volume that resulted, *Teaching History with Big Ideas: Cases of Ambitious Teachers* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), allowed my co-editor Jill Gradwell and me to employ another construct I had been writing about for some time—*big idea questions*. A big idea question (e.g., Was the American Revolution revolutionary?) frames an instructional unit in ways that reflect both intellectual and student relevance in equal measures. The teacher-written chapters describe the authors' assumptions about and the interplay among teaching, learning, and context. In the cross-case analysis chapter, Jill and I identified patterns across the teachers' responses to the challenges they confronted in ways that allowed us to amplify the notion of ambitious teaching.

I am proud of this work but, about a year ago, I had the chance to see it take root in teachers' classrooms. Because of my work on the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, I was asked to lead a curriculum development project (the Toolkit) to support the new New York State K-12 Social Studies Standards. My colleagues Kathy Swan, John Lee, and I built the project around the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), which we began constructing as part of an earlier effort. The 84 curriculum units or inquiries that form the heart of the K-12 Toolkit project use the IDM to promote inquiry-based instruction through the use of compelling questions, evidence-based arguments, disciplinary sources, and taking informed action opportunities. Expressed in this fashion, the Toolkit inquiries reflect the four dimensions of the Inquiry Arc of the C3 Framework. Key to the strong teacher response to the project is the perception that the effort both pushes and honors their professional judgment and expertise.



Happy Holidays, everyone!