

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

What's new with THEN/HiER?



* **Alan Sears, Carla Peck and Terrie Epstein, THEN/HiER members,** have recently published *Education, Globalization and the Nation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) with co-authors Ian Davies, Eric Chong, Andrew Peterson, Alistair Ross, Maria Auxiliadora Moreira dos Santos Schmidt and Debbie Sonu. The authors discuss social, political and cultural contexts relevant to education, internationalization and globalization in and between different nations to investigate what has been done, is being done and should be done in terms of producing high quality education.



* **Stéphane Lévesque** presented his paper "Seeing History as a 'GPS': On the Uses of Historical Narrative for French Canadian Students' Life Orientation" at The International Society for the Social Studies Annual Conference, which was held in Orlando, Florida on February 25 and 26.



Website Update

We have posted four videos and six blog posts related to the "New Directions in Active History" conference, which took place at Huron College from October 2 to 4, 2015 in London, Ontario. The videos are of the following presentations:

- Mike Dove, The Future of Public History Programs in Canada
- Christopher Moore, Bridging the Gap Between Historians and the Public
- Keith Carlson, Community Engaged History
- John Walsh, The Future of Public History Programs in Canada



The blogs, written by presenters, expand on the discussions that took place during the event. They include:

- Tom Peace, Towards an Active History
- Tom Peace and Daniel Ross, Exploring New Directions in Active History
- Amanda Hill, New Directions in Active History
- Beth Robertson, New Directions in Active History: A Retrospective
- Kaleigh Bradley, New Directions in Public History
- Pete Anderson, New Directions in Active History and the Consulting Historian

We will be posting additional items as they become available.

Feature Blog

Our *Feature Blog* for February is Cynthia Wallace-Casey's review of Dr. Terry's *Family Ties*. As Cynthia explains in her blog, Dr. Terry draws heavily upon the theoretical perspective of Pierre Nora to probe the Victorian Christmas programs of three Canadian house museums: Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario; Mackenzie House in Toronto, Ontario; and Cartier House in Montréal, Quebec. This research points to the importance of providing students with the critical wherewithal to re-examine (and re-interpret) narratives they encounter in house museums. It also illustrates some of the challenges associated with teaching history with living history museums. Please read, and comment on, Cynthia's blog.

What's new with our partners?



* **The Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness**, through its Historical Thinking Project, has been instrumental in changing the way history is taught in Canadian schools, according to *The Canadian History Report Card*, a recently released report by Historica Canada. The report grades the efficacy of history teaching in each province and territory in Canada. Read the report here.

* **British Columbia Heritage Fairs Society (BCHFS)** has received an Outstanding Achievement in Education and Awareness Award from Heritage BC. The award was accepted on behalf of the Society by Board members Becky Burns and Kelsey Beaudry at the 35th Annual Heritage BC Awards Gala on February 18 in Vancouver. THEN/HiER Director Penney Clark has joined the Board of the Society.



* **The Museums Association of Saskatchewan (MAS)** was represented by Wendy Fitch, MAS Executive Director, at Canadian Museums Day in Ottawa, January 25 and 26. Wendy and several other Canadian museum colleagues met with Members of Parliament and Senators to discuss various forms of federal support needed by museums in order for them to continue to play an important role in their communities.

* **The Association for Canadian Studies' (ACS)** most recent issue of *Canadian Issues* is themed, "The Battleground of Remembrance: Struggles at the Intersection of Canadian War History and Public Memory" (Fall 2015). Contributors to this issue include Randy Boswell, Jeremy Diamond, Jonathan F. Vance, Jack Jedwab, John English, Laura Brandon, Serge Bernier, Terry Copp and Jamie Swift.



Graduate Student Committees



Scott Pollock

The past month has been busy for many members of the Anglophone Graduate Student Committee. Cynthia Wallace-Casey is preparing for the Canadian Museums Association conference in April, where she will be discussing "Historical Thinking in Museums." Several other members are beginning to think about papers and presentations for the CSSE (Canadian Society for the Study of Education) conference in the spring. This month *Teaching the Past* covered several topics. For example, Chris Pederson writes about the use of fictional literature in the history classroom, arguing that these texts can play an important role in understanding human nature. And as noted on page one, THEN/HiER has re-published a series of six blogs from activehistory.ca. These articles offer an introduction to the idea of active history and a sense of the direction in which this concept has been moving over the past several years. They are all well worth reading! Contact Scott Pollock.

Preparations are well underway for the Francophone Graduate Student Committee symposium organized by Nathalie Popa and me, which will be held March 9 at the Université du Québec à Montréal, and for which spaces are still available: contact me for more details. The symposium will bring together about a dozen young researchers, including Alexandre Turgeon who has written a blog post this month for *Enseigner l'histoire* on newspaper columnist Mathieu Bock-Côté's opinions about the *Grande noirceur* in Québec history. Contact Raphaël Gani.



Raphaël Gani

Research Snapshots

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

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'We don't actually know what happened': Pupils' Understanding of 9/11 and Its Wider Context Ten Years On

In September 2011, ten years after the terrorist attacks on the US known throughout the world simply as 9/11, a new web-based educational resource was launched in the UK to support teachers and their students in learning about the attacks (see <http://since911.com/schools>). The project was funded by a small London-based charity and directed by the UCL Institute of Education. Prior to the development of the website, research was carried out across eight large secondary (11-18 years) schools across England in 2010-11. Here I will report on some project findings from 13 group interviews with 65 students aged 13-15 years.

The data from the student interviews were analysed in two ways, first to discern any patterns in students' substantive knowledge of 9/11 (when it happened, where, who was involved and why it happened) and second to analyse the responses in terms of three main dimensions of historical thinking. For the latter, I adapted Levesque's work (from "Bin Laden is responsible; it was shown on tape": Canadian High School Students' Historical Understanding of Terrorism," *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 31:2, 174-202) and focused on three areas: *perspective recognition/similarity and difference; cause and consequence; evidence/provisionality*. I will focus here on the students' substantive knowledge but a fuller analysis of all aspects of the research will be published in due course.

Factual knowledge of what happened on the day was surprisingly good given that the students had not learnt about it routinely in UK schools and were only about four years old when it happened. They knew it happened in America, that it involved the Twin Towers in New York and, when given a range of dates and numbers of fatalities, were generally correct in their choices. The term 'terrorist' was used in most of the group interviews without any prompting and a small number of students displayed some impressive wider contextual knowledge, for example by drawing comparisons with the IRA or America's previous foreign policy.

However, when the discussion turned to the causes of 9/11, more serious gaps in the students' knowledge were exposed. These gaps fell into three categories: people, geography and chronology. Students generally knew who George Bush was; they were less certain about Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. A common problem was uncertainty about whether Al Qaeda was a person or a group. Geographically, students found it hard to distinguish between Iraq and Afghanistan and they characterised the Middle East as a single entity harbouring vast oil reserves (generally wanted only by the US). Sarah, for example, was especially confused, suggesting that 'wars in Vietnam or Pakistan' were causes of 9/11. Perhaps the most serious gap in knowledge, however, was chronological. It was extremely common for the students to believe that 9/11 was in response to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that nurtured the misconception that 9/11 was purely an act of revenge.

The students brought with them sets of assumptions that, despite often being based on flimsy sources, they held onto tenaciously. Amongst these assumptions was an anti-American bias, the force of which was surprising: George Bush was often cast as a villain and the sense that 9/11 was (sometimes exclusively) America's fault was not at all uncommon. Michael, for example, claimed that, "America does have a history of just hanging around waiting for someone to point the gun at and just later finding a reason to do it." Some students had encountered conspiracy theories about the involvement of the US in the attacks that helped to fuel this anti-Americanism.

Religion was also identified as a key cause of 9/11 but there was confusion and some bewilderment about this. Some students argued that all terrorism was motivated by religion whilst others suggested that religion was a front for other, more political motives.

The point is not that the students' lack of knowledge was shocking – why should we expect them to know anything much when they have not been taught this in schools? Instead, my point is that they knew – or thought they knew – a surprising amount about the broader context and causes of 9/11 through their access to the Internet and other media. This makes it much more likely that they will bring pre-conceptions into the classroom which may act as a barrier to an open-minded consideration of context, causation and perspectives. Effective teaching, we argue, needs to engage with these pre-conceptions in order to make possible more sophisticated analyses of 9/11, its causes and its consequences.

*** MORE TO COME NEXT MONTH**

