

THEN/HiER Visiting Doctoral Student Report: Kate Zankowicz

I would like to express my extreme gratitude to The History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER) for making my time at Acadia University possible.

Intellectual development is often difficult to quantify into concrete deliverables.

However, here are the traces of the intellectual process that I went through during my two weeks as a Visiting Doctoral Student.



This is a photograph of interview transcripts from 38 museum educators, which were papered across the walls of Room 109 in the Beveridge Arts Building. Thanks to the wisdom and guidance of Dr. Brenda Trofanenko, they are now starting to make sense. Themes have begun to emerge, ideas are beginning to weave together and connect with one another: in short, my data are beginning to take shape and *mean* something.

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Working with my mentor Dr. Trofanenko was a tremendous opportunity. She showed me how to see *above line* and *below line* content, how to make the data “speak,” and how not to force people’s viewpoints into over-prescribed holes. Dealing with data is not an innate skill, and I was lucky to be supported at such a key stage in my thesis research by someone who specializes in the museum pedagogy field, and whose own work has been so instrumental in our understanding of how visitors construct their own knowledges within museums.

During my time at Acadia, I was also fortunate enough to be a part of *Beyond Pedagogy*, an international workshop that will lead to a scholarly publication. Not only did I get to read papers of scholars from around the world who were deeply engaged with deconstructing museum pedagogy, I was offered a window into how academics prepare for publication, and was given a voice at the workshop table. The opportunity to meet with other graduate students and to discuss museum pedagogy with them in a meaningful way was also amazing. Our conversations will ultimately form the basis of the final debriefing chapter in the publication where we will discuss our perspectives as new academics in the workshop process, and how issues raised there have informed and enriched our own work.



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The workshop also provided me with the opportunity to meet and network with various academics who do research on museums, and discuss their scholarship with them, in an informal and enlightening way. We spent two intensely stimulating days exploring how to move beyond ideological critiques of museums, how best to deal with troubled pasts in exhibitions, and thinking about the relationship between emotion, affect and education.



I also had the opportunity to explore local heritage sites in the Wolfville area and to investigate how historical knowledge is inculcated and displayed within these sites. My visit to Grand Près was particularly illuminating, as a locus of Acadian cultural pilgrimage. I was able to meet with the director of the heritage site, as well as speak with museum educators. Fascinating conversations about multi-perspectival history, how conceptualizations of history change over time, and how to deal with visitor guilt ensued. As a scholar who is interested in how particular historical and cultural narratives are privileged in museum sites, these interchanges were invaluable to me.

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Dr. Trofanenko's knowledge and encouragement was inspiring, and the opportunity to discuss museum pedagogy issues with scholars who have formed perspectives which are embedded in their own cultural locations has taught me to be aware of my own positioning within my research. Having the opportunity to study at a different place is, in effect, an opportunity to look at things through a different lens. I believe that this may be the definition of a teachable moment.