

## THEN/HiER Visiting Doctoral Student Report

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Virtual Historian (VH) Lab at the University of Ottawa

During the last week of May 2015 I had the privilege of visiting Professor Stéphane Lévesque at the University of Ottawa. Stéphane's work on the Virtual Historian, along with his research on historical thinking and teaching Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) courses was of great interest to me at this point in my doctoral studies and professional career. I was specifically interested in learning more about his experiences teaching history method courses to B.Ed students, as well as some of his recent work based on the idea of how teacher identity and historical consciousness shapes their teaching. My goal was to gain more insight into my own research question in light of the recent release of the Ontario history curriculum documents surrounding how secondary school teachers understand historical thinking concepts and how this impacts their teaching. At this early stage in my doctoral research, Stéphane also provided me with some excellent ideas about how to

structure possible surveys to investigate how current secondary school history teachers are interpreting the new curriculum documents and what strategies they are implementing to apply historical thinking into their daily lesson plans. Other questions to possibly consider in the survey: What do teachers conceive their secondary school students are capable of understanding/completing related to HTCs? What are their views on history, the new curriculum and the shift towards historical thinking? I plan on using the results of the survey to focus my research on a few teachers and conduct some focused interviews with them and perhaps even observe some classroom teaching.

This past year I had the pleasure and opportunity of teaching two sections of Intermediate/Senior history to B.Ed students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). Through this experience I realized first-hand that B.Ed students had various difficulties in understanding and implementing HTCs. This led me to start thinking about how teachers would approach the changes in the new curriculum material. In my various meetings and discussions with Stéphane I not only gained a better understanding of various activities and readings he implements, but also strategies he utilizes when teaching history and historical thinking to his B.Ed students. I was also able to connect with Professor Lorna McLean and Professor Sharon Cook from the Faculty of Education and learned more about crucial ideas and perspectives from their collective years of teaching in a B.Ed program, and how they handle the challenges that B.Ed students face in both the university classroom setting and when they are out on placements in school-based settings.

I also captured a great deal of information about the nature of the Education Research Unit (ERU) at the University of Ottawa, and how the tenured faculty try to instill a culture of research and mentorship amongst their graduate students. As Stéphane explained to me, this environment is created so graduate students are immersed in a climate where they be familiarized with various research projects, and can interact with different professors and their scholarly research and see how to become proficient at conducting research.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Professor Tim Stanley, who is currently the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Professor Chad Gaffield, former President of SSHRC from 2006-2014. Both of them gave me a great deal to think about regarding my own research topic, as well as how to manage the challenges of completing a PhD. They also provided ideas of how to possibly structure my research question, ethical considerations and locations for possible fieldwork. Prof. Stanley also shared his experiences of teaching B.Ed students in history and the challenges that come with introducing students to HTCs.

I would like to thank Prof. Lévesque for hosting me in Ottawa and the THEN/HiER adjudication committee for providing me with the opportunity to visit the University of Ottawa. Also thank you to all of the professors who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me and provide me with valuable advice on my own teaching and research as well as PhD student Raphaël Gani for sharing his research.