

**Education on the Edge of Empire:  
Examining the Economics of British Columbia's Colonial Schooling in the Metropole**

Sean Carleton, THEN/HiER Activity Report, 2013

During the 2013 Winter/Spring semester I traveled to London, England to study at the London School of Economics (LSE) as a recipient of a THEN/HiER Visiting Doctoral Student Program award. With the aid of the award, I spent four months at LSE engaging with scholars and students in the Economic History Department, completing an extensive research project at the National Archives on nineteenth century education in colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and presenting at different UK conferences on various aspects of education history and theory. My time at LSE was rewarding and will greatly support my doctoral project as well as enhance my overall professional development.



At LSE I was able to draw on many excellent resources. LSE is one of the top-ranked interdisciplinary institutions in the UK. In particular, the Department of Economic History at LSE was an ideal host department. The internationally acclaimed expertise of the LSE faculty in

matters of social and economic development theory and history provided me with the opportunity to engage in conversations with scholars from a variety of theoretical and methodological backgrounds. I was also able to attend a large number of talks and seminars on a wide variety of subjects held at LSE and I was thus exposed to the rich academic culture of the institution. In addition, LSE had an excellent host supervisor with a wealth of knowledge and experience that I was able to draw on to complete my proposed research plan, Dr. Chris Minns. Minns examines the economic history of North America particularly relating to migration and education in Canada, interests that overlap with my larger doctoral project. My research benefitted greatly from Dr. Minns' knowledge, and the opportunity to work closely with him and other faculty members and students at LSE for a semester has allowed me to establish a number of important scholarly relationships.

While based in London at LSE I also conducted a major research project on colonial education in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia at the National Archives. Specifically, I was able to examine the original correspondence documents written by the Governors of the two colonies to the Colonial Office in London. Analyzing these original correspondence records gave me a unique window onto the historical development of the colonies and allowed me to trace the growing attention given to the economics of education over time leading up to Confederation with the Dominion of Canada in 1867. These sources will help me to answer a variety of important questions related to my doctoral project: How did the Colonial Office discuss colonial schooling? How was colonial education implemented in the empire-making process? Are there overlapping concerns regarding schooling in Vancouver Island and British Columbia in the colonial correspondence of the time with other settler colonies such as New Zealand and Australia? Is there discussion of colonial education in British North America more broadly? How did Colonial Office administrators, Hudson's Bay Company officials, local administrators, teachers, and parents view the purposes and forms of schooling in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century? Is there direct mention of the early schooling of Indigenous children? Is there discussion about the changing vision for education in the years leading up to confederation with the Dominion of Canada? Using the sources I was able to locate to address such questions from an interdisciplinary perspective that views classrooms as sites of power, conflict, and compromise will allow me to identify particular cultures of resistance and highlight early state schooling in British Columbia as a contested socializing force.



Finally, during my period abroad I was also able to meet and network with a number of prominent scholars and students at other institutions around the UK. Most notably, I traveled to the University of Oxford to meet Dr. Terry Eagleton, the Distinguished Professor of English Literature at Lancaster University, Professor of Critical Theory at the National University of Ireland, and the Distinguished Visiting Professor of English Literature at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Eagleton specializes in critical theory and literary criticism and was previously the Thomas Warton Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford. I was also able to see Dr. Catherine Hall present on her new innovative research project on the legacies of slavery in England. The legacies of slavery project is incredibly impressive and demonstrates the possibilities of combining new digital technologies with historical scholarship geared to public audiences and popular education. Dr. Hall is a Professor of Modern British Social and Cultural History at University College London and is an important scholar in the field of New Imperial History. In addition, I presented a paper on education, history, and comics at the Radical Americas Conference at University College London and I gave a longer paper on the same subject at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland while also visiting and networking with

students and scholars there in the Canadian Studies program. Having the opportunity to meet and interact with a number of the UK's leading scholars and students was a wonderful experience.

Thanks to the THEN/HiER Visiting Doctoral Student my time spent in London as visiting student at LSE was greatly rewarding and will prove invaluable in terms of my doctoral research project and scholarly development.

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