

# **“Scaling Up” the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking**

## **A Report on the Vancouver Meetings, February 14-15, 2008**

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**HISTORICA**



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# **“Scaling Up” the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking**

## **A Report on the Vancouver Meetings, February 14-15, 2008**

### **1. Executive Summary**

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project began in 2006, with a partnership between the Historica Foundation (Canada’s leading national organization devoted to the promotion and improvement of history education) and the University of British Columbia’s Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness (CSHC—which supports research on historical consciousness and history education). The project was designed to foster a new way to conduct history education—with the potential to shift how teachers teach and how students learn, in line with recent international research on history learning. Paradoxically, at the same time, it does not involve a radical shift in the history or social studies curriculum. It revolves around the proposition—like scientific thinking in science instruction and mathematical thinking in math instruction—that *historical thinking* is central to history instruction and that students should become more competent as historical thinkers as they progress through their schooling. Historical thinking *requires* “knowing the facts,” but “knowing the facts” is not enough.

Over the next two years, piloting was undertaken in a variety of locations across Canada. By the end of 2007, the expressions of interest in the project from additional districts, from ministries of education, from social studies teachers’ associations, and from publishers were beginning to outstrip the capacity of the virtually non-existent project infrastructure. Early in 2008, Historica and the CSHC successfully sought additional financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assemble a national meeting to plan the next step: a strategic “scaling up” of the capacities of the project. The primary focus of the meeting were the representatives from ministries of education (18 of the 42 participants): they were in the strategic position of carrying the ideas back to provincial and territorial jurisdictions, where crucial educational directions are set and decisions are made.

The agenda was designed around four components of educational change: a) curriculum revision; b) resource development; c) professional development; and d) assessment. Discussion revolved around principles, opportunities and challenges in each, generating a long list of recommendations.

There was strong expression of the need for central support that would both foster the much-desired inter-provincial cooperation, and also maximize the impact of existing expertise. There must also be support “bottom-up” efforts, starting in schools, districts and associations of social studies teachers. The infrastructure for such support appeared to be made possible with the announcement of funding for The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN/HiER, Dr. Penney Clark, UBC, Director: \$2.1 million over the next seven years), whose goals are directly aligned with the Benchmarks project. There were further recommendations for the ongoing involvement of Historica and CSHC; identification, training and support of a cadre of professional development leaders; and ongoing research and knowledge mobilization.

As these supports are put into place, Benchmarks of Historical Thinking will be poised to make a major impact on the way history is taught and learned in Canada, and the Canadian example will stand out, internationally, as a model for 21<sup>st</sup> century history education.

## 2. Introduction: Aims and Rationale of “Benchmarks”

Benchmarks of Historical Thinking offers a dramatically new way to conduct history education—with the potential to shift fundamentally how teachers teach and how students learn.

Paradoxically, at the same time, it does not involve a radical shift in the history or social studies curriculum. It revolves around the proposition—like scientific thinking in science instruction and mathematical thinking in math instruction—that *historical thinking* is central to history instruction and that students should become more competent as historical thinkers as they progress through their schooling.

Why this approach and emphasis on historical thinking? Why now? For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, history programs in Canada (like those in other countries) aimed at transmitting knowledge of a coherent national story—in English Canada, within the framework of the British imperial legacy (less so in Quebec). Such programs did not necessarily place the teaching of *thinking* at the centre of their educational objectives. In a world shaped by new technologies that have revolutionized access to and exchange of information, migrations that have upended older demographic profiles, and new demands for recognition and rights of previously silenced peoples, history is more contentious than ever. Debates over land claims, national borders, origin stories, and collective historical crimes, guilt and reparations are everywhere. The past is no longer a single narrative of national, political progress. Students need to be equipped, by the end of their high school years, to take active part in these debates: to be able to sift the wheat from the chaff, to find truths amidst a cacophony of politically and commercially motivated messages, and to contribute, in their own voices, to democratic discussion. History education can play a key role.

Competent historical thinkers understand both the vast differences that separate us from our ancestors and the ties that bind us to them; they can analyze historical artifacts and documents, which can give them some of the best understandings of times gone by; they can assess the validity and relevance of historical accounts, when they are used to support entry into a war, voting for a candidate, or any of the myriad decisions knowledgeable citizens in a democracy must make. All this *requires* “knowing the facts,” but “knowing the facts” is not enough. Historical thinking does not replace historical knowledge: the two are related and interdependent.

## 3. The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking: A Short History

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project began in 2006, with a partnership between the Historica Foundation (Canada’s leading national organization devoted to the promotion and improvement of history education) and the University of British Columbia’s Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness (CSHC—which supports research on historical consciousness and history education). With funding from the Canadian Council on Learning and the Department of Canadian Heritage, they convened an international symposium of historians, history education scholars and teachers to map the contours of a project which would capture state-of-the-art international research on teaching and learning history and make it a potent force in Canadian classrooms. From the discussions at that meeting, a foundational Framework document was written, defining “historical thinking” around six concepts (Appendix II).

Over the next two years, work was undertaken in a variety of locations across Canada to put flesh on the bones of the Framework. Teams of teachers in four pilot districts (Vancouver, Selkirk MB, Toronto, NB consortium of districts) wrote classroom materials and assessment rubrics, and

selected student exemplars. A website ([www.historybenchmarks.ca](http://www.historybenchmarks.ca)) was developed for feedback during development, as well as publication for a wider audience. The Critical Thinking Cooperative (TC2) published *Teaching About Historical Thinking* using the Benchmarks Framework. In summer 2007, a weeklong Historica national summer institute (45 participants at University of Winnipeg) developed further materials. At the same time, a number of commercial publishers began to integrate the Benchmark ideas into new textbooks and teachers guides, with Oxford University Press leading the way.

By the end of 2007, the expressions of interest in the project from additional districts, from ministries of education, from social studies teachers' associations, and from publishers were beginning to outstrip the capacity of the virtually non-existent project infrastructure.

#### **4. Ministries Respond**

The Benchmarks project was first presented to representatives of all provincial and territorial Ministries of Education at a meeting preceding the Historica Council meeting in Toronto in November, 2006. An update was presented, October 26, 2007. John Stewart, NWT Social Studies consultant and co-chair of the Ministries of Education committee summarized the response in a report to Historica Council:

Ce qui est remarquable c'est que, depuis un an, on a vu presque une révolution dans la pensée curriculaire aux ministères un peu partout au pays. Ce que Peter (Seixas) nous a donné, je pense, est surtout un nouveau vocabulaire qui nous aide énormément dans la conversation autour de comment structurer notre approche au développement de la pensée historique chez l'élève. Nous, comme ministères, avançons avec cette approche, et nous cherchons actuellement une façon d'avancer une conversation ou un projet national dans ce domaine. Je ne sais pas si j'ai besoin de vous expliquer comment c'est rare pour les Ministères d'éducation de vouloir, même d'imaginer, la possibilité ou la nécessité de travailler ensemble. Selon nous les repères peuvent nous offrir des outils, applicables à l'approfondissement des fêtes d'Historica chez les jeunes canadiens/canadiennes, parmi pleines d'autres rôles. Les repères nous offrent une façon d'explorer les histoires de notre pays – du niveau personnel jusqu'au national. Nous serions très intéressés d'explorer comment un tel projet pourrait être créé, et comment, Historica, pourrait y participer avec nous.

As a result of this overwhelming support and escalating opportunities for development and dissemination, but significant limitations to funding and personnel, Historica and the CSHC successfully sought additional financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assemble a national meeting to plan the next step: a strategic “scaling up” of the capacities of the project.

#### **5. “Scaling up”: Participants, Goals, and Structure of the Meeting, Feb. 14-15, 2008**

##### **5.1. Who?**

The meeting, which took place February 14-15 in Vancouver, aimed to include representatives from as many provincial and territorial ministries and departments of education as possible, representatives from each of the major history and social studies textbook publishers, Historica

personnel directly involved in the project, teachers who have been providing leadership in the pilot districts, and leading history education scholars from across Canada. Reflecting the enthusiasm which we had sensed over the previous months, the response was overwhelming. Of 13 ministries in the country, 12 were represented (six of those sent two each, representing both French and English divisions.) Four publishers, twelve teachers and education scholars who had developed materials for the project, and seven staff members from Canadian Heritage and Historica took part: a total of 42 participants. In many ways, the primary focus of the meeting was on the ministry representatives (18 of the 42 participants): they were in the strategic position of carrying the ideas back to provincial and territorial jurisdictions, where crucial educational directions are set and decisions are made. The scholars and teachers were there to provide a rich fund of knowledge of and experience with the project to help guide strategic planning. The Historica staff and the publishers were there largely to see how their organizations might facilitate and promote the project through their activities. Eleven francophones representing seven different provinces and territories participated. Simultaneous translation was available throughout the meeting. (Appendix III, list of participants).

## **5.2. What?**

Ministry participants were polled prior to the meeting. Of the sixteen who responded, ten had had no experience at all working with the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Framework document. The first goal of the meeting was thus to ensure that all participants had a good understanding of the rationale, objectives, methods, and accomplishments of the project. The second goal was to provide Ministry representatives, with input from others, an opportunity to identify current initiatives at the provincial level and potential ones over the next two years (2008-2010). The third and final goal was to identify potential points of inter-provincial cooperation and collaboration across public, non-profit, and private sectors, as well as technologies for sharing.

## **5.3. How?**

The agenda of the meetings was initially designed around four components of educational change: a) curriculum revision; b) resource development; c) professional development; and d) assessment. After a session on the background and conceptualization of the project, discussions moved from broad articulation of goals and needs, to increasingly specific (but still only “possible”) plans of action. (Appendix IV, Meeting Agenda) Written feedback was provided from all small group meetings.

Before examining the four components, it is necessary to take a step back, to address some broad conceptual issues, which came up in the meeting as issues of translation. The subsequent sections of the report deal with the four components. Materials used to write it included a) the pre-conference questionnaires sent to Ministry representatives only, reports and notes from the plenary and small-group sessions, and post-conference evaluations requested from all participants.

## **6. Report of the Francophone Group: Some Foundational Issues**

Though it had not been built into the agenda prior to the meeting, francophone representatives asked for time together in order to discuss issues that particularly affected their constituencies. One of the break-out sessions was structured in response to this request.



In a discussion about the term “concepts”: the group questioned the adequacy of “*concepts*” as the label for the six terms around which Benchmarks defines historical thinking. They explored their relationship with *compétences* (in the sense used by several ministries), *habiletés* (skills) and *objectifs/résultats d’apprentissage* (learning outcomes or objectives), which are measurable and observable. Other terms that were suggested for what we have called “concepts” in English include “portals” (used in *Teaching About Historical Thinking*) and “dimensions.” As defined in the Framework, each can also be stated as a “problem,” embodying some generative paradoxes. Indeed, **one of their central strengths is that they *problematize the curriculum***, and thus demand thinking and judgment from students.

Because we did not reach a consensus on this, the term “concepts,” with all of its inadequacies, will be used for the remainder of this document. Other recommendations about changes in the translation of terms appear in Appendix I.

The group also noted that the Benchmarks project was initially defined as a program to reform history *assessment* in the schools (and this definition remains in the Framework document). However, two years of work has shown how closely linked assessment is with professional development, classroom materials, and curriculum. Consequently, **planning for the future will need to involve all four related components.**

The question was raised whether the proposed model will evolve, and if so, how? How can a healthy dialogue be maintained, with new input, growth in terminology, and reform where problems are encountered, without endangering the conception itself? To put it the other way around, **how can the basic ideas be maintained, while building improvements into the model?**

On the one hand the group noted that the core ideas of this project are visible everywhere and are in line with the constructivist pedagogy and active learning, on which current curricula are based. On the other, the group expressed a need for **more foundational material** serving to explain the research base and principles at the heart of the benchmarks project. At the same time, there was an even more insistent call for **more exemplary curricula, lessons and assessment tasks in French** that would help teachers implement the Benchmarks in the classroom.

## 7. Curriculum

The various provincial and ministerial jurisdictions are in different stages in the cycle of curriculum revision, with most engaged in some revision at some level where historical thinking would be applicable. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Northwest Territories are all involved in curriculum change where historical thinking is being or could be incorporated. At the same time (with the possible exception of Quebec, where major recent history curriculum revisions have been especially contentious) even where there are already new curricula, participants expressed optimism that the Benchmarks concepts might be incorporated. There appears to be *room* for such an addition: many curriculum documents mention “historical thinking” without defining it much further.

### 7.1. Principles

- Benchmarks concepts can serve as a pedagogical approach to problematizing the existing curriculum (e.g., events/topics in the curriculum would be approached using one or more of the Benchmarks concepts).

- Historical thinking can be introduced into curricula a variety of ways: 1) embedded in specific topics (e.g., “students will learn to assess the significance of WWI”); 2) embedded in more general themes (e.g., “students will understand the roots, consequences and moral issues associated with modern warfare”); or 3) as a framework or strand for historical thinking in the front (introductory) section of the curriculum. Least satisfactory would be as abstract “skills” separated from historical “content” (e.g., “students will learn to assess the significance of historical events.”)

## 7.2. Opportunities

- Alberta’s social studies curriculum provides room for “skills for historical inquiry.”
- Québec observers (not representing the Ministry, but closely connected to the recent curriculum changes) saw rich opportunities for links between the historical thinking concepts to the elements of the three competencies in the history/ citizenship courses (questioning, interpretation, and citizenship awareness).
- Ontario representatives saw strong links to Ministry-mandated "critical literacy," which is promoted K-12, helping students to interrogate texts with questions such as, who is the author, what is the purpose, who is the audience, whose interests are omitted, whose values are represented, in other words, asking students to mine texts for meanings beyond information.
- In Manitoba, both francophone and Anglophone curriculum committees are committed to building historical thinking into the new Grade 11 History of Canada course.
- In New Brunswick, there is a possible integration of the concepts into program renewal, and connecting them to professional development in practical workshops.
- In Prince Edward Island, the concepts are seen as a basis for developing teaching and learning strategies. Representatives showed how they are currently integrated into new materials for the Grade 6 History of PEI course.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education is integrating the concepts into its curriculum renewal process. Pilot teachers have responded positively.

## 7.3. Challenges

- It will take considerable experience and testing in order to integrate the historical thinking concepts in a continuous progression over successive years of study. **An ongoing program of classroom research, and mechanisms for sharing the results of that research** across jurisdictions, will be crucial in enabling teachers and curriculum officials to develop courses which are developmentally and pedagogically appropriate.
- **Curriculum developers will need support** from a cadre of experts with experience in teaching historical thinking.
- It will be a challenge to write curriculum goals/outcomes/objectives that clearly articulate the historical thinking concepts, and that do not lead to a reversion, in classroom practice, to “covering the facts.” Manitoba’s focus on “enduring understandings” is one attempt to do so.

- Curricula need to be written in a way that all teachers can understand, use, and implement (those with history/SS background and those without) historical thinking concepts. This challenge clearly extends **beyond the curriculum documents, themselves, to professional development, resources, mentors and ground-up implementation.**
- Teachers are already working with a lot of required “content” (e.g., pre-contact to 2008). Therefore, it will be important that they see historical thinking as a teaching approach that problematizes existing curricula, not an “add-on.” **Teachers need examples** to show them how flexible the concepts are, and how they can work to enrich the teaching of existing events, eras, and themes.
- Embedding, recognizing, and respect **First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives** will be both a challenge but and an opportunity. For example, where “primary source documents” = oral tradition and words of the Elders, any printed quotations need authentication by Aboriginal content validators. Differences in ideas about evidence, progress, significance and the moral dimension of history should be explored fully. This will require adequate representation in coordinating meetings of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

## 8. Assessment

### 8.1. Principles

- Assessment should move forward hand-in-hand with curriculum. It will be difficult to make progress in either one without alignment. Piloting of curriculum and materials should be linked to piloting of assessments.
- Large-scale provincial assessments pose different problems from classroom based assessments. The Benchmarks project should pay attention to both levels, recognizing the importance of each, but the distinctions between them.

### 8.2. Challenges

- Neither the Framework nor the website tasks really provides a clear, grade-by-grade continuum of development which provides teachers or Ministry assessment personnel with clear guidelines about the developmental processes in historical thinking. We need to develop tasks that **demonstrate a continuum of learning**. What does good work in historical thinking look like in grade 5? In grade 9?
- There is a **tension between classroom-based assessment and large-scale provincial assessments.**
- Provincial assessment personnel have not been involved, to date, with the Project. They may see their tasks in quite different terms. The time and money involved in marking will be a different kind of consideration at the provincial level.
- We have only the beginnings of a research-based set of performance standards for historical thinking at this point. As René Hurtubise (PEI) wrote, after the meeting, there is a need for “un continuum de développement des élèves par rapport aux six dimensions avec des exemples de travaux d’élèves.” The construction of such a continuum will be one of the results inter-provincial cooperation and research related to the project.

### 8.3. Opportunities

The absence of a universally applicable developmental model, in fact, provides us with an exciting possibility in order to link the two levels of assessment (classroom and large-scale). We should be thinking in terms of a two-pronged approach to assessment: “bottom-up” classroom assessment, and top-down provincial assessments. Classroom assessments, working towards grade level “performance standards” with exemplars of student work, will help provide a basis for the development of province-level assessments. The website sharing of these standards and exemplars, along with teachers’ reports can help to build the research base for the development of large-scale assessments. Newfoundland and Labrador have begun to confront the issue of how best to examine student achievement on the province's public exam. **Inter-provincial cooperation will be crucial**, in developing both classroom-based and large-scale assessments.

## 9. Professional Development

### 9.1. Principles

- One-shot workshops are not adequate to help teachers build historical thinking into their classes. An introduction to the Benchmarks framework usually generates enthusiasm for and recognition of the importance and possibilities of helping students to develop historical thinking. But professional growth occurs over one- to two-year period of guided experimentation and informed, supported collegial dialogue.
- Curriculum reform provides a clear demand and opportunity for professional development. Yet, professional development related to **historical thinking can be promoted even in the absence of curriculum change**.
- The **Historica Fairs** represent a powerful opportunity to develop teachers’ understandings historical thinking.
- **Serve teachers’ needs and interests**. It is always better to excite teachers; avoid imposed agendas, ensure an obvious payoff from time spent, reduce burden on teachers by providing ongoing practical support.
- Historical thinking works well in **coordination with other core professional development initiatives** (e.g., inquiry, citizenship, literacy, assessment for learning, backwards design). There are opportunities to integrate with these initiatives, province by province.
- **Match realistic expectations with available resources**. Make strategic decisions on whether it is realistic to serve broad spectrum of teachers equally, or more to focus, at least initially, on natural pockets of interest and opportunity.

### 9.2. Challenges

- We need to **develop a cadre of consultants and in-service providers** who are conversant and comfortable with teaching historical thinking and the Benchmarks Framework.
- A **shared body of PD materials** (e.g., powerpoints, DVDs, webcasts of classroom teaching of model lessons) will assist the in-service providers.

- We need to build **the capacity to deliver in-service to a wide range of educators** from geographically dispersed areas.
- Limited money, competing choices for professional development will always mean that only a minority of teachers attend workshops.

### 9.3. Opportunities

- **Historica should continue its support of summer institutes**, but a number of changes in structure and purpose should be considered. Post-institute follow-up is crucial.
- **Regional institutes** could reduce travel costs and increase the impact.
- Do ministries see Historica as a legitimate vehicle for PD for teachers? If so, would there be financial support for regional, Historica-organized PD? If not, how might they build Benchmarks into their PD efforts?
- Professional development is organized very differently in the different provinces and territories. For example, in British Columbia PD is entirely under the jurisdiction of the school districts. Alberta has seven PD consortia, through which provincial funding and a provincial consulting committee have already provided workshops on historical thinking. **We need to move forward with various models, respecting differences in the provincial environments.**
- Extended institutes of a week in length have some advantages and some disadvantages in comparison to a series of one-day or after-school workshops spread over the school year. The week-long institute offers continuity and immersion. The series offers the opportunity to try new ideas out with students, and discuss results with other participants at subsequent meetings. **A variety of formats should be encouraged.**
- **The Benchmarks website** should be expanded to support pd efforts, with podcasts of pd workshops, videos of successful teaching, power-points explaining the concepts. Explore virtual learning communities locally and nationally, including use of web2 and wikies.
- Ontario and British Columbia Social Studies Teachers' Associations have supported Benchmarks at their annual meetings. We should pursue **involvement from other provincial Associations.**
- TC2 could be directly involved in the provision of professional development (though some expressed concern about too much involvement from what they saw as a commercial operation).
- District-based projects have been demonstrated to be viable options: the pilot districts have successfully provided PD, in the course of developing classroom-based assessment tasks, largely with local funding. Beyond the initial pilots, Kelowna, BC, has a new district-based project. While it will rest on local personnel conversant and comfortable with teaching historical thinking, it will require support, and could provide a model for other districts. For example, there is funding for a summer course on Benchmarks for teachers outside of the Toronto area, opening the possibility of new districts.
- Since February (post-meeting), Ontario history associations have collaborated in writing the draft for a new "qualifications" course in teaching history for the Ministry, with direct

reference to the Benchmarks. New course syllabi in elementary Social Studies methods will incorporate historical thinking.

## 10. Resource Development

### 10.1. Principles

- Consider **digital media simultaneously with print media**. The wealth of primary sources images and texts available on the web present an extraordinary new landscape for historical thinking in the classroom.
- **Work actively with publishers** to ensure that new materials support historical thinking.
- Materials that apply to specific historical eras will be most needed, but other, more generic materials that provide introductions to historical thinking at different levels would also be of use.
- Materials that highlight **aboriginal experience and perspectives** should be a significant component of the work.

### 10.2. Challenges and Opportunities

- Both for professional growth and practical payoff, **step up the involvement of teachers in developing learning and assessment resources** that can be pooled, coordinated and edited by a central agency. Promote shared core threads for all resources (assessment for learning, use of primary document, backwards design) and allocate priority topics across regions.
- As teachers continue to develop tasks and rubrics, there is a clear need for an **editor/reviewer** (at least ½ time), deeply knowledgeable about the teaching of historical thinking. This person could be hired through Historica, through TC2, or through THEN/HiER.
- The **website** should be expanded to provide various kinds of professional development support (see above section) as well as lessons, assessment tasks, and student work.
- **Publishers should be supported by Project members**, as they develop textbooks and on-line materials consistent with the Framework. They should be encouraged, while being discouraged from seeking exclusive, proprietary arrangements in respect to the concepts.
- Historica could co-sponsor TC2's ***Tools for Historical Understanding series***
  - a) 2nd edition of *Teaching about Historical Thinking*
  - b) francophone version of *Teaching about Historical Thinking*
  - c) elementary version of *Teaching about Historical Thinking*
  - d) *Teaching with Primary Documents*

## 11. How Can We Make This Happen? Project Infrastructure and Capacity-Building

Given the provincial/territorial jurisdiction of education in Canada, it is reasonable to expect that the main action in introducing historical thinking into the social studies curriculum will be at that level. Yet there was a clear articulation from the representatives at the conferences of the need for organized central support. As Keith Millions (Alberta) put it: “**on a besoin d’une organisation qui nous regroupe tous d’avancer ce dossier car le mandat des provinces/territoires est limité à leur ressort.**”

This would both foster the much-desired inter-provincial cooperation, and also maximize the impact of existing expertise. As well, there was clear expression of the need to respond to and support “bottom-up” efforts, starting in schools, districts and associations of social studies teachers.

Following the conference John Stewart (NWT) once again insightfully captured the provincial/territorial view:

So, this is a 'teachable moment' for us. What we're unsure about is whether there is anyone to help teach us! I realize that jurisdictions are more or less “finding their way” with Benchmarks, but we don't feel we have enough grounding in the Benchmarks themselves to jump into our curriculum writing, teacher in-service and piloting with confidence that we would be building on what is already known as best or promising practices, as opposed to repeating errors that have already been learned from. We'd like to contribute to the overall “project” of Benchmarks in this part of Canada if that is possible/desirable. Long and short, I suppose, is whether there are any resources (people mostly) that might help us in this process? I think we have an interesting context here (demographically, geographically, culturally etc), and an interesting potential pilot situation that might be useful in the overall field testing of the Benchmarks - but not a lot of capacity yet.

*“Scaling up” is thus most crucially a problem of capacity-building.*

### 11.1. Centralized Support and Coordination: A New Possibility in THEN/HiER

The need for a **full-time manager** was clearly expressed. The manager would assume both administrative responsibilities and substantive support in response to the kind of need articulated by John Stewart. If funding were located for such a position, several options were discussed in terms of location and governance: a) s/he might serve as a Historica staff person; b) TC2 might provide the organizational infrastructure and integrate the Benchmarks into its workshop delivery/publications program. Each of these had significant problems associated with them.

After the end of the meetings, another exciting and extremely promising direction opened up, with the substantial funding (\$2.1 million) of The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN/HiER, Dr. Penney Clark, UBC, Director) over the next seven years. This opened up room for the following concrete recommendations to support the success of the project:

- 1) the THEN/HiER Advisory Board become the Board for the Benchmarks project (for membership, see Appendix V)

- 2) immediate funding be sought for a full-time Manager of the Benchmarks project, reporting to the Director of THEN/HiER
- 3) immediate funding be sought for a part-time editor/writer for Benchmarks materials (THEN/HiER has part-time funding, and the two would add up to a full-time position).
- 4) infrastructure support and space be sought at UBC, appropriate to staffing levels, in coordination with the new THEN/HiER space

### 11.2. The Role of CSHC

- As a partner in THEN/HiER, CSHC should continue to participate in advising, generating research, and in-kind logistical support.

### 11.3. The Role of Historica

- Though Historica did not participate in the initial THEN/HiER proposal, it should immediately **seek status as a partner organization**.
- Historica should continue to provide the opportunity for provincial/territorial representatives to meet at its **November Council meetings**.
- **Summer institutes** could be restructured not only to provide PD, but also to serve inter-provincial coordination and capacity-building objectives.
- Because the **Historica Fairs** are widely recognized and supported, and a broad infrastructure is in place, this is a potential area of leverage or connection that may be useful for coordination, as well as when communicating about the project within political structures.
- As a central tool for communication and professional development the Benchmarks **website** should continue to be maintained and developed by Historica and CSHC

### 11.4. Identification, Training and Support of a Cadre of Professional Development Leaders

- Historica Summer Institutes should be re-shaped to provide more strategic value for the Project, by **“training the trainers”**—working with people who have been identified in the last two years as potential leaders to conduct regional, provincial and district professional development programs. Continued support is imperative.
- These leaders could be assisted by the **creation of PD support materials**, e.g., templates for a five-day institute and alternative models of pro-d delivery mechanisms, power-point presentations, sample workshops and other materials.
- The leaders will need to be **“marketed”** and supported logistically.

### 11.5. Research and Knowledge Mobilization

- The funding of THEN/HiER opens a major new opportunity to **support research on Benchmarks**. Priority areas will be the examination of a) students’ potential competencies at different grade levels; b) factors in student successes in classes where teachers are teaching historical thinking; c) factors affecting the success of the Project’s



professional development for teachers; d) factors affecting the longer term growth of the Project itself, e.g. buy-in of various levels of government, the roles of mentors, administrators, curriculum leaders. THEN/HiER will also facilitate and support exchanges between teachers, provincial officials, and researchers. **Research will be designed to inform Project leaders and participants and improve the quality of their work.**

- Meetings that bring representatives from the different provinces together will continue to be crucial. We learn from each other's experiences – e.g., in Quebec, there has been a huge mobilization of resources to develop province wide assessments to assess competencies in each subject area. What has been the impact on the classroom? What would they do differently? We need many opportunities for discussion, dialogue, sharing ideas, progress, and materials. **THEN/HiER will support inter-provincial meetings.**

## 12. Conclusion

John Hildebrand (NB) expressed the views of many when he wrote, following the meeting,

we still need to take big steps to move away from transmissive ...classrooms to dynamic, student-active classrooms that involve students in higher-order thinking. The dimensions of historical thinking (and the sample tasks that have been developed with respect to them) provide clear and concrete means to work with teachers to improve professional practice.

Linda Mlodzinski (MB) echoed his thoughts, but also expressed the challenge felt by others in the ministries:

The history concepts, which are elegantly simple on their own, become more challenging in their application. It would be so helpful to have an expert ... to call upon for help, clarification and direction when we get stuck. . . We do not have enough experts in the province to take on the scale of PD that will be necessary to make this initiative successful.

The “Scaling-Up” conference simultaneously reinforced enthusiasm for the project, identified high-priority needs, and more clearly defined trajectories for the future. Going forward, there is considerable cause for optimism, given the enhanced inter-provincial cooperation, the increased involvement of university-based history education researchers, and the development of a larger pool of expertise to support work in the provinces and territories. As these supports are put into place, Benchmarks of Historical Thinking will be poised to make a major impact on the way history is taught and learned in Canada, and the Canadian example will stand out, internationally, as a model for 21<sup>st</sup> century history education.

## 13. Appendices

### Appendix I. Other specific recommendations

#### John Stewart's recommendations re: communications

1. That the Ministries personnel communicate directly with Historica Council on the support for Historica's ongoing support for the Benchmarks project.
2. That one of the Deputy Ministers proposes the placement of Benchmarks on the CMEC agenda.
3. That a briefing note be prepared, which would provide the educational context, including research references, showing how the Benchmarks project reflects the recent developments and directions in history education, curriculum, pedagogy and learning. This briefing note should show how the Benchmarks project reflects current best practice in classrooms.

#### Recommendations of the francophone group concerning the terms used in the French translation of the Benchmarks framework document

1. Title : *Les éléments (dimensions) de la pensée historique*

Each province identifies certain key concepts in their own curriculum documents; these second order concepts of historical thinking are stated as observable competencies. For this reason we suggest using the term *éléments* (or *dimensions*). In Canada and elsewhere in francophone literature on the subject, we refer to historical thinking as « *la pensée historique* » and not as *réflexion*

2. The concept of evidence: We suggest the word *traces* instead of *faits*.

# BENCHMARKS OF HISTORICAL THINKING: A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT IN CANADA

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CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS  
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AUGUST 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2006

## INTRODUCTION

What should students know and be able to do when they are finished their years of school history? Surely, the accumulation of facts-to-be-remembered is not an adequate answer to the question. Many curriculum documents indicate “historical thinking,” but are not very helpful in unpacking its meaning for teachers and students. If not “more facts,” then what is the basis for a history curriculum that extends over multiple years of schooling? Whatever that is, in turn, should inform history assessments. Otherwise, we measure a journey along a road which we don’t really care whether students are traveling. General curriculum statements about the values of learning history are insufficient, unless those values inform our assessments. This document aims to define historical thinking for the purposes of shaping history assessments.

Ken Osborne notes: “...it is not clear whether or to what extent history courses at different grade levels are designed to build on each other in any cumulative way.”<sup>1</sup> British researchers and curriculum developers have been attentive to exactly this problem, defined as one of *progression*. Historical thinking is not all-or-nothing: fundamental to the definition is the notion of progression, but progression in what?<sup>2</sup>

Researchers have identified “structural” historical concepts that provide the basis of historical thinking. The Benchmarks project is using this approach, with six distinct but closely interrelated historical thinking concepts.<sup>3</sup> Students should be able to:

- establish *historical significance* (why we care, today, about certain events, trends and issues in history. Why are the Plains of Abraham significant for Canadian history?)
- use primary source *evidence* (how to find, select, contextualize, and interpret sources for a historical argument. What can a newspaper article from Berlin, Ontario in 1916 tell us about attitudes towards German-Canadians in wartime?)

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\* Carla Peck (UBC) was instrumental in helping refine the historical thinking concepts described in the Benchmarks Framework. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the participants of the April and August 2006 symposia.

- identify *continuity and change* (what has changed and what has remained the same over time. What has changed and what has remained the same about the lives of teenaged girls, between the 1950s and today?)
- analyze *cause and consequence* (how and why certain conditions and actions led to others. What were the causes of the Northwest Rebellion?)
- take *historical perspectives* (understanding the “past as a foreign country,” with its different social, cultural, intellectual, and even emotional contexts that shaped people’s lives and actions. How could John A. Macdonald compare “Chinamen” to “threshing machines” in 1886?)
- understand the *moral dimension* of historical interpretations (this cuts across many of the others: how we, in the present, judge actors in different circumstances in the past; how different interpretations of the past reflect different moral stances today; when and how crimes of the past bear consequences today. What is to be done today, about the legacy of aboriginal residential schools?)

Taken together, these tie “historical thinking” to competencies in “historical literacy.”<sup>4</sup> This formulation is neither the last word on historical thinking nor the only way to approach it. As Patrick Watson wrote, in his report on the April, 2006, Benchmarks Symposium, (citing Niels Bohr) on physics and mathematics, “the achievement of a new formula was not, in fact, a movement towards *truth*, but rather the development of language that the research community could agree upon, as representing the objectives of the search.”

It is also important to note that these elements are not “skills” but rather a set of underlying concepts that guide and shape the practice of history. In order to understand *continuity and change*, for instance, one must know *what* changed and *what* remained the same. “Historical thinking” only becomes meaningful with substantive content.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING HISTORICAL THINKING

In order to think historically, historians, the public in general, and school students in particular must:

### ESTABLISH HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

*The principles behind the selection of what and who should be remembered, researched, taught and learned.*

The past is everything that ever happened to anyone anywhere. We cannot remember or learn it all. We put effort into learning about and remembering that which is historically significant, but how are those choices made? Students who do not think about significance may simply take what is presented to them (by the textbook or teachers) to be significant, without any further thought. Alternatively, but just as problematically, students may equate “significant” with “interesting to me.” The keys to more sophisticated notions of significance lie in being able to connect particular events or trends to others in a variety of ways. Thus, significant events include those that resulted in great change over long periods of time for large numbers of people (e.g., World War II). But there are other possible criteria for significance.<sup>5</sup> The problem of significance is complicated because it depends on perspective and purpose: what is viewed as historically significant may vary over time and from group to group.

#### ASPECTS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

- a) **Resulting in change** (The event/person/development had *deep* consequences, for *many* people, over a *long period* of time.)
- b) **Revealing** (The event/person/development sheds light on enduring or emerging issues in history and contemporary life or was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups.)

**Note:** Many topics will demonstrate *either* (a) or (b) but not necessarily *both*. Also note, for either of these, students can establish the historical significance of an event or person by linking it to other events in a historical narrative or argument. “It is significant because it is in the history book,” and “It is significant because I am interested in it,” are both inadequate explanations of historical significance.

#### AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- a) Demonstrate how an event, person or development is significant either by showing how it is embedded in a larger, meaningful narrative OR by showing how it sheds light on an enduring or emerging issue.

- b) Explain how and why historical significance varies over time and from group to group.

**POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:**

- a) Explain what made [X] significant.
- b) Choose the “most significant events” [e.g., in Canadian history; in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; for new immigrants to Canada], and explain your choices.
- c) Identify and explain differences in significance over time or from group to group (e.g. Why is women’s history more significant now than 50 years ago? Why do Canadians consider Louis Riel significant, while Americans generally don’t?).

## USE PRIMARY SOURCES AS EVIDENCE IN CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PAST

This includes how to find, select, interpret, and contextualize primary sources. There are distinctions among forms of evidence, e.g., records, testimony, relics, demanding some different kinds of questions. Reading a source for *evidence* demands different strategies than reading a source for *information*. The contrast may be seen in an extreme way in the difference between reading a phone book (for information) and examining a boot-print in the snow outside a murder scene (for evidence). We don't ask ourselves, as we look up phone numbers, "who wrote this phonebook; why was it organized in this way" (unless, perhaps, we get a wrong number). On the other hand, with the boot-print, a trace of the past, we examine it to see if it offers clues about the person who was wearing the boot, when the print was made, and what was going on at the time. The first thing to establish here is "what is this indentation in the snow?" that is, "what is it?" History textbooks are generally used more like phone books: they are a place to look up information. Primary sources must be read differently. To make sense of them, we need to contextualize them and make inferences from them.

### ASPECTS OF EVIDENCE:

(Note: "author" here is used broadly to mean whoever wrote, painted, photographed, drew, or otherwise constructed the source.)

- a) Good questions are necessary in order to turn a source into evidence, the first question being, "What is it?"
- b) Authorship: the position of the author(s) is a key consideration.
- c) Primary sources may reveal information about the (conscious) purposes of the author as well as the (unconscious) values and worldview of the author.
- d) A source should be read in view of its historical background (contextualization).
- e) Analysis of the source should also provide new evidence about its historical setting.

### AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- a) Use several primary sources to construct an original account of a historical event.

### POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:

- a) Find and select primary sources appropriate for responding to historical questions.
- b) Formulate questions about a primary source, whose answers would help to shed light on the historical context.
- c) Analyze a primary source for the purposes, values and worldview of the author.
- d) Compare points of view and usefulness of several primary sources.
- e) Assess what can and can't be answered by particular primary sources.
- f) Use primary sources to construct an argument or narrative.

## IDENTIFY CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Continuity and change provide a fundamental way to organize the complexity of the past. There are lots of things going on at any one time. Changes happen at different paces at different times in history, and even at the same time in different aspects of life. For example, technological change might happen very rapidly at a time when there is little political change. One of the keys to continuity and change is looking for change where common sense suggests that there has been none and looking for continuities where we assumed that there was change. Students sometimes misunderstand the history as a list of events. When they see that some things change while others remain the same, they achieve a different sense of the past. They will no longer say, “nothing happened in 1901.” Judgments of continuity and change can be made on the basis of comparisons between some point in the past and the present, or between two points in the past (e.g., before and after the French Revolution). **Note: Because continuity and change are so closely tied to cause and consequence, student tasks may often join the two.**

### ASPECTS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE:

- a) Continuity and change are interrelated: processes of change are usually, continuous, not isolated into a series of discrete events.
- b) Some aspects of life change more quickly in some periods than others. Turning points, perhaps even tipping points, help to locate change.
- c) Progress and decline are fundamental ways of evaluating change over time. Change does not always mean progress.
- d) Chronology can help to organize our understanding of continuity and change (you cannot understand continuity and change without knowing the order in which things happened.)
- e) Periodization can help to organize our understanding of continuity and change.

### AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- a) Explain how some things continue and others change, in any period of history.
- b) Identify changes over time in aspects of life that we ordinarily assume to be continuous; and to identify continuities in aspects of life we ordinarily assume to have changed over time.
- c) Understand that periodization and judgments of progress and decline can vary depending upon purpose and perspective.

### POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:

- a) Place a series of pictures in chronological order, explaining why they are placed in the order they are.



- b) Compare two (or more) documents from different time periods and explain what changed and what remained the same over time.
- c) Assess progress and decline from the standpoint of various groups since a certain point in time.

## **ANALYZE CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE**

Central to cause and consequence is the active role, or agency, that people (as individuals and groups) play in promoting, shaping, and resisting change in history. Causes are related to, but distinguishable from, motivations (or intentions) of any group or individual. They are multiple and layered, involving both long-term ideologies, institutions, and conditions, and short-term actions and events. Causes that are offered for any particular event (and the priority of the various causes) may differ, based on the scale of the overall historical narrative, and ideological perspectives and approaches of the historian.

### **ASPECTS OF CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE:**

- a) Human beings cause historical change, but they do so in contexts that impose limits on change. Constraints come from the natural environment, geography, historical legacies, as well as other people who want other things. Human actors (agents) are thus in a perpetual interplay with conditions, many of which (e.g., political and economic systems) are the legacies of earlier human actions.
- b) Actions often have unintended consequences.

### **AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

- a) Identify the interplay of intentional human action, and constraints on human actions in causing change.
- b) Identify various types of causes for a particular event, using one or more accounts of the event.
- c) Be able to construct counterfactuals (e.g., if Britain had not declared war on Germany in 1914, then...)

### **POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:**

- a) Examine an everyday event (e.g. a car accident) for its potential causes (e.g., the skill and response time of the driver, the state of health or drowsiness of the driver, distraction of the driver, violation of driving rules, the condition of the cars, the technology of the cars, the weather, the road signage, absence of traffic lights, the culture which glorifies speed, the size of the oncoming SUV, etc.)
- b) Analyze a historical passage, and identify “types of causes,” (e.g., economic, political, cultural; conditions, individual actions) that it offers as causes.
- c) Examine the relationship between an individual actor’s motivations and intentions, and the consequences of their actions.
- d) Create a schematic chart of the causes of [e.g., the Japanese internment] and explain their arrangement.

e) How might people at the time have explained the causes of [x] and how does that differ from how we would explain it now?

## TAKE A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

“The past is a foreign country” and thus difficult to understand. At the same time understanding the foreignness of the past provides a sense of the range of human behaviour and social organization, alternatives to taken-for granted conventional wisdom, and a wider perspective for our present preoccupations. Historical perspective-taking is the cognitive act of understanding the different social, cultural, intellectual, and even emotional contexts that shaped people’s lives and actions in the past. Though it is sometimes called “historical empathy,” it is very different from the common-sense notion of deep emotional feeling for and identification with another person.

### ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE-TAKING:

- a) Taking the perspective of historical actors depends upon evidence for inferences about how people felt and thought (avoiding presentism—the unwarranted imposition of present ideas on actors in the past). Empathetic leaps that are not based in evidence are historically worthless.
- b) Any particular historical event or situation involves people who may have diverse perspectives on it. Understanding multiple perspectives of historical actors is a key to understanding the event.
- c) Taking the perspective of a historical actor does not mean identifying with that actor.

### AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- a) Recognize presentism in historical accounts.
- b) Use evidence and understanding of the historical context, to answer questions of why people acted the way they did (or thought what they did) even when their actions seem at first irrational or inexplicable or different from *we* would have done or thought.

### POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:

- a) Write a letter, diary entry, poster (etc.) from the perspective of [x], based either on some sources provided by the teacher, or sources the students find.
- b) Compare primary sources written (or drawn, painted, etc.) from two opposing or differing perspectives about a given event. Explain their differences.

## UNDERSTAND THE MORAL DIMENSION IN HISTORY

Historians attempt to hold back on explicit moral judgments about actors in the midst of their accounts. But, when all is said and done, if the story is meaningful, then there is a moral judgment involved. Thus, we should expect to learn something from the past that helps us in facing the moral issues of today. One (but not the only) way that the moral dimension of history comes into play is through the legacies of past action: when do we owe debts of memory [e.g., to fallen soldiers] or of reparations [e.g., to victims of aboriginal residential schools]?

### ASPECTS OF THE MORAL DIMENSION:

- a) All meaningful historical accounts involve implicit or explicit moral judgment.
- b) Moral judgment in history is made more complex by collective responsibility and profound change over time. In making moral judgments of past actions, we always risk anachronistic impositions of our own standards upon the past.
- c) Historians often deal with the conflict between a) and b) by 1) framing questions that have a moral dimension; 2) suspending judgments in order to understand the perspectives of the historical actors; finally 3) emerging from the study with observations about the moral implications, today, of their narratives and arguments.

### AT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- a) Make judgments about actions of people in the past, recognizing the historical context in which they were operating.
- b) Use historical narratives to inform judgments about moral and policy questions in the present.

### POTENTIAL STUDENT TASKS:

- a) Examine a historical issue involving conflict [e.g., attitudes for and against women getting the vote; why Canada admitted such a small number of refugee Jews 1933-39; the outlawing of the potlatch], identify the perspectives that were present at the time, and explain how these historical conflicts can educate us today.
- b) Students identify a moral issue today [e.g. Canadians' role as peacekeepers, private vs. public health care, protection of the environment], research aspects of its historical background, explain the implications of the history for today.

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<sup>1</sup> Osborne, K. (2004). *Canadian History in the Schools*. Toronto: Historica, p. 13.

(<http://www.histori.ca/prodev/file.do?id=20688>, accessed 8/9/2006).

<sup>2</sup> Lee, P., & Shemilt, D. (2003). A scaffold, not a cage: progression and progression models in history. *Teaching History*, 113, pp.2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ashby, R. (2005). The nature of levels and issues of progression in history: Notes and extracts for reflection, *PGCE Support Materials* (p. 7). England: Institute of Education. These have been radically transformed in the new British National Curriculum.

<http://www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/history/levels.htm> (accessed April 3, 2006) For Seixas' earlier formulation, see Seixas, P. (1996). Conceptualizing the growth of historical understanding. In D. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *Handbook of Education and Human Development: New Models of Learning, Teaching, and Schooling* (pp. 765-783). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

<sup>4</sup> In earlier versions, the term "literacy" was used rather than "thinking." The April 2006 Benchmarks Symposium had discussed at length the connotations of these and other terms, without a definitive conclusion as to which should define the project. Further response to the term "literacy" since the Symposium points to its connections to E.D. Hirsch's "cultural literacy" and the connotation of a list of facts-to-be-learned in common. As this project does not aim to revise the factual *content* of provincial history curricula, "literacy" may convey the wrong message. On the other hand, deep literacy (e.g., reading for point-of-view and writing as argument) are central to the goals of the Benchmarks Framework.

<sup>5</sup> Counsell, C. (2004). Looking through a Josephine-Butler-shaped window: focusing pupils' thinking on historical significance. *Teaching History*, 114, 30-36.

## Appendix III.

### **Benchmarks of Historical Thinking: “Scaling Up” Repères de la réflexion historique : « Actualisation » February 14-15, 2008 / 14 et 15 février 2008**

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## Appendix IV.

**Benchmarks of Historical Thinking: “Scaling Up”**  
Georgia and Pacific Rooms, Sandman Hotel, Vancouver City Centre  
180 West Georgia (at Cambie)  
**February 14-15, 2008**

### Agenda

Thursday, February 14, 2008

**9:00 Welcome and Introductions**

This will be an extended session, in which participants have up to three minutes to provide not only their professional backgrounds, but also how they or their jurisdictions have worked with the Benchmarks project to date, or hope to in the future.

**11:00 Overview of the Project**

Peter Seixas

Participants will have received the Benchmarks Framework document. This session will review the ideas of the Framework, provide an overview of the work of the project to date, and set the goals for the meeting.

12:00 Lunch

**1:00 Plenary Discussion: Existing and Potential Provincial Initiatives**

Participants will explore a few province-level initiatives that have already begun (e.g., Manitoba’s and P.E.I.’s curriculum revision; Alberta’s and New Brunswick’s professional development). They will then have an opportunity to supplement, amplify, coordinate and critique visions for the future that were introduced in the 9:00 a.m. session.

**2:00 Group Session I: The Large Picture**

Chairs

- a) curriculum revision  
(including scope and sequence considerations)
- b) resource development  
(including textbooks and supplementary materials)
- c) professional development
- d) assessment

Linda Modlinski

Carla Peck

Roland Case

Gail Sumanik

Session goal: Participants select one primary area (among the four above), and articulate a) goals and key principles; b) challenges and opportunities; c) strategic considerations; and d) potential inter-provincial and inter-organizational coordination, over the next two to four years.

**4:00 Plenary:** Report-back and discussion of small groups’ work

5:00 Adjournment

Evening: Four chairs draft reports based on afternoon discussions, including sections on a) goals and key principles; b) challenges and opportunities; c) strategic considerations; and d) potential inter-provincial and inter-organizational coordination, over the next two to four years.

Friday, February 15, 2008

9:00 **Plenary:** Presentation of four preliminary reports and plenary discussion

10:00 **Plenary:** Website discussion and review: Noni Mate  
How could the website fit with provincial initiatives?

10:30 **Group Session II** (reconstituted groups): **Priority Initiatives**  
Session goal: each group develops two to four priority initiatives that could generate multi-year, sustained growth and development. This session will provide an opportunity for Ministry representatives to contribute to discussion of an area other than their chosen “primary area” (see Group Session I).

12:00 Lunch

1:00 **Plenary:** Presentation of the morning’s work

1:30 **Group Session III: Action Plans**  
Session goal: small groups, based on focus, proximity and opportunity will plan next steps. How could the priority initiatives (Group Session II) turn into action: in six months, one year, three years? What are the human and financial resources available and needed? What are the possibilities for inter-provincial cooperation?

3:00 **Plenary:**  
Report back from small groups  
Round table: What might you do within your jurisdiction? What avenues of cooperation are most appealing to you?

5:00 Adjourn

7:00 No-host bar; dinner at 8:00. Century Restaurant, 432 Richards St at Pender

## Appendix V. Pre- and post meeting questionnaires

Benchmarks of Historical Thinking  
**Pre-Meeting Questionnaire for Ministry Personnel**  
Please return to Jill McCaw, [jmccaw@histori.ca](mailto:jmccaw@histori.ca) by February 6, 2008

1. Name
2. Province
3. What is your position in the Ministry of Education? (Provide a title, as well as a brief description of your areas of responsibility.)
4. What is your level of familiarity with the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Framework? Circle one:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
None.....Briefly scanned it..... Read and discussed it.....Worked with it with teachers

5. Has your jurisdiction already used any aspect of the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking (e.g., in curriculum documents, teacher workshops)?

**The meeting will focus on four areas: 1) curriculum revision and implementation, 2) classroom resources, 3) professional development, and 4) assessment.**

6. Do you have specific challenges or opportunities that you will face in the next two to four years, in respect to **curriculum revision and implementation**, for which the Benchmarks might be relevant? What are they?
7. Do you have specific challenges or opportunities that you will face in the next two to four years, in respect to **classroom resources** for which the Benchmarks might be relevant? What are they?
8. Do you have specific challenges or opportunities that you will face in the next two to four years, in respect to **professional development** for which the Benchmarks might be relevant? What are they?
9. Do you have specific challenges or opportunities that you will face in the next two to four years, in respect to **assessment** for which the Benchmarks might be relevant? What are they?
10. Which of these four areas is the highest priority for you?
11. If everything went as well as possible at the meeting on Feb. 14-15, what would you hope to have achieved, through your attendance, for your province/territory?

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**Post-meeting Evaluation**

Please return to Jill McCaw, [jmcaw@histori.ca](mailto:jmcaw@histori.ca)

1. Name and position:
2. How conversant do you feel with the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Framework? (e.g. could you provide a basic overview for others? Could you help teachers or authors of materials to use the concepts?)
3. Do you think the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking could provide added value to your history or social studies education program? In what way(s)?
4. What do you see as the major challenges or impediments to achieving that value?
5. What would best help you meet those challenges?
6. How helpful was this two-day meeting in “scaling up” the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project, from the perspective of your position?

Not at all helpful		Somewhat helpful		Extremely helpful
1	2	3	4	5

7. Other comments:

## Appendix VI. THEN/HiER Advisory Board

THEN/HiER's Advisory Board consists of the following plus two "partner representatives" from organizations in the cluster, plus a graduate student.

**Applicant: Director Dr. Penney Clark** is an Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of British Columbia. She has numerous publications on history education in journals, including the *American Journal of Education*, the *McGill Journal of Education*, and the *Canadian Journal of Education*. Her three co-authored Canadian history textbooks are used widely. Her co-edited textbook, *The Canadian Anthology of Social Studies: Issues and Strategies for Teachers* is used in teacher education courses at universities across Canada. She is Principal Investigator on a SSHRC Standard Research Grant (\$100,200.00). She was Acting Director of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness for 8 months in 2004/05. She currently is a member of the Editorial Board, *American Educational Research Journal*. Dr. Clark has supervised, or been a committee member for 30 doctoral and Master's students. She has been actively involved in THEN/HiER from its inception and is currently serving as an elected member of its three-member Board of Directors.

**Co-Applicants.** All co-applicants been actively involved in THEN/HiER during the past two years.

**Dr. Margaret Conrad** is professor and Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Studies at the University of New Brunswick. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, and an Officer of the Order of Canada. She has received honorary degrees from Acadia and Mount Saint Vincent Universities. She is Past President of the Canadian Historical Association and currently sits on the Advisory Boards of the Lafontaine-Baldwin Symposium, *Historica*, Council of Canadian Academies, and Canada's National History Society. She has written extensively on Atlantic Canada and women's history and is currently working in the fields of public history and humanities computing. She recently published (with Alvin Finkel) the Canadian history text, *History of the Canadian Peoples*.

**Dr. Kevin Kee**, Canada Research Chair in Digital Humanities (Tier II), Associate Professor, Department of History, Brock University, Adjunct Professor at McGill University, is a co-applicant. He was Director and Project Director of History New Media at the National Film Board of Canada from 1999-2002. He was a primary investigator on a project developing a simulation for history education, funded by Canadian Heritage (\$403,042). He was the primary investigator of the "Simulating History: The Best Practices for History Simulations Project" and "Simulating History: The Poetics of History Simulations" projects, both funded by SSHRC, and is a recipient of an Ontario Early Researcher Award. He has published widely on the use of computer simulations and "serious games" for history education and has published a book on Canadian cultural history with McGill-Queen's University Press.,

**Dr. Jocelyn Létourneau**, is professor and Canada Research Chair in the département d'histoire, Université de Laval. He is the Principal Investigator of Canadians and Their Pasts, a SSHRC funded Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) grant. Recent publications include: *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory, and Identity in*

*Quebec Today* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004) and *Le Québec, les Québécois. Un Parcours Historique* (Fides/Musée de la civilisation, coll, 2004).

**Dr. Stéphane Lévesque** is Associate Professor of history education at the University of Ottawa and Adjunct Research Professor at the University of Western Ontario. Very active in the national history community, he is a Council member of the Historica Foundation, president of the Citizenship Education Research Network, and past co-chair of the Teaching History Group of the American Educational Research Association. His book, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, is forthcoming from UofT Press. He is inventor of *The Virtual Historian*, a computer program to teach Canadian history online, and author of a forthcoming book on the military history of Quebec.

**Dr. Ruth Sandwell**, teaches in the history and teacher education programs at OISE/UT. In addition to being a historian of rural Canada and the history of the family, she is interested in the intersection of history education and public memory in contemporary Canada. Her most recent books are *To The Past: History Education, Public Memory and Citizenship in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2006) and *Contesting Rural Space: Land Policy and Practices of Resettlement on Saltspring Island, 1859-1891* (McGill Queen's University Press, 2005). She is co-director of the history education website series, *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History*. She is founding co-director of THEN/HiER.

**Dr. Peter Seixas** is professor and Canada Research Chair in Education at UBC and Director of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness. With a PhD in history from UCLA and 12 years of experience teaching high school social studies, his career spans schools and the academy. He is editor of *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (University of Toronto Press 2004), and co-editor (with Peter Stearns and Sam Wineburg) of *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York 2000). He is directing the pan-Canadian history education reform project, "Benchmarks of Historical Thinking." He plans to devote fully one-half of his research time in Years 2-7 to the Benchmarks project, which will be aligned with, and contribute to, the work of the cluster.

**Dr. Amy von Heyking** is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Lethbridge. She is an historian of education and her book, *Creating Citizens: History and Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980*, was published by University of Calgary Press in 2006. She is a teacher educator and conducts research on the development of young children's historical thinking. As the author of many teaching resources, and in her professional development work with classroom teachers, she provides specific strategies that encourage teachers to integrate best practices in history instruction.

## Appendix VII. THEN/HiER Summary of Planned Activity

In 1998, Canadian historian Jack Granatstein published his bestselling polemic, *Who Killed Canadian History?* which captured the sense of crisis that Canadians feel about their history and cultural heritage. Canadians are asking: Are we historically illiterate as a nation? Do we understand enough about our past to make informed judgments about our course for the future? Does “traditional” history education teach us enough about our diverse country? How do new technologies affect the ways that Canadians, especially young Canadians, relate to the past? What makes a good history teacher? How should we be preparing pre-service history teachers? Should we develop a national Canadian history curriculum? How should we assess students’ historical literacy? This cluster will address these questions.

The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN/HiER) was formed in 2005. With funds provided in the first two phases of the SSHRC Strategic Research Cluster Design Grant, this new network twice brought together from across Canada an interdisciplinary, indeed multi-professional group of 45 key players in history education. This group identified important issues within the broadly defined field of history education, and developed specific suggestions about how this unique collaborative network could facilitate a real and sustained improvement. This proposed project will strive to extend the synergy around history education created in those meetings, not only by generating new history education research, but by making existing knowledge more visible and then *mobilizing* that knowledge into the places where it really matters. It will provide stakeholders with an intellectual space for active engagement in the changes that have transformed the discourse related to Canadians’ historical literacy. Most significantly, this cluster will produce policy recommendation documents and present them to the Council for Ministers of Education for discussion, with the intention that they inform curriculum development. The network will use a range of strategies including a semi-annual e-journal and quarterly print bulletins, an interactive website, annual national and regional symposia with podcasts for those unable to attend in person, and one-month per year graduate student exchanges to:

- Nurture a community of inquiry among academic historians; public historians in museums, archives and historic sites; practicing teachers; researchers based in faculties of education; graduate students; policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for engagement with, and critique of, existing research in the field of history education, with the aim of bridging research and practice.
- Encourage research in classrooms involving collaboration between academics and teachers.
- Transform classroom practice through pro-active connections with ministries of education, textbook publishers, other curriculum developers, and practicing teachers. We will collaboratively develop textbook publications, teacher resource materials and on-line museum-based activities and other digital resources, for schools.
- Disseminate current Canadian and international research on history education out of the universities to broader communities of stakeholders.



- Establish and nurture fertile research connections with international stakeholders.
- Engage in the development of authentic approaches to assessment of students' historical literacy through a partnership with the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project, developed by the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, UBC. Well conceived assessments, in conjunction with curriculum, materials and professional development, are a powerful driver of the reform of history education itself.

THEN/HiER will provide structured opportunities for interaction among various constituencies involved in history education which will lead to classroom-based research opportunities, the publication of both digital and print teaching resources, and policy recommendations, which will have long term implications for, and impacts on, curriculum development in history education across Canada.

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