



# Social Studies Explorations

– A Professional Journey



Fall, 2007 • Volume 2 • Issue 1

Archived copies of Explorations can be found at

[www.nrlc.net](http://www.nrlc.net)

Previous issues include:

Critical Thinking  
Assessment  
Historical Thinking  
Inquiry-Based Learning

Issue One:

**Multiple Perspectives**

### Guiding Question:

What is a multiple perspectives approach and how can Social Studies teachers successfully implement it?

### Abstract:

One of the foundations of the new Social Studies Program is a multiple perspectives approach. Designed to move beyond conventional history education, this approach encourages consideration of 'the other' and development of historical consciousness and critical thinking skills. Recognizing that a multiple perspectives approach is more than 'culture' and content will help teachers successfully infuse a multiple perspectives approach into everyday practice.

See the full article on pages 2 & 3

## Northwest Regional Learning Consortium

### Alberta Education Renews Funding for Social Studies Implementation

Alberta Education recently announced that funding in support of social studies implementation has been extended for three years. Revisions of the implementation project have been based on your requests and suggestions. This year is planned around feedback provided by teachers in zone one. Thanks for your input.

### NRLC will have a new website

This year we will be working to incorporate many new forms of technology into our programs. We will have a new website by November 1st. Expect exciting things – we intend that this will be more than a bulletin board of events – we anticipate that it will be a teacher portal full of resources and opportunities for you to share and engage in. We encourage you to check the website on a regular basis as new sessions are added and the program changes. This will give you the latest information.

### Podcasts

Keep your ears open for NRLC podcasts this year – some will feature your colleagues while others will share class

room ideas that you can use. These will begin to be posted on our new website in early November.

### Webcasts

Our newest challenge is webcasting and we hope you sign up to take part in our first series being held October 16th, 23rd and 30th. These webcasts will feature speakers from TC2 (Roland Case and Garfield Gini-Newman) and we are setting this up so that teachers will be able to participate in small groups from over one hundred sites in Alberta. The presenters will provide you with pre-reading material as well as activities during the session that will allow you to work with the concepts being presented. There will be follow up available through a blog or a wiki on the related topic. Be sure to join in from your closest location in Alberta! Your school could even sign up to host a session for you area and then you'd be close to home. To volunteer a site, contact Leslie Snyder.

### Updates on the Web

The Online Guide to Implementation now includes materials at the grades K-5, 7, 8 and 10 levels. You can access the

Online Guide through the LearnAlberta website at [www.Learnalberta.ca](http://www.Learnalberta.ca).

### NRLC Email updates

Did you know that you can sign up on our website for automatic email updates from NRLC? An easy and convenient way to stay informed about PD opportunities! [www.nrlc.net](http://www.nrlc.net)

### Bookings for this year

We continue to book 2007-2008 PD events, school PD days and a variety of other special requests. Please contact us – we can provide PD to help you improve student learning!

Stay in touch! Leslie Snyder

Questions or program suggestions can be directed to:

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NRLC Zone One

Social Studies Project Coordinator



# Multiple Perspectives

Submitted by Warren Woytuck

## Introduction:

When asked about the inspiration for the movie *Letters From Iwo Jima*, director Clint Eastwood indicated he wanted to examine the Second World War battle from a Japanese perspective, exploring ideas such as “life was pretty miserable for the Americans; imagine how miserable life was for the other guys. What were their lives like?” (“Fresh Air from WHYY”, NPR, January 10, 2007).

While the movie remains an interpretation of history, Eastwood’s comments do reflect the intents of one of the foundations of the new Alberta Social Studies program, the infusion of a multiple perspectives approach into the study of history and contemporary events.

Social studies curricula and resources, and in education in general, have tended to emphasize one perspective at the expense of others. Told from the perspective of the ‘winner’, conventional approaches of teaching history have ignored and marginalized the ideas, contributions and perspectives of ‘the other’.

Rather than present a single view or master narrative, the new program explores events, ideas and people from multiple perspectives. The inclusion of a diversity of experiences and perspectives is viewed as central to the development of active and responsible citizens in a democratic and pluralistic society. A multiple perspectives approach is founded upon the idea that “our pluralistic world is interpreted from multiple perspectives often characterized by deep cultural, religious, political, and

historical differences ... since there are various ways of characterizing things and events, no one account has a privileged claim to uncontested truth” (Werner and Case, p.181).

*“A multiple perspectives approach to education implies the development and enlargement of human consciousness or awareness of the world, of “seeing” or looking at the world with new and enriched perspectives that transcend the local and particular and that enables individuals to achieve a greater meaning and sense of who they are and how they relate to the world.”*

Douglas Stewart,  
“Purposes of Public Education:  
Philosophic Reflections,” p.6.

Given this, the import and richness of multiple perspectives may be most practically and effectively addressed through two key recognitions and approaches:

## More than ‘culture’:

Though the new social studies program does infuse Francophone perspectives as well as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives where appropriate, the importance of multiple perspectives is not found in the mere inclusion of the perspectives of specific groups of people.

In addition to the perspectives mentioned in the Program of Studies and resources, teachers have the freedom to explore the

collective identities and perspectives found within their schools and communities. Students should be encouraged to be considering multiple perspectives throughout the process of exploring and analyzing issues, ideas and concepts.

When developing learning and teaching activities it is important to expand exploration of multiple perspectives beyond those associated with ‘culture’ or specific identities. Instead of being asked for one ‘definition’ or generally accepted narrative, students could explore a range of understandings. Could there be other interpretations of this event? Might there be more than one perspective on this concept? Do all people view citizenship in the same way? Might there be different understandings of globalization? Quality of life? Liberalism? Canada?

As citizens, students should have opportunity to hear the authentic voices of other citizens; these opportunities, however, should be extended to include exploration of ideas and perspectives that challenge the ‘meta-narrative’ or conventional ways of viewing the world.

## More than content:

One of the challenges that the developers of the new program of studies encountered was determining how curriculum and learning resources could include all perspectives. Realizing that it would be impossible to do so, development of a multiple perspectives approach became increasingly important.

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Since it would not be reasonable to expect learners (or teachers!) to 'know' all of the perspectives in an increasingly diverse and complex world, learners must be encouraged to develop the cognitive abilities and habits of mind required to recognize and appreciate multiple perspectives.

Engaging students in multiple perspectives with the intent of developing citizens who can demonstrate empathy requires an approach that is founded upon

skill development rather than a focus limited to content.

As elements vital to inquiry- and issues- based instruction and learning, the models of critical, historical, and geographic thinking each present strategies and tools for helping students understand and appreciate perspectives.

Drawing upon multiple historic or geographic sources will encourage understanding of diverse perspectives. Designing learning activities that encourage students to understand the prevailing norms of the time will contribute to understand-

ing contexts and perspectives (Denos and Case, p.47).

Perhaps most important is the recognition and appreciation of the relationship between a multiple perspectives approach and the other foundations of the new program. Thoughtfully infusing multiple perspectives into instructional methodology will ultimately support inquiry- and issues-based approaches, contribute to skill development and promote the habits of mind required for active and responsible citizenship.

## Annotated Resources, Web Sites, Books, etc.

### **Annotated References, Articles, Books...**

*To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, & Citizenship in Canada* (Ruth Sandwell, editor. University of Toronto Press, 2006). A thought provoking collection of articles that includes works by Peter Sexias ("What is Historical Consciousness?") and Timothy J. Stanley ("Whose Public? Whose Memory? Racisms, Grand Narratives and Canadian History"). The book provides multiple views on what history should be taught and how it should be taught in Canadian classrooms.

"Themes of Global Education", Walt Werner and Roland Case. In *Trends and Issues in the Canadian Social Studies* (Ian Wright and Robert Sears, editors, Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 1997). A collection of articles that present practical ideas on contemporary topics and issues in the social studies classroom.

"Indigenous Knowledge: Foundations for First Nations" (Dr. Marie Battiste). An essay that describes the tensions between Indigenous and Eurocentric

ways of knowing. Dr. Battiste also provides numerous examples of ways of knowing that would enrich explorations of Indigenous perspectives.

*Teaching About Historical Thinking* (Mike Denos and Roland Case, The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2006). This book provides practical ways to encourage the development of historical thinking and a multiple perspectives approach.

### **Biography**

Warren Woytuck is a consultant with The Critical Thinking Consortium. An experienced 15-year teacher, writer and facilitator in Alberta and British Columbia, Warren was co-lead of the development of the new High School Social Studies curriculum. In addition to extensive collaboration with publishers of the new high school social studies resources, Warren has created and edited materials for the "Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian history" project and developed training materials for the Alberta Bus Drivers' Training Program.



**99 Minutes of Social Studies**

**Join a Webcast with TC2**

*An exciting new learning adventure!*

**Oct 16, 2007—4:30 pm**

Introducing Primary Students  
to Historical Thinking

Facilitator: Dr. Roland Case

**Oct 23, 2007—4:30 pm**

Helping Elementary Students  
Think About History (Grades 5—8)

Facilitator: Dr. Roland Case

**Oct 30, 2007—4:30 pm**

Engaging the Teenage Brain

Facilitator: Garfield Gini-Newman

**No registration fees.**

**Held at local sites in  
your school district.**

***No special equipment needed. Your  
district will provide further information.***

**“Sessions You Requested”**

*We took a survey and you told us...*

\*You want to see the program in action and  
view demo lessons, then work around them

\*You want sessions where you can get  
down to work in groups with other teachers

\*You want to work with the materials and  
have a “guide on the side” to help you

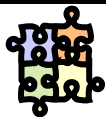
\*You don't want to always leave your  
classroom—so we have weekend, evening,  
and after school opportunities for you

*Your feedback is essential to this program!*

*Please continue to provide input on the  
current social studies implementation  
program. Make requests and suggestions  
for PD days, school based inservices,  
and summer sessions.*

**We're listening!**

**2007 ATA Social Studies Council  
Annual Conference—Jasper, AB**



*October 19-21, 2007*  
**“Curriculum Crossword—  
Decipher the Puzzle”**

There will be excellent opportunities for Social Studies teachers across the province to be involved in ongoing dialogue and excellent PD opportunities. In addition to sessions presented by our Social Studies colleagues and other interested educators, **Avi Lewis and The Arrogant Worms** will be featured keynotes. Registration forms, presenter forms and additional information can be found on the specialist council website at [www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca) or by contacting Les Champ (Conference Director) at [lechamp@shaw.ca](mailto:lechamp@shaw.ca). *Hope to see you there!*

<b>Anne Davies In Zone One</b>	2007-2008
Leading the Way to Assessment for Learning—Part 1	Thursday, Sept 27, 2007
Assessment for Learning: Practical, Powerful and Time Saving	Friday, Sept 28, 2007
Building an Assessment Plan for Social Studies (Grades 5 - 10)	Thursday, Feb 21, 2008
Building an Assessment Plan for One Subject Area (Div 3 & 4)	Friday, Feb 22, 2008
Leading the Way to Assessment for Learning—Part 2	Thursday, Apr 24, 2008
Collecting Evidence of Learning & Re- porting Using Symbols & %'s	Friday, Apr 25, 2008

For further information check our website:

**[www.nrlc.net](http://www.nrlc.net)**



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