

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Centre for the Study of
Historical Consciousness**

**Annual Report
to the
Dean's Advisory Committee on
Research**

2008/2009

Peter Seixas, Director

I. Introduction: Mandate and Vision

The Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness began in 2001, as the result of a successful proposal for a Canada Research Chair located in the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education. Its first major activity was an international symposium entitled "Theorizing Historical Consciousness" funded by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies. Since that time, based in a research suite in Education's Scarfe Building, it has enjoyed steady growth in research proposals and major projects, visiting scholars, conferences and symposia, and graduate student scholarship. Our list of Centre associates now numbers over 500 scholars from around the world.

The CSHC offers an interdisciplinary nexus for scholars working in all of the fields of inquiry that investigate how people think about, understand, and use the past. Over the past eight years, it has drawn the attention of scholars working in areas as diverse as art history, collective memory, history education, historiography, media studies, museology and public history. The Centre has brought them together in new ways and developed new synergies. The term "historical consciousness" has, itself, sparked sometimes heated theoretical exchange, raising important questions about the political and ideological dimensions of the field.

The Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness has developed important national and international ties with other research centres that are pushing the boundaries of history education scholarship beyond formal institutions like schools and museums, while offering scholars in the humanities and social sciences support to develop the policy implications of their work. Internationally, it has inspired the development of at least one other centre with a similar mandate.

Beyond ongoing community-building (locally among graduate students, sessionals, researchers and field-based professionals) as well as nationally, and internationally, specific goals for the past year included:

1. Developing a generative working relationship with the new history education network, THEN/HiER, Penney Clark, Director. This demanded resolution of a range of questions: from intellectual aspects (e.g., how will the Benchmarks project inform the work of THEN/HiER?), to personnel arrangements (with staff serving the interests of both units) and website interfaces.
2. Funding and implementing the recommendations stemming from last year's major report entitled, "'Scaling Up' the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking" (April 2008).
3. Analysis, writing and speaking on "Canadians and Their Pasts," based on a telephone survey of 3000+ Canadian adults.
4. Expanding the international presence of the Centre.

II. Governance and Participation

Through 2004, the Centre benefited from the active involvement of its six member Steering Committee, with inter-Faculty representation from the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts (and the respective Deans serving ex officio). Since 2004, we have not had meetings of a Steering Committee. The main impact of this change is that there is somewhat less formal

involvement from the Faculty of Arts and more focus on the history education end of our mandate. Dr. Penney Clark is the Associate Director of CSHC.

There is no structural differentiation among the 500+ CSHC associates who are part of our database. They include members of the Faculty of Education, the broader UBC scholarly community, and national and international representation of scholars and professionals in the field.

Ulrike Spitzer continues to serve as the indispensable Secretary and Laboratory Supervisor. She maintains the website, supports conferences and symposia, arranges for seminar and steering committee meetings, manages correspondence and contact lists, and maintains the financial records. Ulrike now splits her time between support for the Centre and THEN/HiER. Her office has been relocated, physically, into the Centre, a move that has greatly facilitated her support and coordination capacities.

III. How the Goals Were Achieved

Goal #1

There have been extensive discussions about the administrative relationship between the THEN/HiER Network, whose injection of new energy and resources into history education at UBC represents a major step forward. Peter Seixas serves on the Steering Committee of THEN/HiER and Penney Clark serves as Associate Director of CSHC. Working with complementary mandates, over the past year we have developed a shared office suite and secretarial service, intersecting listserves, and a number of co-supervised graduate students. We have also collaborated in a THEN/HiER panel presentation at the Sixth Biennial National Conference on the Teaching and Learning of History (*Whose History for Whose Future? A National Conference on the Teaching, Learning and Communicating of the History of Canada*) 24-26 October 2008 Quebec, QC, and on an edited book (*History Teaching and Learning in Canada: A State of the Art Look*, Penney Clark, ed., submitted to UBC Press). In one year, we have already developed an extremely important synergy, and promises to be more so in the future, making the Faculty of Education at UBC a recognized leader in history education, both nationally and internationally.

Goal #2

The CSHC has continued as major focus, the major pan-Canadian “Benchmarks of Historical Thinking” Project, working in collaboration with the Historica Foundation. Based on Seixas’ (and others’) research in history education, this project began by developing classroom assessment tasks, rubrics and student exemplars that will help teachers to articulate, foster, and measure the development of historical literacy among their students. The aim is to infuse historical thinking in an explicit way into school history programs, through revision of curricula, assessments, textbooks and professional development. In addition to maintaining local projects across Canada (and supporting the development of new local projects in Kelowna, Calgary and Edmonton), we have received, through Historica, a grant from the Department of Canadian Heritage, as a direct result of a Vancouver meeting, Feb. 2008, entitled “Scaling Up the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking.” This grant has enabled us to hire a national project coordinator, revise the website, and—with the support of THEN/HiER—host two national meetings with representatives of all Canadian ministries of education and major Canadian history textbook publishers over the next two years. The coordinator has been hired (Jill Colyer), and planning for the first of the meetings (February, 2010) has started. New textbooks for the

Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba markets are in development and scheduled for publication over the next year.

Goal #3

Work on analysis and dissemination of the CURA survey results occurred throughout the year and is ongoing, involving cross-departmental collaboration (with Dr. Kadriye Ercikan, EDCP) and graduate students. Activities in which the CSHC played a crucial role included a research meeting of seven CURA co-investigators from across Canada, hosted by CSHC, 4-5 June 2008; and another presentation at the October 2008 Quebec conference (see above) by Seixas, Ercikan and Gosselin “Canadians Confront the History Wars,” subsequently published in the large circulation *Diversity/Diversité*, 7, no.1 (Winter 2009): pp. 50-54.

Goal #4

The special series of articles, edited by Seixas, for *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, entitled “National History and Beyond,” has generated submissions from Finland, Russia, Pakistan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Greece, among others. The first of the series is due for publication in late summer, 2009, and will continue for several issues.

International presence has been further fostered by consultation with the National Inquiry Into School History (Australia), ongoing exchange with the Center for Historical Culture (Netherlands) and Euroclio, a successful proposal with international partners to the International Congress of Historical Sciences (Amsterdam, 2010), new exchange with Spain (Mario Carretero, Autonoma University) and www.culturahistorica.es, among others.

IV. Financial Report

Description	Budget	Refunds	Expenses
Budget Balance Carry Forward	\$9,639.04		
Faculty support	\$10,000.00		
CRC Transfer from HWVA		\$29,972.59	
Refunds for Benchmarks		\$2,597.74	
Refund airfare (McGraw-Ryerson)		\$630.00	
Books			\$(56.16)
Copies			\$(405.51)
Courier			\$(131.22)
Event contribution			\$(1,000.00)
Memberships			\$(300.34)
Office equipment maintenance			\$(280.72)
Office supplies			\$(177.65)
Phone - Long distance			\$(18.25)
Phone rental			\$(341.50)
Postage			\$(67.09)
Software			\$(288.52)
Administrative assistant salary			\$(3,907.00)
Total	\$19,639.04	\$33,200.33	\$(6,973.96)

Available funds at year-end

\$45,865.41

V.(a) Planning for 2009-2010

The CSHC will continue its major initiatives, the “Benchmarks” project and the “Canadians and Their Pasts” CURA, and international collaborations into 2009-2010.

The Benchmarks initiative will continue to be a major focus, with CSHC involvement not only at the local level (promoting participation at the level of the school departments in Vancouver, with the support of the VSB through Dr. Valerie Overgaard) but also at the pan-Canadian level. New funding from Canadian Heritage including the full time project director, the return of Dr. Seixas from sabbatical, and the collaboration with THEN/HiER enables us to expect a considerably expanded scope of activity. We expect also to launch a major research initiative on the status of historical thinking in history curricula and classrooms across Canada. This will provide a baseline for examination of the national impact of the Benchmarks project over the next three to five years. An unknown—and potential challenge—in the next year lies in our partner, the Historica Foundation, which may merge with the Dominion Institute, an organization whose approaches to history education have, in the past, differed quite fundamentally from those of the CSHC.

With close ties to the Benchmarks initiative as well as THEN/HiER and EDCP, we plan to host a two-week national seminar on history education in July, 2010, with participants able to earn M.A. course credit, on an optional basis.

“Canadians and Their Pasts” will be in its final year in 2009-2010. The primary goals will be the contribution of chapters based on the survey (with collaborative writing), the critique of chapters of other teams of partners, and facilitating the publication process.

The international profile of the CSHC will also be strengthened during 2009-2010, with keynotes, workshops and papers given by Dr. Seixas in Basel, Switzerland (September, 2009), Leuven, Belgium (August, 2010), Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the Netherlands, (August 2010).

Again, with Dr. Seixas’ return from sabbatical, the program of speakers, visiting professors and visiting students should increase in the coming year.

The CSHC will continue to depend upon the \$10,000 annual funding from the Faculty to support its activities. This is a modest—but crucial—commitment, in the context of the \$160,000 annually that goes directly to the Faculty from Seixas CRC grant (with the remaining \$40,000 going to UBC central funds).

V.(b) Planning for 2009-2012

The goals and plans for 2009-2010 have implications for trajectories for the longer term. While the CURA will have come to an end, the stage will have been set for CSHC to pursue a more school-focused research effort on how Canadian students understand the past, and how Canadian teachers teach it. We look forward to the Faculty of Education at UBC as a strong and expanding node of strength in the reform of history education, research to support reform, and efforts to place reform within a broad social, cultural and historical context.