



BCSSTA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
SOCIAL STUDIES
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Dimensions

Spring 2014

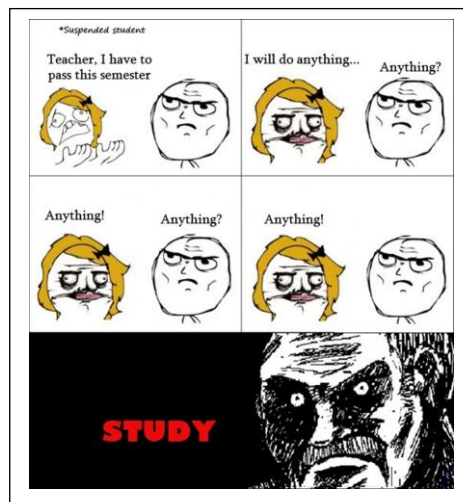
IN THIS ISSUE

Letter From the Editor

by Amber Rainkie

The year is almost done, and with that...summer vacation ☺ Be sure to check out some of the ideas in this issue that you can use for next school year! I thought a little teacher humour could be of use these days.

Some moments that I have experienced this year although of a different variation:



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Keynotes



Dr. Wade Davis

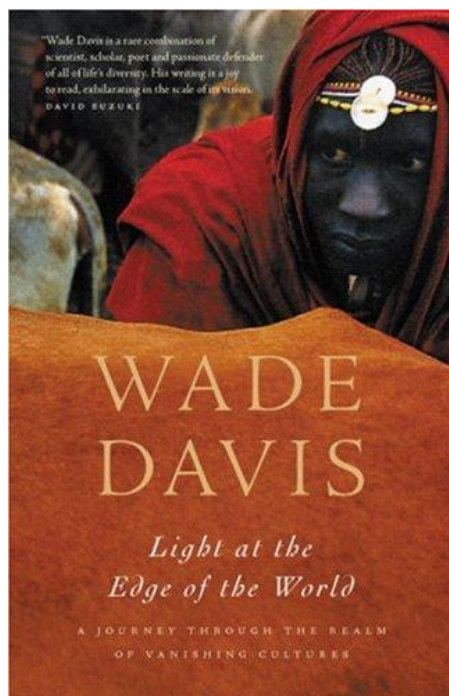
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BCSSTA CONFERENCE 2014

This year we are pleased to present Dr. Wade Davis as our keynote speaker, presenting with "Ancient Widsom – Modern World" .

An ethnographer, writer, photographer, and filmmaker, Davis holds degrees in anthropology and biology and received his Ph.D. in ethnobotany, all from Harvard University. Mostly through the Harvard Botanical Museum, he spent over three years in the Amazon and Andes as a plant explorer, living among fifteen indigenous groups in eight Latin American nations while making some 6000 botanical collections. His work later took him to Haiti to investigate folk preparations implicated in the creation of zombies, an assignment that led to his writing *Passage of Darkness* (1988) and *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1986), an international best seller.



A native of British Columbia, Davis, a licensed river guide, has worked as park ranger, forestry engineer, and conducted ethnographic fieldwork among several indigenous societies of northern Canada. His photographs have appeared in some 20 books and more than 80 magazines, journals and newspapers, including *National Geographic*, *Time*, *GEO*, *People*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside*, and *National Geographic Adventure*. Select images are part of the permanent collection of the U.S. State Department, Africa and Latin America Bureaus. Davis is the co-curator of *The Lost Amazon: The Photographic Journey of Richard Evans Schultes*, first exhibited at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and currently touring Latin America.

For a full bio visit:
<http://bcستا.wordpress.com/10-2/>

Water School

(part 6-8 / 8)

by Tony Woodruff

Hi,

This is my last report from Africa on this trip. I am in London, just about to board my flight to Vancouver.

Again, if you would like to know more, check out our website at www.waterschool.com

If you would like to help, our monthly giving program is extremely valuable for us, because it allows us to plan long term activities, so even a small amount each month is very useful for our programs.

Many thanks for your support,

Kwaheri,

Tony.

NAIROBI

The taxi ride to Entebbe last Saturday was uneventful, and the airport was not busy. Saturday is a good day to travel – I think the quietest day of the week.

We flew out heading south over Lake Victoria, crossing the Equator for the 5th time on this trip, and then headed east across the Lake (second largest in the world, after Lake Superior). We then entered Kenyan airspace near the city of Kisumu. Kenya looks brown and dry after the lushness and population density of Uganda. Finally into Jomo Kenyatta Airport and I got my bags. This airport was also quiet, and I was out of the airport in less than 30 minutes.

I was met by a hired driver, Martin, and his boss, Elizabeth, who had arranged all our itineraries and animal watching last October. I checked in at the Nairobi Safari Club, on the north side of the city centre, just across from the central police station and the University of Nairobi. I unpacked, had dinner and crashed.



This week I stayed in Nairobi, and had a less hectic schedule, so this diary should be shorter!

Sunday February 5th

Our representative in Kenya is very impressive lady, called Jane Otai. Jane grew up in a very poor home, and worked her way out of that difficult beginning by passing the exam hurdles of the very competitive educational system. She eventually went to East Africa's oldest and most prestigious University, Makerere, in Kampala, in Uganda.

Jane's work experience has been focused on the problems of urban slums, and she is considered a global authority. She has addressed the UN, and the Women's Caucus of the US Senate. A few years ago, she toured Melinda Gates through Nairobi's Mathare slum.

(Jane's version of this visit is interesting. She said the visit was preceded by 3 large US security vetting expeditions, who tended to contradict each other. Finally the day came, and amidst huge security, Melinda Gates arrives in an armoured Cadillac for an "informal visit with some mothers in the slum". Jane had set up the meeting and took MG to meet the mothers. MG introduced herself "I am Melinda, the wife of Bill Gates." Silence. The women had no idea who Bill Gates was. Finally one lady said "I am Betty, the wife of Njeru." And the discussion started Not quite all on the same page....)

As well as directing the Water School's work with our partners in Kenya, Jane has a post with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, as an expert resource on urban slum health



issues in the developing world. She has authored several academic papers.

I met Jane after lunch, and we reviewed our week. We were meeting on Sunday with our main partner, LISP (Life Skills Promoters), because they had arranged a trip to South Sudan for the week (which actually got postponed), and we really needed to meet. We met James, and the head of LISP, Emma Wachira. Our discussion on Sunday focused mostly on what LISP did. They explained that they advocated for children to be taught basic life social skills, like emotional control, dealing with violence and rape, anger management, healthy decision making, sex and HIV etc. They had spent 10 years getting Life Skills adopted by the Kenyan Government as a part of the national curriculum in all 12 years of primary and secondary schooling. They had also produced all the age appropriate materials for each year. I reviewed these, and to my amateur eye they seemed very well done. (Emma gave me some sample materials to bring home.) They also helped the Ministry of Education implement these programs, so they had good contacts throughout the Ministry of Education, the wider Kenyan educational world, and several country districts where they had done implementations.

So I gained an understanding of LISP's skill sets.

For Water School, they manage school and community Water School programs in a slum area of Nairobi, called Babadogo. I had visited these projects, with Peggy, last October.

As the discussion continued, Emma mentioned that the Kenyan Ministries of Education and Health were beginning a new effort called "Comprehensive New School Health Program". This would become the government's official policy for how school health issues should be handled. It seemed

to me that Water School fitted in this somewhere.

It was Sunday, so at 4pm we called it a day, and I let them get back to their families.

A quick swim, a short walk to dinner at the Norfolk Hotel, and bed, reading a great book (How deep is that pothole?) by the Irish Doctor, Ian Clarke, who had founded Kiwoko Hospital, which I had visited in Uganda. I had just put down my book, about 11pm, when there was a loud cracking sound outside, just like fireworks. I knew it wasn't fireworks, because since the Kenyan invasion of Somalia, and the consequent tightening of security, fireworks have been banned in Nairobi. So I guessed it was gunfire. I turned off all my lights, and opened the window to look outside. The sound seemed to be coming from the southwest of the city, but I couldn't see anything. Also no sirens, or unusual activity below (I am on the 15th floor).

I turned on the TV, but no news there. It went on for about 30 minutes, and then stopped. The next day, I asked Jane. "Nothing unusual", she said – "Probably the police chasing a gang – the media won't bother to report it."

Monday February 6th

Jane had arranged a meeting with the Head of child health in the Ministry of Health. She had done previous work with both the Head, Dr Stewart Kabaka, and his deputy, Joseph Onwong'a. (Jane seems to know half the people in Nairobi.)

We explained our work, and then asked Dr Kabaka about the new child health policy. He gave us a copy of the initial draft. The new health policy focuses in 5 areas:

1. Nutrition
2. Clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)
3. Disease prevention and control
4. Values and life skills
5. Environmental safety

Water School teaches WASH programs, including Sodis water purification using the sun's UV. The draft policy document mentioned filtration, boiling or chlorination as recommended methods for treating

water, but not Sodis. So we discussed the benefits of Sodis:

- It is very cheap/ free – all the materials are available in villages, if there are used plastic bottles available, so it sustainable after the educators leave
- It is highly effective
- It doesn't cause deforestation by burning wood or charcoal
- It doesn't affect the environment at all (except in a positive way by utilizing used plastic bottles)
- It doesn't need any chemicals, and the water still tastes good

Dr Kabaka was enthusiastic, and said that they should include Sodis as another option for making water safe. He immediately invited Jane to join the WASH technical committee which would be working on the final strategy and producing materials for use in the field. Jane recommended that LISP be part of this process because of their expertise in school material production. Dr Kabaka knew of LISP and Emma, and agreed.

He said that our timing was perfect, because that weekend they had organized a large (45 people) conference in Naivasha, with all stakeholders to get the implementation process going. He said their policy was to welcome all stakeholders to join in. This included people like UNICEF, AMREF (an African medical research body), Save the Children- Canada, the German government, the Japanese government etc. He said his office would be the coordinator for the whole program.

Despite constant interruptions, Dr Kabaka gave us lots of time and attention. We finally thanked him, and said goodbye. I was excited, and Jane seemed pleased. Of course, we realize that we need the support of the Board in Canada to make this change of priority in our work in Kenya, but the opportunity is to eventually get our program into 20,000 primary schools, supported by the whole government apparatus.

I should say here that in many ways Kenya is different from Uganda. Mostly importantly, it is much less poor. Uganda is still recovering from lost decades in the 1970s and 1980s, when it was quite lawless, with the army and militia groups doing what they wanted. Most of the country's elite were

either killed or went into exile. It was only after the current leader, President Museveni, came to power in 1986, that the country got some semblance of security, freedom and development (though as my Baganda friends will say, it is far from perfect).

Kenya has a history of more stability, but suffers from massive corruption by the civil service and politicians. Consequently the government in Kenya has significant resources to implement programs, which the Ugandan government can only dream of. For example, clinics in Uganda often have no drugs.

Both countries, today, have considerable political freedom, with the press in both often severely critical of government.

Tuesday 7th February

In the afternoon we met with our other partners in Kenya, the Mennonite Central Committee, MCC (head office in Winnipeg), which has extensive work in Kenya. They have a beautiful campus in the hills just outside the central city, and we met with the volunteer couple who oversee their operations in Kenya, Ron and Martha.

MCC has 4 global focuses:

- HIV
- WASH
- Global family values
- Peace

They self fund our work here, but utilize Jane's and Water School's expertise in WASH programs, so they are active Sodis promoters.

MCC currently is working with our program in a slum area of Nairobi, called Mathare Valley, which Peggy and I visited last October. Jane has many connections in the Mathare community, and has helped very much to get this program going. MCC promote our program in the primary school, an orphanage and in the community at large.

MCC have also just received funding to do our program in 2 more areas – Kinago (in Naivasha), and in the Mukuru slums of Nairobi. These programs will start in April. Jane helped MCC get this funding, and will be overseeing and monitoring progress.

We left Ron and Martha to host a group of 15 visitors from the MCC in Canada, in their beautiful garden.

Wednesday 8th February

We met again with Emma at the LISP office to review our meeting with the Ministry of Health and plan strategy. One of the things we talked about was money. Developing strategy has a cost. Firstly, we all agreed that this is a great opportunity to make a big leap forward with our program. Our activity is dependent on getting the agreement of our Board in Canada, though. We looked at LISP's funding budget from Water School, which runs until March 2013. We found \$4,000 which could be easily redirected without impacting our work in the schools. Emma felt that this was enough to get started for the next few months. As we get into the Technical Committee work, we will need more funding, but we will look to the bigger partners around the table (e.g. UNICEF or AMREF) for the big projects e.g. cost of printing materials. A side benefit will be to expose our work to some of these large, powerful NGOs, which may lead to other opportunities.

I want to say something about aid work in general. I must admit a bias. I very much value direct work in the field, and place a lesser value on the work of some large NGOs which occupy large offices in comfortable cities, like Nairobi, and produce study after study on developing country problems, without ever eating ugali with a village family, or using a long drop toilet. There are a lot of western "aid" workers who are leeches on the developing world, sucking up money given by western governments. Also, a lot of "western aid" is in reality subsidies for the western countries' industries. The EU and US are particularly guilty – especially when they donate food directly. This has the effect of depressing local prices, and impoverishing further, African farmers (there is plenty of food in Africa – just poor distribution and storage systems). Meanwhile the big producers in France or Iowa pocket large amounts from their governments. Free trade, building good

roads, building and equipping hospitals, and investment in the local business sector is much, much healthier for the local developing economy.

I like the Water School because we are very geared to getting out in the rural areas and working directly with farmers and schools. We now pay no staff in Canada, and virtually all our money flows to project work. But we have more projects than money, so please give generously!!!

OK, I'll stop now.

Thursday 9th February

I wrote a bit, read, and then wandered out to buy a book. As I was walking down Koinange Street, a middle aged African man said he liked my hat. We got talking as we walked together. Emmanuel told me that he was a Zimbabwean refugee, who had recently escaped. He had the offer of a post at Guelph University in Ontario, and he and 2 friends were trying to get to Djibouti, where a church organization would fly them to Canada. He was poorly dressed, and had one working eye. He said he needed \$50 to get him to Mombasa and then on a ship up the coast to Djibouti. He asked if we could have a coke and discuss it.

I didn't know what to do. His story was good and very detailed (there was a lot more). I wanted to believe him. So we stopped at a café. I said to him "Can you prove you're from Zimbabwe?" He said no, but if I went with him to where his friends were, he could show me his ID and worthless Zimbabwe money. I said no to this, but made a decision to compromise, and gave him KSH 1,000, about \$10, which would get him a bus ride to Mombasa. We parted.

When I met Jane later, I told her this story. She said that I was lucky that I didn't go with him. I was almost certainly going to be robbed, and maybe beaten up or worse. It was very likely he was just a con man, of which there are a lot in Nairobi. She said too that even going to a public café with a stranger can be dangerous, because they often slip a sedative into food or drink, and

then rob you. She told me not to give any money to anyone on the street again. She also told me that I shouldn't walk around Nairobi after dark. "You are a mzungu, and that means people think you are rich and that makes you a target."

Jane and I had our wrap up meeting, and later I walked (before dark) to an Italian restaurant on the other side of the downtown. After dinner, I heeded Jane's advice and took a taxi back.

Friday 10th February

So here I am in my hotel room, writing. Tonight I take a midnight British Airways flight to London, cold weather and the "developed" world.

It has been a great trip, and I have learned so much and met so many interesting and inspiring people. I plan to return in November, and already have some ideas of what I want to do then.

If you have read this to the bitter end – congratulations! Any feedback is welcome – if I do this again are there any bits which were really boring, or which I should have expanded on?

Kwaheri y kwanana!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit www.waterschool.com to read more about the world's water crisis and what you can do to help.

To read the previous installments of the "Water School" series, please visit <http://bcssta.wordpress.com/dimensions-newsletter/> and follow the links.

BC ALPHA

New Classroom Presentations on Crimes Against Humanity during WWII in Asia

Submitted by Heather Evans



Lee Ok-Seon, Survivor of Japanese military sexual slavery during WWII in Asia

Lee Ok-Seon was born in Korea in 1927 during the Japanese occupation. She was only 14 years old when she was kidnapped off the street, thrown into the back of a truck and trafficked to China and kept as a military sex slave for the Imperial Japanese Army for three years. After the war, she lived in China until 2000, at which point she returned to Korea to join the survivor-led redress movement. Since then, she's dedicated her life to giving her testimony locally and internationally, and to lobbying against the Japanese government for an official apology. Now, at the age of 87 and with her health rapidly deteriorating, she's hanging on to a thread of hope that justice will come before her imminent passing.

Yoshio Shinozuka was a Japanese Imperial Army soldier during the Asia-Pacific War. He was conscripted at the age of 16 to serve as an army physician's assistant with the infamous biological warfare Unit 731, where he was involved in conducting experiments and vivisections on Chinese captives. Feeling deep remorse for his involvement in such atrocities, Shinozuka first came forward in 1984, and later in 1997 he gave testimony in a Japanese court on behalf of 180 Chinese individuals suing the Japanese government for compensation and an apology for victims of Japan's germ warfare. He was invited in 1998 to speak at public forums to testify about Unit 731 war crimes in the US and Canada, but was denied entry to both countries. He passed away on April 20, 2014 at the age of 90.

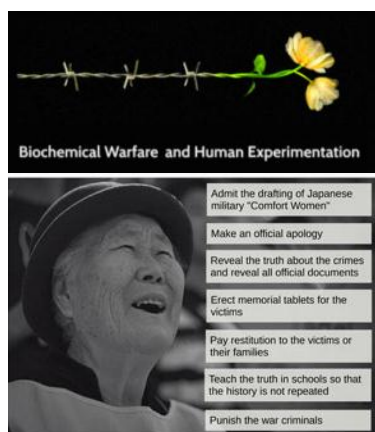
These are two of the many survivors of the Asia-Pacific War that have courageously come forward to reveal the truth of the crimes against humanity committed during the Asia-Pacific War, commonly known as WWII in Asia. The survivors' decades long redress and reconciliation movements have done much to raise awareness of what many refer to as the Asian Holocaust.

However, unlike in Europe where Germany has squarely faced up to its WWII past, in Asia the Japanese government continues its policy of denials of both the historical truth and of its responsibility despite overwhelming recognition by the international community of the truth of the wartime atrocities. Not only does Japan refuse to make an official apology and due reparations, but it whitewashes historical textbooks and prevents the teaching of this historical truth in school classrooms. As a result, this unresolved wartime past is at the heart of social and political tensions in the Asia-Pacific today.

That's why for more than 17 years the British Columbia Association for Learning & Preserving the History of WWII in Asia (BC ALPHA) has worked to foster understanding, redress, and reconciliation related to crimes against humanity committed during the Asia-Pacific War. A primary focus of the organization's efforts is to offer today's youth the opportunity to extend their understanding of WWII beyond the European theatre, and to learn valuable lessons from this past that will inform their thoughts and actions as global citizens. BC ALPHA was invited by the BC Ministry of Education as a partner to develop the teacher's guide [Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945: Social Responsibility and Global Citizenship](#), has taken BC educators on the Canada ALPHA [Peace and Reconciliation Study Tour](#) to Asia since 2004, and has organized the annual [International Human Rights Day Student Symposium](#) (IHRDSS) hosted by Vancouver Technical Secondary School since 2009.

Building on these initiatives, BC ALPHA is now ready to offer **FREE** classroom presentations on humanity issues around the Asia-Pacific War to high schools. Studying the Asian Holocaust gives students an opportunity to deepen their understanding of human rights and the causes and consequences of violations of such rights. The presentations also give attention to the inspiring international redress movements that have emerged in the aftermath of the war, movements that continue the struggle for justice still today in the face of Japanese denials of its wartime past. Students are further encouraged to make connections between this wartime past and global contemporary social and political issues.

The classroom presentations are designed in line with the [TC² approach to critical thinking](#) and [the Historical Thinking Project's](#) six historical thinking concepts. Structured more as interactive workshops than one-dimensional lectures, our presentations utilize Prezi presentation technology and small-group activities to create an impressionable and meaningful learning experience for students.



Sample Slides from Prezi Presentations

topic

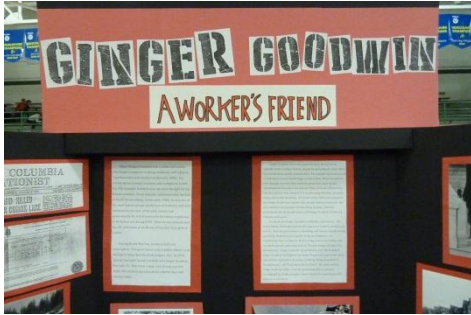
But the presentation itself is just one part of a larger package we offer educators. We provide preparation materials, educator resources and suggested follow-up activities, and we work closely with each teacher to integrate these presentations into their existing curriculums. What's more, teachers and students provide feedback that directly impacts further development of the classroom presentation packages, promoting a collaborative process between BC educators and our organization. In the end, all of the materials we develop will be available to teachers for use in their own classrooms.

To learn more about these classroom presentations, including bios of the speakers and options, visit <http://www.alpha-canada.org/education/classroom-presentations> or contact the Education Director at education@alpha-canada.org.

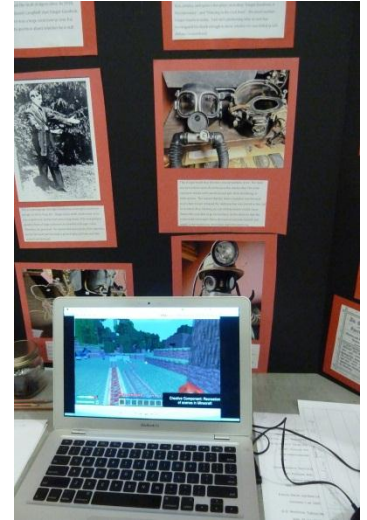
Let Us Acknowledge Success

by Tom Morton

It may still be in draft form, but I have already seen the new Social Studies curriculum successfully implemented. As I toured this year's Heritage Fairs I saw it in creative displays which explored diverse topics such as residential schools, corsets, Igor Gouzenko, and Ginger Goodwin. All of these projects were focused on what the draft curriculum calls "big, open-ended questions" such as "How is dress reform connected to women's rights and freedom?" and "How did Igor Gouzenko start the Cold War?" Students gave thoughtful, knowledgeable explanations of their topic and answered my questions about historical significance and their use of evidence.



The Ministry of Education curriculum document quotes Levstik and Barton: "By allowing students to pursue their own investigations and reach their own conclusions, inquiry should enable those whose experiences have not traditionally been represented in the official curriculum to deepen and expand their historical understanding rather than simply to remain distanced from school history." The Heritage Fairs topics were very diverse ranging from family history – "My Bannock Family" – and local – "Kingsway: A Biography of a Street" – to national – Farley Mowatt – and international – Spanish Flu. There were also many "official curriculum" topics such as the Persons Case and the Gold Rush but the projects explored these topics in more depth than usual.

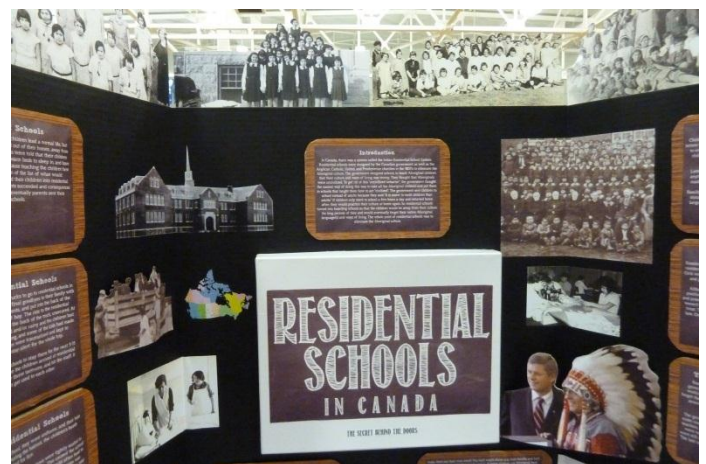


In the proposed Social Studies curriculum, "curricular competencies are built around six disciplinary concepts put forward in history by Peter Seixas and the Historical Thinking Project, and in geography by the Critical Thinking Consortium: significance, evidence, cause and consequence, continuity and change, perspectives, and ethical judgment." Evidence and significance were the most evident at the Fairs, but there were several projects that asked questions about cause and consequences, for example, "Fraser River or the Klondike Gold Rush: Which had the most impact on Canada's history?" Others posed ethical questions: "Should Canada participate in wars or is peacekeeping the best decision?" Many students projects explored change and continuity with some very imaginative timelines.

All of this might sound Pollyannaish, but as education researcher John Hattie argued in a recent interview: "We are terrible in education at acknowledging success." Moreover, "When we have a successful lesson, or when you're running a successful school, very often we attribute that to the kids but it is actually us." Behind these wonderfully thoughtful and articulate students are "us": teachers and Heritage Fair co-ordinators who kindled student curiosity about a topic, focused it through an inquiry question, and stressed feedback and criteria along the way.



The Heritage Fairs Society and its coordinators continue to build on the successful strategies of these teachers and students through workshops and the web site www.bcheritagefairs.ca in order to grow beyond the 5,000 students who currently participate and to ensure that the historical thinking at the heart of the proposed curriculum comes alive.



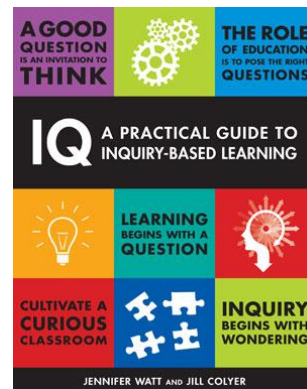
George Somerwill is a former UN official, journalist, CIDA and NGO humanitarian worker. Engage him on Twitter @UN4All (#MYTAKE), by email unforall2012@gmail.com, or subscribe to his blog at unforall.com. He is also available for classroom and keynote presentations.

Book Review

Parachuting or Truffle-Hunting: this is a good guide to inquiry

By: Tom Morton

Jennifer Watt and Jill Colyer. *IQ: A Practical Guide to Inquiry-Based Learning*. (2014) Oxford University Press www.oupcanada.com.



Parachutist or a truffle-hunter? This is an often-quoted distinction between the historian who likes the grand view from above, and the type who prefers to keep the nose to the ground to unearth tasty treasures. The distinction can also apply to teachers' guides for teaching history. *IQ: A Practical Guide to Inquiry-Based Learning* firmly favours the truffle-hunters and their many treats but it also covers a wide horizon of key features of the inquiry landscape.

Some of the features are common to most guides on inquiry learning such as developing focus questions and gathering and analyzing sources. These are explained clearly with supporting "Reproducibles" (aka: Blackline Masters), case studies, examples, and lots of practical, thoughtful advice. A two page spread gives the steps in the inquiry process with accompanying ideas for gathering evidence of learning, that is, a parachutist's view. The book is intended for teachers from grade 7 to 12 and the cases studies and examples are from history, geography and civics.

The guide also tackles the familiar challenges of inquiry-based learning. For example, it gives the criteria for a good inquiry questions and how to help students develop their own and offers ideas to encourage student self-direction. Especially useful are the prompts for an inquiry journal, self-assessment and reflection.

Another frequent challenge for students is how to make sense of their evidence and information. *IQ* suggests asking them to identify patterns or trends in their data with questions such as these:

- What is similar about this evidence?
- Are there two or three points or arguments that are consistent across a number of pieces of evidence?
- On closer inspection, what evidence is not a good fit? Why?

There are also treasures that distinguish *IQ* from other teacher guides, for example, guidance for building a classroom culture that supports inquiry, teaching vocabulary, and student self-assessment of their point of view about a topic and how that might impact their research. Small delights are scattered throughout such as the prompts for conversations with students or the advice to give students the gift of time, reducing the volume of tasks and providing more time for reflection.

The only gap in *IQ* is around co-operative learning. There is a helpful section on communication skills with two excellent "Reproducibles", an exit card on student discussion and entertaining quotes about listening. However, given the importance that the authors give to group work one would expect more on group formation and such key topics as how to structure individual accountability and positive interdependence.

Overall, this is a superb guide for teachers – useful for those who are new to inquiry-based learning and those who are more experienced.

AN EXTREMIST'S WORST NIGHTMARE: EDUCATED GIRLS

The plight of the missing northern Nigerian schoolgirls, kidnapped in April by the Nigerian extremist group Boko Haram, finally grabbed the world's attention. And though their story may eventually catch the eye of Hollywood, most western media have been less than enthusiastic to analyze why around 300 educated girls were taken in the first place.

One of the reasons why is that, if you are an extremist from Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq or any other of a number of conflicted states, educated girls are your worst nightmare. Just ask Malala Yousafzai, the 15 year old Pakistani schoolgirl shot in the head by the Taliban last year.

And why would a fanatic be so scared of an educated girl? Because educated young women are an unstoppable force for social change within their societies. Although the west wages its war on terror from Pakistan to Russia and from Syria to West Africa, using drones, missiles, guns and highly trained soldiers, the biggest threat to any kind of extremism is girls reading books.

To ensure that outraged westerners get the message, and to keep their part of northern Nigeria as marginalized as possible, Boko Haram has even announced the sale of the schoolgirls as slaves. Yet the education of those same young women provided a relatively inexpensive and effective long-term weapon against extremism, and that is what Boko Haram fears more than anything else. Consider that the name Boko Haram, translated roughly from the Hausa language, means "Against Western Education".

Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist group, has existed in Nigeria's poverty-stricken north, for years, but in a nation split roughly equally between Islam and Christianity, the Nigerian authorities, especially its poorly trained military itself split between the two religions, did not want to rock the political boat by pursuing them too hard.

The group's key goal is to set up an independent Islamic state, subject to a more strictly imposed Sharia law, in northern Nigeria. Doing so, and by attacking a marginalized group like schoolgirls, Boko Haram is able to gain power and move towards that key goal.

An educated young woman is society's game-changer because education changes demographics. In many poorer nations, uneducated parents will have a high number of children. Boys particularly are expected to support their parents into old age. This means that every generation has a population bulge of often unemployed young men in the 15-24 age group. However, studies also show that this group – with few skills – can seriously increase the risk of social upheaval in a weak society.

However, the economic success of countries like China and Malaysia, where the education of girls is an equal right demonstrates that educated girls have fewer children later in life. The Asian economic boom correlates directly with the education of women, moving them from villages into more productive city-based work. The bottom line: investing in equal educational opportunities for girls will eliminate the population bulge in a generation, leading to greater stability and an improved economy.

Bangladesh – formerly known as East Pakistan, and an

economic basket-case, made a conscious policy decision in 1971 to open its education system to girls. Though there still remains much to be done, the nation is now lead by a woman and it is women empowering other women that points to the long-term success of the nation. Incorporated into this positive trend has been the loaning of interest-free funds to rural women by the Grameen Bank and the rise of the women's cooperative movement, both of which have contributed to poverty reduction, job creation and the social integration of women.

The United Nations, through its agencies such as UN Women and the UN Development Programme, and many national governments and NGOs focus attention and resources on educating girls and women through the UN Global Education Initiative (UNGEI). This initiative is specifically aimed at *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) 2 and 3. These call for universal and equal access to primary education for boys and girls, and eliminating gender disparity, in all areas, including primary and secondary education. Canada and other nations such as Sweden, the US and the UK are part of this initiative.

My Take



Every time western nations take a small step forward in challenging terrorists or jihadis in various parts of the world, there are many who breathe a sigh of relief and think, "we're winning." But containing these dark forces who wish to enslave their own daughters and keep their people in the dark ages is like trying to catch a fish with your bare hands – almost impossible.

Eighteen months ago, pundits were saying of west and north Africa (Mali and Libya, for example) that "at least there are no suicide bombers in those parts of the world. Eighteen months later, both nations have been hit by multiple suicide attacks.

As long as young men in poor societies lack gainful employment they are easy prey to hardline religious fanatics who point out that if the young men would only become jihadis or suicide bombers, they will receive multiple rewards after death. The people who manipulate these young men may genuinely be religious or they may simply want political power within a country or region.

What should cause western nations as much concern is the number of young men brought up in the west, with a western education and an apparent bright future leaving everything to go to join a conflict, such as Syria or Somalia. British anti-terror forces were recently forced to publicly request Muslim women to report on any of their menfolk who were talking of joining jihad.

Other than using every means at their disposal to try to influence potential extremist recruits, the UN, and European and North American nations, including Canada, need to remain vigilant. But programs should also be aimed at unemployed young men in 'at-risk' nations.

For individual Canadians, financial and moral support to any NGO or UN Agency which fosters education for girls and women is easily within the reach of each one of us.