

Visiting Doctoral Student Award Report

Gulzar Ahmad

Home Institution: University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Host Institution: Queen's University, Kingston, ON

Dates of Visit: July 29 – August 08

I feel truly honored to write this report about my visit to collaborate with Professor Theodore Christou at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University in Kingston. Dr. Christou impressed me as an exceptional human being with a pleasant demeanor. I found him not only an ardent educator but also a passionate historian with a strong vision and mission for history education. Although he is officially on leave until January 2026, he generously welcomed my request to visit and work under his invaluable guidance. Throughout my two-week stay, he remained fully engaged, guiding me, answering my questions, and providing thoughtful feedback. His considerate and collegial spirit made our conversations enriching and meaningful.



During my discussions with Dr. Christou, I learned many valuable lessons on personal, academic, and professional levels. One key insight that stands out is the practical skill of backwards planning, especially regarding my dissertation timeline, as I am currently in the writing stage of my doctoral journey. By starting with my end goal of completing my PhD and then working step-by-step in reverse, I am now able to identify clear objectives, establish realistic timelines, and prioritize tasks effectively. Moving forward, I plan to use this approach

not only during the final writing stage of my doctoral journey but also as I pursue my next academic goal: securing a postdoctoral position.

Dr. Christou and I have agreed to collaborate on future academic projects, including a potential co-authored publication on historical mindedness (a lived habit of the mind that connects past, present, and future through critical, ethical, and inclusive engagement (Osborne, 2006) in citizenship education in Canada. This collaboration will also serve as a foundation for my intended postdoctoral research on multiculturalism in history education in Canada. As a first step, we are planning to develop a joint abstract for an upcoming conference. We unfortunately missed the deadline for the AERA Conference in April 2026. Its theme of, “Unforgetting Histories and Imagining Futures: Constructing a New Vision for Education Research” could not be more relevant to our work. However, we are actively seeking other venues. Our focus remains on creating a co-authored publication intended as a meaningful contribution to the field of history education in Canada.

I also had the opportunity to chat with and learn from Rachel Collishaw, a Governor General Award recipient for the teaching of Canadian History, recognized for writing and contributing to several textbooks and learning resources that emphasize inquiry and historical thinking. Rachel was very welcoming and agreed to connect me with other authors of Ontario’s Grade 7, 8 and 10 history textbooks if required for our analysis on the sociopolitical context of history textbooks in the Curriculum and Resources cluster of the *Thinking Historically for Canada’s Future* project. I also had meaningful discussions with Jim Pedrech (Innovation Consultant with the London District Catholic School Board in Ontario), and Diane Vautour (History teacher, Loretto Abbey Secondary School Toronto). They are working with Dr. Christou on conceptualizing a world history resource for Canadian educators. Their project, which is funded by the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), focuses on the representation of Korean women in Korean history. Over the course of three days, I had the privilege of observing and participating in their discussions, which provided me with meaningful insights into the teacher resource development process. Importantly, I learned about how women are represented both/either as subjects and/or as actors throughout Korean history. This collaborative experience allowed me to draw connections between these representations and key Historical Thinking (HT) concepts.

During my visit, I discovered that Lake Ontario was just a short walk from the Donald Gordon Centre where I was staying. My late-evening walks along its shore offered cool, pleasant, and reflective breaks after full days of research work and meetings. I also explored Kingston’s historic limestone buildings and the ancient rock formations by the lake, deepening my appreciation for the city’s heritage and landscape. A highlight of my trip was the Princess Street Promenade, when the street is closed to traffic and transformed into a lively festival of local shops, food vendors, community stalls, and live music. The warm, welcoming atmosphere made it a joy to browse, try local foods, and chat with vendors. These experiences not only enriched my visit but also helped me balance the demands of academic work with moments of rest and reflection.



Overall, this visit was transformative. Prof. Christou words — “Queen’s in a micro sense — you leave here not to be the same person even in two weeks” — truly resonated with me. I left Queen’s with clear research directions, new collaborations in motion, and a renewed commitment to producing scholarship that has genuine impact.

Finally, I extend my profound gratitude to the *Thinking Historically for Canada’s Future* project for funding my visit, which made this enriching academic and cultural experience possible. My sincere thanks to Dr. Christou for cordially accepting me, offering guidance, and posting my presentation invitation on LinkedIn—your support was invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Heather McGregor for attending my presentation and sharing constructive comments on my work. Finally, I extend special appreciation to Dr. Becca Evans for her generosity and hospitality,

from walking me and my wife along the shore of Lake Ontario and sharing the history of the rocks formation on the lake, to inviting us to her soccer matches at Richardson Stadium and Nixon Field, to treating us to a memorable dinner of traditional Afghan food on the final night of our stay. Her thoughtful advice on my postdoctoral plans was both encouraging and immensely helpful.

I look forward to sustaining the connections and momentum built during these two weeks and to carrying the lessons learned here into both the completion of my PhD and the next chapter of my academic career.