

Thinking Historically for Canada's Future

Visiting Doctoral Student Program Report

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Faculty Host: Dr. Lindsay Gibson, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Dates of Visit: October 1-12, 2022

My visiting doctoral student program was generously hosted by Dr. Lindsay Gibson in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Throughout my time at UBC, I had opportunities to teach and discuss my research on historical empathy, build relationships with peers and faculty, and learn from and about humans and more-than-humans on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

As a history teacher and researcher, I am familiar with the Faculty of Education at UBC as a place that has been—and continues to be—a leader in history education. As part of my doctoral research tracing the history of historical empathy, I learned more about the ground-breaking work of Dr. Peter Seixas and his involvement in establishing the *Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness* and the *Historical Thinking Project*. Having the opportunity to visit the place where these ideas and networks took shape has been a special moment of my doctoral program. Dr. Seixas passed away while I was visiting UBC and, although I never met him personally, I felt his legacy as a teacher, researcher, and mentor ever-present throughout my time there.

During the first week of my visit, Dr. Gibson invited me to lead a graduate seminar on historical empathy in his course *EDCP 541: Problems in Historical Understanding*. I was pleased to join an engaged and enthusiastic group of graduate students to discuss the possibilities and problems surrounding historical empathy. One of the highlights was being able to share my forthcoming article conceptualizing historical empathy and hear the class's reactions, questions, and critiques, especially since most of the students in the course are practising teachers. This experience was invaluable as I continue to theorize historical empathy in my dissertation, while also keeping in mind the practical applications for teachers.



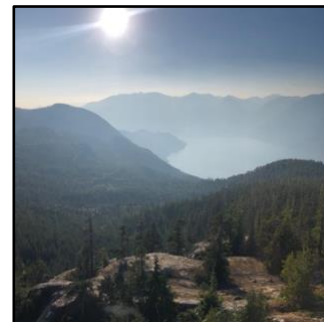
I also attended three classes of the B.Ed. course, *EDCP 332: Secondary Social Studies – Curriculum & Pedagogy*, and observed Dr. Gibson teaching about inquiry and historical thinking. During one of the classes, I taught a lesson that engaged teacher candidates in considering the

learning opportunities and challenges of historical empathy. They worked in groups to generate questions and tasks that foster historical empathy, which they can use during their upcoming teaching placements. In preparation for my visit, I developed a teacher-oriented primer on historical empathy that outlines: a definition of the term, descriptions of the five elements of historical empathy as I conceptualize it, possible student learning outcomes, tips for teachers, and other resources. After sharing this primer with teacher candidates and hearing their feedback, I plan to revisit the primer to make edits and additions before sharing it more widely with educators.

I am thankful for the many discussions of historical empathy I had with Dr. Gibson. Our conversations have been formative in my thinking about the “big questions” that have come up in my research, including: the relationships between the cognitive and affective dimensions of historical empathy, the alignments with and extensions of historical thinking, assessing historical empathy, and the importance of articulating problematic approaches to historical empathy. This experience has greatly contributed to my understanding of historical empathy, and a future step is to begin developing activities and questions on Canadian history topics to provide examples of how historical empathy may be implemented in practice.

During my time at UBC, I also met with faculty and fellow graduate students involved in the *Thinking Historically* project—many of whom I had only met over Zoom until now! Thank you to Ian Alexander and Alim Fakirani for showing me around campus and Dr. Penney Clark and Dr. Gibson for treating me to lunch. I valued these in-person connections and hope there will be many more to come in the future.

As this was my first visit to British Columbia, I also made time for some sightseeing. On UBC’s campus, I walked among the trees at the Botanical Garden’s treetop canopy walkway, watched seals from a distance at Tower Beach, and learned about Indigenous cultures and histories at the Museum of Anthropology. I also spent an afternoon biking around Stanley Park and hiked up a mountain in Squamish. Wherever I went the views were breathtaking, and throughout my stay the weather was unusually warm and sunny. I thoroughly enjoyed my first trip to B.C.!



I’d like to express my deepest gratitude to *Thinking Historically for Canada’s Future* for this wonderful opportunity and to Dr. Gibson and the Faculty of Education at UBC for hosting me. As I wrap up my time here, I’m filled with a renewed energy and passion for my research as I continue analyzing my data, writing my dissertation, and reflecting on my contributions to history education research in Canada.