

Thinking Historically for Canada's Future

Visiting Doctoral Student Program Report

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Faculty Host: Dr. Julie McLeod, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne (Australia)

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If you have ever been to Melbourne, Australia you know that there are sounds and other sensorial experiences that will become impossible to forget: the rapid heartbeat like thumps of crosswalks, the chimes of the trams that transverse the city, or the mating calls of Australian magpies that sound more like R2-D2 than a bird! Add in a few (often more) Aussies correcting your Canadian accent for pronouncing words with a hard “R”, and you have a truly unique and unforgettable experience. One shaped by learning, and perhaps constant re-learning what is familiar.

My first visit to Melbourne was nine years ago when I embarked on an exchange as an undergraduate student. Adding an extra term to my four year degree to venture abroad, it was here when I began to recognize the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne as a global leader in education. Thanks to Dr. Carla Peck and the *Thinking Historically for Canada's Future* project, it was wonderful to return as a visiting doctoral researcher and work with Dr. Julie McLeod (Professor of Curriculum, Equity, and Social Change), a historian of education and leader in progressive education. Dr. McLeod who just completed an Australian Research Council (ARC) study on progressive education and race in interwar Australia, became the perfect person to help expand my thinking on the way progressive education ideas circulated globally and influenced Canadian reformers in the twentieth century. More on this below.

During my first week, I had the opportunity to take part in a speaker series with the Australia New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHES). As the current graduate student representative for the Canadian History of Education Association (CHEA), it was great to meet other historians of education across Australia and New Zealand virtually, in addition to sharing my doctoral research. This invited talk arrived at an optimal time in my doctoral journey as I prepare for my candidacy defence at the end of June.



Beyond consuming an unreasonable number of flat whites, the second week of my visit was focused on listening and learning from scholars in the Social Transformation in Education (STE) Research Group, and other visiting professors and international doctoral students. I attended a writing workshop by Dr. Torill Strand (a visiting Professor from the University of Oslo) titled “writing between being and an event” and began to play with the stylistic choices of academic writing. Dr. Strand spoke about how academic writing can challenge boundaries of thought in addition to helping understand global events. Conveniently during this visit was the STE monthly seminar series. Here, I had the chance to listen to Dr. Matthew Keynes (a Senior Research Fellow) discuss the way history educators viewed the outcome of the 2023 Australian national referendum on integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in parliament. An insightful look at how emotionality can be used to understand the effects of political change.

As my visit fell at the end of the first academic term in Australia, I was able to cross paths with a few international PhD students who were concluding their own visiting positions, from South Korea to Hong Kong. In particular, I was able to have many informal conversations with Minh Nguyen, a current PhD student in the STE research group who is currently exploring how progressive education ideas influenced one alternative school in Vietnam. I hope to maintain this connection in the years ahead.



In this last week, I also appreciated the many generative discussions I had with Dr. McLeod about transnationalism in the history of education. Dr. McLeod encouraged me to read works by Fiona Paisley and especially Tony Ballantyne, whose research imagines history in a trans-local space. I also very much welcomed her challenge to think more deeply about space and place, and how I select and justify my research sites. On the last day of my research visit, Dr. McLeod hosted a potluck at her home in Carlton North, an evening spent with faculty and graduate students in STE.

While it was difficult to leave the warm weather of North America for autumn, Melbourne as a city has so much to offer. It was wonderful during the weekends to reacquaint myself with the historic arcades off Bourke and Collins Streets in the CBD, or to run on the many trails throughout the city. Every corner you turned, you would be greeted by

nineteenth century Victorian cottages and quaint coffee shops. It was difficult to ever head in a wrong direction. A shoutout to Dr. Keynes for acting as a local tour guide, and showing me CERES—an urban farm and community space in north Melbourne.

As the last visiting doctoral student of the *Thinking Historically for Canada's Future* project (and the first award-winner to go abroad!), I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with Dr. McLeod at The University of Melbourne and to engage with the very welcoming and supportive STE community. A true career changing experience.

I look forward to being called to return again to Melbourne, one day in the not-so distant future!

G. Hajnal, June 2026.

