

Thinking Historically for Canada's Future

Visiting Master's Student Program Report

Master's Student: Jessica Gobran, M.A. Student, Educational Research (Curriculum & Learning), University of Calgary

Faculty Host: Dr. Penney Clark, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Dates of Visit: March 22-28, 2026

I am grateful to have spent one week at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as a visiting scholar, learning alongside faculty and graduate students involved in the *Thinking Historically* project and UBC's *Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness*. The visit was graciously organized and hosted by Dr. Penney Clark, Professor in the Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy, whose mentorship shaped the depth and direction of my experience.

Knowing my interest in exploring how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) might inform my research on the framing of ancient civilizations in Alberta's new social studies curriculum and government recommended resources, Dr. Clark coordinated a series of meetings with faculty and graduate students related to this topic. Dr. Clark supported me in developing a broader and more nuanced understanding of how CDA might enrich my research, while also encouraging me to consider alternative methodological approaches for analyzing resources.

I particularly valued the time Ian Alexander, Gulzar Ahmed, and Sarah Clifford (via Zoom) spent discussing CDA with me. Their insight and years of experience helped me better navigate the complexities of implementing this approach. In addition to learning the technical tools of CDA, discussions with other faculty members helped situate my study within the broader landscape of social studies and history education. Specifically, my conversation with Dr. Lindsay Gibson (Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy) prompted me to consider how analytical work with curriculum resources offers an opportunity to help students think about how history may be used and abused. I am left reflecting on *why* students are tasked with learning about particular ancient civilizations, and how these choices contribute to teleological thinking about the West. I also felt encouraged by Dr. Gibson's reminder that scholarly growth unfolds as a series of approximations. My time at UBC was a meaningful step forward in that process.

The visit also highlighted the strength and collegiality of the UBC graduate community. Dr. Clark brought together a group of faculty and students – including Dr. Samson Nashon (Head of the Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy), Dr. Gibson, and graduate students Gulzar Ahmed, Ian Alexander, Prince Essiaw, and Kelsey Beaudry – for lunch. This event served as a welcoming and intellectually generative forum to discuss shared interests and experiences in history education, curriculum shifts, and resource selection.



Lunch on campus, generously hosted by Dr. Clark. From left to right: Dr. Lindsay Gibson, Prince Essiaw, Ian Alexander, Gulzar Ahmed, Kelsey Beaudry, Jessica Gobran, Dr. Penney Clark, and Dr. Samson Nashon.

The week concluded serendipitously at the Education Graduate Student Conference, “Education in Tension: Embracing Uncertainties and Complexities,” on March 27th. Although I had not initially planned my visit around this event, attending it alongside Dr. Clark was a powerful culmination to the week. During the final session, we were both struck by a presentation employing an emerging methodological approach for textual analysis that she had suggested to me in an earlier meeting. This experience reinforced the relevance of our conversations and left me eager to further explore these ideas, yet cognizant of the inherent tensions that I will navigate with and through these research endeavours.

Beyond these formal engagements, the UBC campus itself contributed to my experience. Visiting during the cherry blossom season, I found a rhythm of reading, writing, walking, and reflecting in the mornings and evenings, often by the waterfront. The environment made immersion in the readings recommended to me by faculty and graduate students both focused and personally meaningful. I feel fortunate to have had such a beautiful environment to study and learn in.

Left: The UBC Sunset Lookout, next to my residence at The Green College – this was a favourite spot for evening reading.
Right: Blooming cherry blossoms behind a street sign on campus.



Left: Light shining through the stained-glass windows of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, where I studied in the evenings.
Right: The UBC Rose Garden that I walked through each day as I returned to my residence at The Green College.

My stay at The Green College further extended these opportunities for engagement. I attended two evening panels: “The Role of Scholars in a Time of Social and Ecological Crisis” and “Reflections on the Work of Play in Early-Career Scholarship and Pedagogy.” These sessions prompted deep reflection on my ethical responsibilities and the role of uncertainty in my research. I resonated with the suggestion that playful experimentation can prompt “muscle confusion” that helps learners develop versatility and break stagnant patterns of behaviour. In this sense, my muscles were playfully and productively ‘confused’ during my week at UBC, allowing new patterns of thinking that allowed me to re-approach my research foci with fresh eyes. Finally, an evening visit

to the Museum of Anthropology at UBC and engagement with Indigenous artwork from across the world encouraged me to think more critically about how ancient civilizations may be framed and represented.

Overall, my time at UBC was both intellectually rigorous and personally edifying. Through Dr. Clark's generous mentorship, I was able to deepen my research thinking and build vital scholarly connections. I am very grateful to Dr. Clark and the *Thinking Historically* project for making this formative trip possible and look forward to continued participation in this intellectual community in the years to come.