

CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM BENCHMARKS OF HISTORICAL THINKING

**A Report on the Toronto Meeting
February 10-12, 2011**

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Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project
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“Continuing the Momentum”

A Report on the Toronto Meeting, February 10-12, 2011

1. Executive Summary

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project began in 2006, with a partnership between the Historica Foundation and the University of British Columbia’s Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness. The Benchmarks Project was designed to foster a new approach to history education—with the potential to shift how teachers teach and how students learn, in line with recent international research on history learning. Paradoxically, at the same time, the approach does not involve a radical shift in the history or social studies curriculum. It revolves around the proposition—like scientific thinking in science instruction and mathematical thinking in math instruction—that historical thinking is central to history instruction and that students should become more competent as historical thinkers as they progress through their schooling. Historical thinking requires “knowing the facts,” but “knowing the facts” is not enough.

Over the next two years, piloting of the Project was undertaken in a variety of locations across Canada. By the end of 2007, expressions of interest in the project from additional districts, from ministries of education, from social studies teachers’ associations, and from publishers were beginning to outstrip the capacity of the virtually non-existent project infrastructure. Early in 2008, Historica and the CSHC successfully sought additional financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assemble a national meeting to plan the next step: a strategic “scaling up” of the capacities of the Project. The 42 participants explored four components of educational change: a) curriculum revision; b) resource development; c) professional development; and d) assessment. Discussion generated recommendations reported in *“Scaling Up” the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking* (April, 2008).

In early 2009, in response to the needs identified in the *Scaling Up* Report, the Department of Canadian Heritage committed a major funding contribution to the Benchmarks Project to March 2011. Additionally, The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN|HiER) provided funds for national meetings in 2010 and 2011. At the 2011 national meeting, delegates discussed the progress and challenges made in the past year, and saw a variety of presentations on how educators have incorporated historical thinking into their work, and participated in strategic planning. Assuming that the pending contribution proposal (for three years) to the Department of Canadian Heritage is successful, the Benchmarks team will use the recommendations that came out of these sessions to prioritize major projects and initiatives for the coming year.

2. Introduction: Aims and Rationale of “Benchmarks”

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking offers a dramatically new approach to history education — with the potential to shift fundamentally how teachers teach and how students learn.

Paradoxically, at the same time, the approach does not involve a radical shift in the history or social studies curriculum. It revolves around the proposition — like scientific thinking in science instruction and mathematical thinking in math instruction— that *historical thinking* is central to history instruction and that students should become more competent as historical thinkers as they progress through their schooling.

Why this approach and emphasis on historical thinking? Why now? For most of the 20th century, history programs in Canada (like those in other countries) aimed at transmitting knowledge of a coherent national story — in English Canada, within the framework of the British imperial legacy (less so in Québec). Such programs did not necessarily place the teaching of *thinking* at the centre of their educational objectives.

In a world shaped by new technologies that have revolutionized access to and exchange of information, migrations that have upended older demographic profiles, and new demands for recognition and rights of previously silenced peoples, history is more contentious than ever. Debates over land claims, national borders, origin stories, and collective historical crimes, guilt and reparations are everywhere.

The past is no longer a single narrative of national, political progress. Students need to be equipped, by the end of their high school years, to take an active part in these debates: to be able to sift the wheat from the chaff, to find truths amidst a cacophony of politically and commercially motivated messages, and to contribute, in their own voices, to democratic discussion. History education can play a key role.

Competent historical thinkers understand both the vast differences that separate us from our ancestors and the ties that bind us to them; they can analyze historical artifacts and documents, which can give them some of the best understandings of times gone by; they can assess the validity and relevance of historical accounts, when they are used to support entry into a war, voting for a candidate, or any of the myriad decisions knowledgeable citizens in a democracy must make. All this *requires* “knowing the facts,” but “knowing the facts” is not enough. Historical thinking does not replace historical knowledge: the two are related and interdependent.

3. A History of the Project: 2006-2010

3.1. In Partnership with the Historica Foundation

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project began in 2006, with a partnership between the Historica Foundation (then Canada’s leading national organization devoted to the promotion and improvement of history education) and the University of British Columbia’s Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness (CSHC—which supports research on historical consciousness and history education). With funding from the Canadian Council on Learning and the Department of Canadian Heritage, an international symposium of historians, history education scholars and teachers convened to map the contours of a project which would capture state-of-the-art international research on teaching and learning history and make it a potent force in Canadian

classrooms. From the discussions at that meeting, a foundational Framework document was written, defining “historical thinking” around six historical thinking concepts (HTCs: see www.historybenchmarks.ca).

Over the next two years, work was undertaken in a variety of locations across Canada to put flesh on the bones of the Framework. Teams of teachers in four pilot districts (Vancouver, Selkirk MB, Toronto, NB consortium of districts) engaged in professional development around the HTCs, wrote classroom materials and assessment rubrics, piloted these in their classrooms, and selected student exemplars. A website (www.historybenchmarks.ca) was developed for feedback during development, as well as publication of the classroom materials and student exemplars for a wider audience. The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC2) published *Teaching About Historical Thinking* (2006) using the Benchmarks Framework. In summer 2007, a weeklong Historica national summer institute (45 participants at University of Winnipeg) developed further materials. At the same time, a number of commercial publishers began to integrate the Benchmarks ideas into new textbooks and teachers’ guides.

The Benchmarks Project was first presented to representatives of all provincial and territorial Ministries of Education at a meeting preceding the Historica Council meeting in Toronto in November, 2006. An update was presented the following year, October, 2007. The ministries responded positively but expressed the need for more information and support if they were to be able to work productively with the ideas.

3.2. Financial Support from the Department of Canadian Heritage

As a result of escalating opportunities for development and dissemination, but significant limitations to funding and personnel, Historica and the CSHC successfully sought additional financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assemble a national meeting, whose goal was to discuss and plan strategic “scaling up” of the capacities of the project. In February, 2008, 42 participants gathered in Vancouver. They included representatives from provincial and territorial ministries and departments of education, major history and social studies textbook publishers, Historica and Canadian Heritage personnel directly involved in the project, teachers who had been leading the pilot districts, and history education scholars from across Canada. The participants explored four components of educational change: a) curriculum revision; b) resource development; c) professional development; and d) assessment.

Discussion generated recommendations reported in “*Scaling Up*” the *Benchmarks of Historical Thinking* (April, 2008). Through 2008, work in local districts, with textbook publishers, and several ministries continued. At that time, major funding (\$2.1 million) was announced for The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN|HiER), a pan-Canadian history education network under the directorship of Dr. Penney Clark, also based at UBC’s Faculty of Education, opening up the horizon of possibilities for the reach of the Benchmarks Project.

3.3. Building Capacity: Longer Term Funding

In early 2009, in response to the needs identified in the *Scaling Up* Report, the Benchmarks Project received additional funding to March 2011 from the Department of Canadian Heritage for:

- a full-time project coordinator to support and promote the Project

- enhancement of the Benchmarks website
- additional national meetings to bring together ministry of education representatives and other key education stakeholders and
- identification of gaps in historical knowledge and understanding among young people

With the new funding, we formalized an Executive Steering Committee, consisting of Penney Clark (UBC), Carla Peck (University of Alberta), and Peter Seixas (UBC), for consultation on all major decisions.

In June, 2009, after a national search, Jill Colyer was hired as project coordinator, met with the Executive Steering Committee, and set up a national office in Kitchener, Ontario, within striking distance of Toronto.

In September 2009, the Historica Foundation merged with the Dominion Institute, shifting the partnership configuration in regards to personnel, priorities and logistics. After a series of meetings, by mutual agreement among the newly formed Historica-Dominion Institute (HDI), the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the CSHC, we re-organized the institutional partnership, enabling the Canadian Heritage funding contribution to flow directly to UBC, without the involvement of HDI.

3.4. *The 2010 National Meeting*

In 2010, thanks to funding from our partner THEN|HiER, the next Benchmarks Project meeting was held in Toronto. The meeting, which took place February 18-20, 2010, included 60 invited participants from across Canada. A reception, funded by the Interchange on Canadian Studies, provided a welcome on the first evening. Participants included representatives from all but two provincial and territorial ministries, publishers or editors from each of the major history and social studies textbook houses, personnel from the Department of Canadian Heritage, teacher-leaders from the pilot districts, history education scholars from across Canada, representatives from partner organizations, and the presidents of a number of provincial history and social studies teachers' associations. There were seven francophone and three First Nations/Inuit/Métis representatives.

On the morning of the first day presentations summarized developments since the 2008 national meeting, specifically in regards to recommendations generated at that meeting. Jill Colyer reported on her activities as coordinator. Tom Morton, senior researcher with the Project, summarized his examination of historical thinking in provincial curricula. Linda Mlodzinski and Renée Gillis, from the Manitoba Ministry of Education, presented their work on curriculum reform in that province; Carla Peck explained her professional development consortia-based initiative in Alberta; and Lindsay Gibson surveyed his local initiative in Kelowna, BC. Penney Clark outlined the ways in which THEN|HiER's initiatives are complementing and supporting the work of the Benchmarks Project.

After Peter Seixas outlined the goals for the meeting, participants assembled in four groups to address: accomplishments, challenges and needs, paying particular attention to the question of First Nations, Inuit and Métis perspectives within the context of the Benchmarks project. The groups were heterogeneous in terms of geographic region and education sector. One of the four was conducted in French, while the other three were in English. They addressed the interrelated problems of a) curriculum, b) professional development, c) resources, and d) assessment.

On the second day, Noni Mate of 7th Floor Media presented the new Benchmarks Project website, after which the groups re-assembled to consider how to respond to the challenges and needs they had articulated on the previous day, with action at local, provincial and pan-Canadian levels.

The project coordinator and Benchmarks Executive Steering Committee reviewed and prioritized the recommendations that resulted from the meetings and used them to guide major activities and initiatives for the next year. These major initiatives involved:

a) Curriculum

Ministries requested assistance in incorporating historical thinking into their curricular documents, including seeing drafts of work being conducted in jurisdictions across the country. Interest in more information about the progression of understanding of the concepts was also highlighted.

b) Professional Development

The ongoing need for PD was universally identified as an area of crucial importance. Recommendations included targeting faculties of education, providing curriculum links to lessons on the web site, and developing a cadre of historical thinking experts to run training sessions.

c) Resources

Teacher and student resources that explicitly incorporate historical thinking can play a key role in the development of historical thinking. While a number of publishers had done this on a small scale, no revolutionary products that broke from the traditional models had been created. As in the categories of curriculum and professional development, there was a need for more expertise in historical thinking within publishing teams. At the same time, there appeared to be an explosion of opportunities in on-line resources, documents and images from a number of federal agencies and museums.

d) Assessment

The meeting noted that new ways of teaching history would have to be accompanied by new ways of assessing history learning. Participants expressed the need for assessments to support and promote learning while providing information for reporting how well students are doing. As well, they raised the challenge of developing system-wide assessments to monitor uptake by teachers and improvement in student competencies.

Rubrics had been central to the models of assessment in the Benchmarks project to date. Taking these further would require a much clearer sense of progression across grade levels for each of the historical thinking concepts. At the same time, the dissemination of the use of rubrics for assessing students work would be enhanced by the development of some generic rubrics (not tied to particular lessons or tasks) for each of the historical thinking concepts, to be published on the website.

The meeting thus generated an ambitious agenda: the accomplishments of 2010-11 were reported to the 2011 meeting and are detailed under section 4.1 below.

4. 2011 National Meeting: Continuing the Momentum

In 2011, our partner THEN|HiER again funded the Benchmarks Project national meeting, February 10-12 in Toronto. The central location for flights from across the country helped to contain costs. The invitation list was limited to 60 participants from across Canada, despite dozens of requests from others who wanted to attend. Interest in the meeting reflects a growing awareness of historical thinking as an educational issue in general, and in the work of the Benchmarks Project in particular.

Participants included representatives from provincial and territorial ministries across the country, representatives from each of the major history and social studies textbook publishers, personnel from the Department of Canadian Heritage, teacher-leaders in pilot districts, leading history education scholars from across Canada, representatives from partner organizations, and the presidents of a number of provincial history and social studies teachers' associations. New representation included the Alberta Ministry of Ed., the BC Ministry of Ed., the Saskatchewan Council of Social Studies, the Ojibwe Cultural Centre, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Richmond Museum, Historica-Dominion Institute, Brock University, the BC Social Studies Teachers' Association and the Ontario Elementary Social Studies Teachers' Association (For a complete list of those in attendance, see Appendix I).

Simultaneous interpretation was available for participants, as presentations were in both English and French. Handouts and materials were produced in both official languages. (Please see the complete agenda, Appendix II).

The meeting began with a reception the night of February 10th, partly sponsored by McGraw-Hill Ryerson. The first morning of the meeting saw Peter Seixas and Penney Clark welcome those in attendance and outline the goals for the meeting. Jill Colyer then reported on the major accomplishments of the past year. These accomplishments are summarized in Section 4.1 of this report.

The bulk of the meeting involved the following sessions:

- a) Progress and Challenges of the previous year - breakout groups discussed questions such as "What have you done with the Benchmarks Project?" "What has worked?" "What problems have you encountered?" and reported back to the entire group
- b) Best Practice/Works in Progress - a variety of selected educators presented their work to the larger group.
- c) Strategic Planning - breakout groups worked through a "Strategic Planning Worksheet" (Appendix III) with a list of areas of potential interest and concern and reported back to the entire group

Sections 4.2 to 4.8 of this report are based on notes taken during the two breakout sessions, as well as the reports back to the meeting. We have compiled and interpreted the notes from the two sessions together, under common headings. Two key ideas, which we have not previously highlighted, emerged from these discussions:

- New technology provides more avenues for participation and impact than we have yet exploited. Planning for expanded use of video-conferencing, podcasts, and web-based resources should be given consideration.

- Partnerships with other organizations are crucial. We have developed some powerful ideas, but implementation on a broad scale, in curricula, materials, and classrooms will depend on strategic work with other organizations that subscribe to similar goals.

4.1. Major Accomplishments

Training of educators

Our flagship professional development exercise was a Summer Institute held in Ottawa in July, in collaboration with Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Drawing 30 participants from across Canada, it utilized the unrivalled resources of LAC. It added to the network of knowledgeable teacher-leaders and generated resources for teachers, both locally and nationally. The success of this Institute led to planning for another, at St. John's College, UBC in Vancouver, July 2011. Follow-up work from Summer Institute was conducted with the Ojibwe Cultural Centre, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Montreal Jewish Public Archives, University of Winnipeg Collegiate, OISE, Vancouver School Board, and the Saskatchewan Council of Social Sciences.

- The Executive Steering Committee added a fifth member, Allan Hux, who brings deep experience with history curriculum and resources, as well as invaluable contacts in the key Toronto District School Board.
- We reviewed and advised on resource development from all education sectors
- Peter Seixas, Carla Peck, Jill Colyer, Allan Hux, and Tom Morton gave historical thinking workshops at school boards, universities, faculties of education, and subject association meetings across the country.

Website revision and update

Thirty new lessons were posted to site (total of 52). New links were added to partner websites, as well as updates via news items. And, as a consequence of the new, direct contribution relationship with the Department of Canadian Heritage, we migrated the site to a new host server.

Outreach to faculties of education and provincial teachers' associations

- Members of the Benchmarks Project have been working with UBC, OISE, York University, Wilfrid Laurier University, UNB, and Brock University.
- In Ontario, educators have prepared the ground for a southwestern Ontario faculty of education network.
- Historical thinking is being promoted in a number of Ontario College of Teachers Additional Qualifications courses.
- Benchmarks members have presented at numerous teaching conferences, and have written articles for provincial teaching association newsletters.

Initiatives with ministries and partners

- The Benchmarks Project worked actively with the New Brunswick Ministry of Education, French division, to develop a summer historical thinking workshop.
- A preliminary scope and sequence chart was developed with TC2 and the Ontario History Consultants' Association for submission to the Ontario Ministry of Education, for their Social Science and Humanities, and Canadian & World Studies curriculum review.
- Work continues with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.
- A new Grade 5 resource incorporates historical thinking for the Northwest Territories.

- Work continues in Nova Scotia.
- We pursued opportunities for collaboration with CBC Learning, Canada’s History, Discovery Education, the Historica-Dominion Institute, and the museums and archives community.

Promotional materials

Flyers and workshop packages were produced and distributed as usual. A major new initiative consisted of a series of historical thinking classroom posters, in both English and French. The first print run of 1000 sets disappeared quickly. We will incorporate feedback on first sets of posters, make modifications, and run additional sets of posters for distribution.

Grant and contribution applications for new and continuing funding

- Canadian Studies Program, Department of Canadian Heritage
- THEN|HiER
- CURA (Canadian University-Research Alliance) — Canadians and Their Pasts

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit involvement

- Guest speakers and participants at 2010 Summer Institute
- Ongoing research and writing (Peter)
- Funding request for an aboriginal educators’ conference

Francophone materials and support

- Workshops in Quebec.
- Development of French language lessons
- Assisted NB in development of French teacher workshop
- Classroom posters in FR and EN

4.2. Partnerships and Collaborations

The Benchmarks Project needs clarity about our relationship to partners. What is Benchmarks trying to do, what *can* Benchmarks do, what do we need help with and what can our partners help us with? There are limits to what the core Benchmarks personnel can do, themselves: how will we get the other parts done? (In other words, identify our strengths, identify what our goals are, and identify what we need others to do and who those others are going to be.) With clearly defined roles we could apportion expertise in particular areas. For example, Benchmarks can provide the intellectual direction of the project, Canada’s History could be our social media outlet, Library and Archives Canada and museums could provide access to more primary sources. Some ideas for partnerships that emerge from the discussion included:

- Partner with other projects funded by the Canadian Studies Program (Canada’s History, Historica-Dominion Institute, the Association for Canadian Studies)
- Partner with Canada's History to perhaps develop webcasts or webinars on exemplary teaching, on how to introduce concepts to students (GG winners, if “Benchmarks teachers” could be a way to do this – see last comment, below), and also work with Canada's History on the social media front.
- Work with existing organizations such as THEN|HiER, and Canada's History to spread ideas emerging from the Benchmarks project in their current media outlets (newsletters, websites, etc.). Have a Benchmarks Corner” in these newsletters as a regular feature. We should start

providing a steady supply of news and new ideas so that Benchmarks stays on the forefront of people's minds and starts to reach new audiences.

- Joel Ralph from Canada's History wondered if the Benchmarks project could help teachers using the HTC's ("Benchmarks approach") apply to Canada's History GG teaching award program. Joel would be very interested in helping us with that and would of course promote award-winning teachers, thereby promoting the Benchmarks project.
- Museum partnerships and "memory institutions" more generally, have a great deal of potential due to their collections of primary source materials. Digitization of museum collections is proceeding fairly quickly. Museums are often anxious to collaborate. They want their collections used.
- CMEC may be an avenue to pursue for funding and legitimacy at the ministerial level.
- Parks Canada would like a formal memo of understanding for partnership. Such formal agreements might be useful for other organizations as well.
- There are probably endless numbers of organizations for potential partnerships: colleges, professional historians, NFB were mentioned; but we need to be strategic.

4.3. Professional Development

There are five distinct audiences for professional development: teacher-leaders, who then provide professional development to their colleagues; the mass teacher population, both elementary and secondary, for use in their own classes; pre-service teacher education programs; history departments where students from faculties of education are required take history courses; and other interested parties such as museum educators.

Professional development needs to be strategic. In other words, we need to target different audiences for different purposes. One example would be to target those involved with heritage fairs, as this was seen as a potentially powerful driver for reform. Heritage fair coordinators might require participants to include the HTC's in their work with students in preparation for the heritage fairs, providing in-service, exemplars and tools to do so. Other key ideas include:

- Teacher Education programs (for pre-service teachers) should be a major priority. Involve faculties of education, perhaps in collaboration with local school districts, in providing professional development for School Advisors.
- Summer Institutes: Build in an expectation that participants in the Benchmarks Summer Institutes will serve as lead teachers within their own school districts. Develop a competitive application process, with applicants sending a c.v., so that we target people who will be able to continue as p.d./curriculum leaders. College of Teachers' approval of the Summer Institute as a course towards career progress and pay increments would increase demand. Provide tuition-free summer institute for practicum sponsor teachers, to build teacher education teams supporting historical thinking.
- The concepts need repetition—for students as well as for teachers, and teachers feel there isn't enough time to do that because their courses are already "jammed," and they understand "content" demands more clearly than "thinking competency" demands. It takes time to become proficient so we need a variety of more extended PD models.
- We need a scope and sequence plan for professional development. This will involve developing a clear focus and prioritizing strategies. We should have a plan for multiple starting points for teachers, where we want them to end up, and what the intermediate steps need to be.

- There is a need to incorporate other means of in-service “delivery” through use of technology. One participant mentioned that provincial social studies and history teachers’ conferences usually take place in urban areas and the cost of travel prevents teachers who live elsewhere from attending. Teachers could view exemplary teaching videos made available on the Benchmarks or THEN|HiER websites and discuss in locally-based groups. Summer Institute access can be extended through on-line tools, SKYPE, webinars. Joel Ralph, of Canada’s History expressed interest in pursuing these technological avenues.

4.4. Materials and Resources

- Textbooks are a key resource for communicating to teachers what is to be learned.
- There was debate over the utility of accumulating lesson plans on the website: some think they are not all that useful, because most teachers want to “do their own thing.” However, others felt just as strongly that lesson plans are very useful because they provide models and templates for people to follow. What was clear for all was that we do need exemplars for how to teach the concepts, whether those are introductory lesson suggestions or full-blown lesson plans, and that these exemplars need to have attached to them a very strong assessment piece.
- There is too little assistance for elementary teachers, who often have much less preparation for history teaching in their teacher education programs.
- French language materials are still running behind English. At the very least, we need an exemplary lesson for each concept, in French, on the website. Francophone funding in Ontario should be explored further. Stephane Levesque is working with the Ontario Ministry to translate and adapt TC2’s *Teaching About Historical Thinking*.
- Aboriginal materials: research and consultation are crucial.
- Exemplars of student work, with commentary, are crucial tools to help teachers think about what to expect from their students.
- A "heritage fair" resource package might be very helpful to go along with the professional development targeted to heritage fair coordinators.
- Parks Canada would like assistance with resource development.

4.5. Communication and Branding

Concern was expressed about the term “Benchmarks.” On the other hand, it was acknowledged that there could be costs to scrapping it at this stage in the Project.

“Competency,” “literacy,” “critical thinking” and “21st century” came up repeatedly as powerful words in current educational circles. Others include “school improvement,” “adolescent strategy,” “assessment for learning,” and “results-based learning.” Because they are trendy, they receive funding dollars. Rather than scrapping “Benchmarks of Historical Thinking,” we might add a slogan, where appropriate, “Promoting critical historical literacy for 21st century Canada.” Specifically, more substantive links with literacy infrastructure in education should also be pursued. No clear decision was reached on the question of a name change at the meeting, but the discussion will inform a decision from the Executive Board in the near future.

- One-day workshops for teachers—while perhaps limited for genuine professional development—are useful for promoting the Project and awareness of the idea of historical thinking. In this way, branding and professional development are linked.
- We should seek more presence in newsletters and publications within the educational community.

4.6. Assessment

Assessment was expressed as a major concern for all groups of participants. More attention and development needs to be paid to assessment of student progress in historical thinking, both at the small classroom scale and at the large district or provincial scale. Nunavut has moved to comprehensive projects as final summative assessments: here is an opening for HTC's, and one that might serve as an assessment model elsewhere.

4.7. National Meetings

- We might add webinars or video conferencing for participants who cannot travel to the meeting.
- Assessment and historical thinking at the elementary level should receive special attention.

4.8. Research and the Intellectual Foundations of the Project

- We need empirical research related to how students progress toward the development of deeper understandings of historical thinking concepts.
- We also need empirical research on how teachers progress in response to various professional development initiatives, and how they are using various materials and resources. To find out, we could use some of the same approaches as publishers – focus groups and field-testing sites.

5. Meeting Evaluations

A post-meeting evaluation form was completed by 28 of the invited participants (see Appendix IV) and provided important information for this report. Asked how helpful the meeting had been, on a scale of 1-5, the vast majority (26) rated it highly (1 or 2), one rated it 3, and one a 4 (one did not provide a number). Respondents provided very specific feedback that will be used for the priorities and plans that we establish for the next year of the project. We also received good feedback on possible changes to the format of the next annual meeting.

6. Conclusion

At the time of writing, we are awaiting word on whether the Canadian Studies Program will fund the Benchmarks Project for the next three years (word that has been delayed by an inconveniently timed federal election.) If the Project were to end here—as a nationally funded, centrally coordinated education reform initiative—we might rest on the laurels of having had a clear impact on the Canadian history education discussion, at least at the levels of Ministries, textbooks, teacher association meetings and university-based history teacher education. On the other hand, we can be equally certain that the Project has not reached far enough to develop the practices of *doing history* with confidence and *thinking historically* with competence, to a significant percentage of Canadian students. That may or may not be an attainable goal, given limited resources, a diverse and dispersed population, and competing priorities and philosophies. Yet, each time we come together from the far-flung regions of Canada, the enthusiasm, receptivity and sense of possibility generated by the Project inspire us to keep that goal in our sights, and to work with whatever resources we *do* have, to attain it.

7. Appendices

7.1. Participant List

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7.2. Meeting Agenda

Thursday, February 10, 2011

7:00pm **Reception** Vista Foyer (main floor, Hilton)
 Light fare and cash bar

Friday, February 11, 2011

8:30 am **Breakfast** Dundas/Cawthra Room

9:00 am **Welcome and Introductions**

Peter Seixas, Director, Benchmarks Project
Penney Clark, Director, THEN|HiER

Goals of the Meeting

Peter Seixas

Project Update

Jill Colyer, Coordinator, Benchmarks Project

10:00 am **Session 1: Progress and Challenges**

Participants will be placed in largely homogenous groups to discuss *current* progress and challenges. (“Here is what we’ve done. What has worked? What are our problems?”)

Note: Coffee will be served during this session.

11:30 am **Session 1: Reports and Discussion**

12:30 pm **Lunch** Dundas/Cawthra Room

1:00 pm **Session 2: “Best Practice/Works in Progress” Presentations**

- Kevin Kee, Brock University, video gaming and historical thinking
- Janet Thompson, Vancouver School Board, teaching historical thinking
- Alan Corbiere, Ojibwe Cultural Centre, history in aboriginal communities: an Anishinaabe perspective
- John Stewart, NWT Dept of Ed, Grade 5 curriculum resource development
- Craig Harding, Calgary Board of Ed, historical thinking and interpretive maps
- Carla Peck, Alberta, a model for professional development

2:15 pm **Session 2: Learning Stations**

Each of the previous presenters will “host” a learning station to field questions and engage in discussion with participants.

Note: Coffee will be served during this session.

Friday, February 11, 2011

- 3:00 pm **Session 3: “Best Practice/Works in Progress” Presentations**
- Lindsay Gibson, UBC, TC2 History Docs Project
 - Myra Partridge, Janice Slaght, Toronto DSB, Heritage Fair projects
 - Brent Toles, Sask Dept of Ed, SASK curriculum review
 - Emily So, Richmond Museum, developing education kits
 - Tom Morton, Benchmarks Project, lesson and unit development
 - Stan Hallman-Chong, Kim Wallace, ON Min of Ed, ON curriculum review
- 4:15 pm **Session 3: Learning Stations**
- Each of the previous presenters will “host” a learning station to field questions and engage in discussion with participants.
- 4:45 pm **Summary of the day**
- Peter Seixas
- 6:00 pm **Dinner** Vista “A” Room

Saturday, February 12, 2011

- 8:30 am **Breakfast** Dundas/Cawthra Room
- 9:00 am **Strategic Planning**
- Peter Seixas
- 9:30 am **Session 4: Strategic Planning**
- Homogeneous groups will brainstorm and provide input on the next phase of the project. This may include:
- A. Faculties of education initiatives
 - B. Professional development (e.g., How can we help boards and districts to access funds? How do we develop a core PD team without funds?)
 - C. Assessment (e.g., How to handle province-wide exams?)
 - D. Non-classroom educational targets (e.g., museums and historic sites)
 - E. Branding and building capacity
 - F. Future of national meetings
- 11:00 am **Break**
- 11:15 am **Session 4: Reports and Discussion**
- 12:15 pm **Concluding Remarks and Lunch**
- 12:30 pm **End of meeting/lunch**

7.3. Strategic Planning Worksheet

A. Professional development

(A cadre of trainers, summer institutes, pre-service teacher education, aboriginal conference)
WHAT ARE THE ROUTES TO MAXIMUM IMPACT?

B. Partnerships and collaborations

(THEN|HiER, TC2, Virtual Historian, the Begbie contest, textbook publishers, museums, LAC, Parks Canada, CBC, HDI, CNHS, ACS) WHAT KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS, WITH WHOM, WILL MAXIMIZE IMPACT?

C. Materials

(Textbooks, partners and the production of materials, portals to others' materials, assessment tools – for the classroom and for large-scale, website: are lesson plans the best way to go?)
WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL RESOURCES?

D. Research and the improvement of our intellectual foundations

(Aboriginal perspectives, progression of concepts/scope and sequence)
WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH WOULD ASSIST YOUR WORK?

E. Management of the project

(Executive Board and Annual Meeting) ARE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS ADEQUATE?

F. Communication and branding

(Protecting the integrity of the concepts, enhancing the Benchmarks “brand”)
HOW IMPORTANT ARE THESE CONCERNS; IF SO, WHERE?

G. The two-year timeline

HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT WHAT COMES BEYOND 2013?

7.4. **Post-meeting Questionnaire**

Please note: Your responses are very important to us. Certainly because they help us to improve the usefulness of our meetings, but also because they are a critical reporting component tied to our federal funding.

1. Name and position:

(1 = very useful, 5 = not at all)

2. How useful/helpful did you find Session 1:

Progress and Challenges? 1 2 3 4 5

3. How useful/helpful did you find the presentations in Sessions 2 and 3:

Best Practice/Works in Progress? 1 2 3 4 5

4. How useful/helpful did you find the informal learning stations in

Sessions 2 and 3: Best Practice/Works in Progress?? 1 2 3 4 5

5. How useful/helpful did you find Session 4: Strategic Planning?

1 2 3 4 5

6. From your perspective, based on your current position/role, what should be the highest priorities for the Benchmarks Project for 2011-2012?

7. Would you like us to contact you directly to do some brainstorming/planning about a collaborative initiative between your jurisdiction/board and the Benchmarks Project?

8. Other comments:

Benchmarks of Historical Thinking

www.histori.ca/benchmarks/

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