

National History and Identity in Saskatchewan Social Studies Curriculum 1970-2008:  
Narratives of Diversity, Tolerance, Accommodation, and Negotiation

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## **Abstract**

Social studies, with its focus on history, politics, and identity, provides an interesting site of analysis through which to examine the historical development of master or comprehensive narratives of the nation in Canadian curriculum documents. This research is focused on providing a historical critical discourse analysis of the development of the myths and meta-narratives of the nation as they appear within social studies and history curriculum documents in the province of Saskatchewan from the 1970s to 2008. As a historical critical discourse analysis, the research sought not only to provide explanation concerning the function of those discourses, but also draw connections between and provide explanation concerning the historical climate that gave rise to these particular discourses. The research provides useful information for examination of discourses of Canada and Canadian identity and offers critical suggestions for future curricular development. Working from the parameters set out by Tomkins (1986), the formal curriculum is the official state sanctioned program of study. The study is limited to the aims, goals, and learning outcomes as written in the official curriculum documents in the disciplines of social studies and history.

*Keywords:* social studies education, history education, curriculum history

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

As a social studies educator, this research is informed by my interest in the contemporary state of the discipline of social studies in the Canadian context and the possibilities this subject area presents for addressing issues of collective identity in what is recognized as an increasingly pluralist landscape. Underlying this interest in collective identity construction in Canadian education is an interest in exploring the ways that past and on-going representations of the national narrative undermine goals of reconciliation, equity, and diverse notions of belonging. While Canada is generally regarded and commonly defined as pluralistic and diverse, these constructions are often rooted in historical and contemporary narratives that seek to gloss over or completely ignore the foundation of the first and early settlements and the ways in which those initial settlements continue to legitimize continued dispossession of land and resources from Indigenous peoples. Central to the shaping of the current Canadian collective identities is an investigation into the stories that our nation tells about colonialism and the ways these stories uphold the myth of settler innocence that is required to maintain legitimacy in these lands.

Since its inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a primary goal of public education has been the socialization of students into particular types of citizens who not only share particular values but also share in a common identity. Introduced at a time when people were relatively unfamiliar with government intervention into citizens' everyday lives, public, universal education became one of the most important tools for forging national identity amid diversity (Raptis, 2018). In both Canada and the United States, social studies has been the primary vehicle through which to achieve such goals (Hardwick, Marcus & Isaak, 2010). Despite the fact that education, along with the curriculum documents which guide educational outcomes, falls under regional, provincial jurisdiction, there was, and continues to be, a clear expectation to cultivate 'national consciousness' – one that for a long time focused on the Canadianization of people and propagated allegiance to the British parliamentary system and the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture (Levesque, 2011). Formulations of national identities are inextricably linked with our historical records and retellings of the past. As Dickason (2005) contends, whether these narratives are oral or written tradition, identities are solidly based and built in the past. This record of where we are from, how we got to where we are today, and where we are headed tomorrow becomes



the distinct focus of history. In many ways, it is the work of trying to make sense of our collective experiences (Dickason, 2005) so that it can provide opportunities for students to see themselves as part of the national narrative, past present, and future.

Processes of colonization, both past and present, are integral to such discussions of nation building and the narratives that we construct because such discourses can either reveal or conceal histories of marginalization and oppression. Through a discussion of the legal entrenchment of racist and colonial practices in the Canadian context, Thobani (2007) notes that the sovereignty of Canada rests on the oppression of Indigenous peoples and their socio-political order as it remains the necessary condition of Canadian sovereignty. To truly reflect on Canada's colonial past is to call into question the formation of the country itself, a daunting and unsavoury story that many people do not want to acknowledge. Recognizing and legitimating Canadian sovereignty requires that settlers constantly forget what Audra Simpson refers to as the settler's secret, the secret of Indigenous sovereignty (Razack, 2012). It is Canada's denial of its ongoing violent colonial past that has brought me to consider what is at stake if Canada were to fully recognize our violent and racist colonial past and the ways it continues today.

Although intensely integral to the study of oppressive structures, the historical perspective should not work to diminish the presence of these oppressive forces today. Instead the focus is on understanding the past as an integral tool in understanding present oppressive forces in society. As Nelson (2002) reminds us "we must learn to see the history as not a thing of the past, but a 'history of the present'" (Nelson, 2002, p. 232 as cited in Schick, 2014, p. 100). In similar fashion, Leonardo (2004) also notes, "...despite the fact that white racial domination precedes us, whites daily recreate it on both the individual and institutional level" (p. 139). Recognition that the past is integral to the structures, beliefs, and values that we hold in the present is key to understanding any aspect of contemporary society. It is especially crucial in understanding constructions of national identity as it is overtly entrenched in structured ideologies and processes. If there is no recognition of the role of the past in creating and sustaining ideologies of race and racism, there is little hope to change or disrupt contemporary discourses.

## **Purpose and Guiding Questions**

Since curricular documents are influenced by dominant ideas and discourses both within and outside the field of education, this research situates historical curricular narratives with specific reference to the prevailing educational, socio-political climate as well as the more enduring historical myths and discourses that have gained significant currency in the Canadian context. Contextualizing curricular documents using the sociopolitical factors involves the examination of a combination of social and political factors, including ideological, educational, historical, political, as well as broad social trends of the period. The desired outcome is the construction of a historical analysis that offers some practical insight and critique of the conception(s) of national identities that we see in today's social studies curriculum. Curriculum represents a necessary site of investigation into the notion and representation(s) of the nation and national identity because, despite variances in the application of these documents, they do serve as the framework and foundation from which classroom teachers develop their lessons.

Firmly grounded in the subject matter of history, politics and society, social studies provide an ideal space through which to consider and analyze the development of narratives of nation and identity in the Canadian context. Specifically focused on a formative period of entrenchment of multiculturalism and diversity politics in the Canadian public and educational spheres, this study explores the development of these narratives in the period from 1970 up to the most recent (2008) curriculum renewals in the province. The period from the 1970s to the present represent a formative period in relation to the development of Canadian identity and belonging. As Canada moved out the period of social and political unrest that dominated the 1960s, political and social life became increasingly characterized by calls from a number of groups, including non-British and French immigrants, Indigenous peoples, women, and Francophones, to be recognized and included in the political sphere. Enmeshed in the larger political climate of civil rights and peace based movements of the 1970s both inside and outside of Canada's national borders, what is often referred to as the second wave feminist movement gained momentum (Status of Women, 2016). Taken up in the Canadian context, as so often is the case, the federal government called for a Royal Commission to examine the status of women. Formed in 1967 with a mandate to investigate the status of women and offer recommendations for the advancement of equality between women and men across all sectors of Canadian society, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women represents an important marker of the social and

political upheaval that characterized Canada and most Western nations during the 1960s. The conclusions from the investigations included recommendations for changes to the legislative system, and strategies to address critical issues facing Canadian women such as poverty, family law, as well as the Indian Act for First Nations women with Indian Status (Status of Women, 2016).

With respect to the growing diversity of the Canadian population, governments could no longer ignore growing calls from non-British and non-French populations for recognition in official representations of Canadian identity and culture. Under increasing pressure from immigrant groups in particular, the government abandoned assimilationist policies in favour of a more tolerant approach. In a statement to the House of Commons in 1971, Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, working from the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism that began its work in 1963, announced multiculturalism as an official government policy. A crucial turning point in defining Canadian identity, it was during that 1971 speech in the House of Commons that Trudeau declared that no one single culture could define Canada. Instead, Canada was defined by its multitude of cultures and the government would accept demands from these cultures for recognition as meaningful contributors to the overall makeup of Canadian society and culture (Canadian Museum of Immigration). Once the federal government announced their new official recognition of Canada as a multicultural nation, provincial governments followed suit and created their own policies that recognized and integrated Canada's multicultural identity. Saskatchewan's heritage of non-British immigration and the fact that by 1971 53 percent of the population was neither British nor French fit well with official multicultural policy and resulted in Saskatchewan becoming the first to develop a policy at the provincial level in 1974 (McGrane, 2011).

Part and parcel to Trudeau's recognition of Canada as a diverse nation with no official culture was his belief that no one culture should precede any other (Troper, 2002). Reflective of the liberal orientations of equality, especially with respect to equality before the law, Trudeau believed in the equal, as opposed to special, treatment of all Canadians, regardless of their language or culture. This belief, articulated through the rhetoric of his just society policies, underpinned efforts by the federal government to dissolve the Department of Indian Affairs and render all treaties with Indigenous groups null and void. Commonly referred to as the White Paper, the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy of 1969 aimed to end the

special relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples. Specifically, the White Paper proposed a transfer of responsibility to provincial governments so that these governments could integrate services for Indigenous peoples with those provided to other Canadian citizens, the abolishment of the Indian Act, and the elimination of Indian Status all together. Taken as yet another attempt at assimilation, Indigenous peoples rallied in opposition to the proposed legislation and eventually, under this increasing pressure, the federal government officially abandoned the White Paper. Despite this abandonment of the policy as official legislation, the provincial and territorial governments did adopt its teachings as frames for their educational policies.

The period also marks another important turn with respect to federal legislative development with important implications for the Canadian nation and Canadian identity. Not only did this period see the entrenchment of multicultural policies that aimed to define Canada in terms of its diversity, but the liberal values of individual rights and equality also became another lasting legacy of the Trudeau government. In addition to entrenching Canada's recognition of its diverse populations, Trudeau also succeeded in bringing about constitutional reform that embedded individual rights through the creation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Included as the second of four parts within the Constitution Act 1982, the Charter specifically outlines the individual rights and freedoms (fundamental freedoms, legal rights, mobility rights, equality rights etc.) each Canadian citizen is entitled to across the country. Indicative again of the growing power of Indigenous individuals and organizations to exert pressure on the federal government, the Constitution Act 1982 also saw, as a direct result of Indigenous lobbying and activist efforts, the inclusion of both Aboriginal and Treaty rights within the repatriated constitution.

In the educational sphere, the late 1960s also saw the publication and subsequent proliferation of a biting critique of teaching about Canada by Hodgetts (1968). Published in 1968, the report judged much of what was going on in Canadian classrooms regarding Canadian content to be subpar. In addition to garnering widespread attention both within and outside of educational publications, the report resulted in the creation of the Canada Studies Foundation that aimed to remedy the problems articulated by the report. Not only did provincial governments become expressly concerned with integrating and promoting students learning centred on Canadian studies, their efforts also reflected the larger frame of the shift to

multiculturalism and tolerance as markers of the Canadian identity. Included within provincial efforts to incorporate the federal governments' official adoption of multiculturalism ministries of education started carrying out investigations of educational resources in order to eliminate discriminatory resources (Hebert, 2001). Beginning a historical examination of the development of social studies in the Canadian context in the 1970s presents an interesting avenue through which to consider the extent to which the Saskatchewan curriculum began to wrestle with some of the complex questions of identity and nationalism which took centre stage as these social, political and educational events and processes unfolded.

In addition to the narrow timeframe, the focus of the study will be further limited by the examination of only grades 7-12 curriculum documents. Since social studies curricula, as a subject discipline, at the high school level have not been renewed in the province since the 1990s and since social studies branches out into a larger variety of specific subject courses, the study will also examine history curriculum for grades 10 -12. History was selected in lieu of other social sciences subjects because of its shared emphasis on citizenship and content associated with identity, politics, and society. The curriculum will be examined working from the parameters set out by Tomkins (1986), where he defines curriculum as the official program of study. In this way, the study will be limited to the documents which outline the 'aims and objectives' of the courses.

The following questions serve to inform the focus of the study:

- 1) What kind of national narrative(s) has/have been developed through social studies and history curricula in Saskatchewan since 1970?
- 2) How have ideas about land and place been represented in the social studies and history curricula in Saskatchewan since 1970?
- 3) How might we use the historical development of ideas concerning nation, identity and land/place in curriculum to uncover the shortcomings and then posit a direction for curriculum that aims to:
  - a. Honour truth and reconciliation
  - b. Acknowledge the omissions and myths of the past national narratives
  - c. Promote a progressive citizenry that works for an equitable and sustainable Canada?

## **Curriculum Documents**

Findings and interpretations are based on primary source examination of twenty-five grades 7-12 curriculum guides spanning the years 1971 to 2008. Throughout the years in question (1970 – 2008) there were two major curricular renewal projects that resulted in new guides at various levels. Curriculum guides produced in the 1990s reflect the work of the Social Studies Task Force that began its work in 1981. Renewals at the middle years level reflect the latest updates in the areas of social studies in the province at the 7 -12 level, a process that began in the early 2000s under the last New Democratic Party (NDP) government to hold power in the province.

Since history as a subject discipline in the province of Saskatchewan was only reintroduced in 1991, following a 45-year absence, and secondary social studies guides have not undergone revision since the reintroduction of history as a subject discipline, interpretations and findings concerning history courses are less reflective of historical development. This is because these secondary level history guides produced between 1991 and 1997 have not been updated and continue to be in use across province in 2020. Despite attempts to revise social studies at the secondary level in the early 2000s, the process dissolved without any new curricular renewals produced. Instead, the process concluded without the creation of any new curriculum guides at any of the 10, 20, or 30 levels in history or social studies. The process is currently underway once again in the province, with both reference and writing committees beginning their work in 2017.

The structure and organization of the curriculum guides has undergone significant change over the years, at first becoming increasingly prescriptive then later returning to organization which lends itself to greater teacher autonomy. Guides produced during the 1970s contained little in the way of detailed prescriptive aims and objectives for the course of study. Instead, the guides began with a general statement concerning the broad aims of social studies in the province followed by broad aims for the course, and then knowledge based content that should be covered by the course. Guides produced in the 1980s start to become increasingly prescriptive and also contain much more emphasis on the broad approach and philosophical underpinnings that inform the content. This progression continues into the 1990s where curriculum guides reach the pinnacle of prescriptiveness. Not only do the 1990s guides contain overarching philosophical underpinnings, aims for social studies and the particular course in

question, but these guides also contain overtly detailed objectives for the course, divided into knowledge, skills and values objectives, as well as suggested lesson plans for each of those objectives.

Although the structure of the curriculum guides shifts significantly in the 2008 renewals, signaled by a move to much shorter and less prescriptive guides, these guides continue to include a front section that explains the philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum. The six Common Essential Learnings (independent learning, personal and social skills and values, critical and creative thinking, communication, numeracy, and technological literacy) of the Core Curriculum, originally introduced as part of the curricular renewal work of the 1980s, receive a revision and update in the 2008 guides. By 2008, these Common Essential Learnings are reorganized and revised to appear as Broad Areas of Learning (building lifelong learners, building a sense of self and community, building engaged citizens) and Cross Curricular Competencies (developing thinking, developing identity and interdependence, developing literacies, developing social responsibility). The 2008 renewals also contain a renewed framework for social studies curriculum in the entire K-12 years. Formerly divided into 21 core concepts, with a different focus at each of the grade levels on a set number of those concepts, the renewed social studies framework divides the aims for all courses in the K-12 years into four broad goals: power and authority, interactions and interdependence, dynamic relationships, and resources and wealth.

## **Structure**

The dissertation that follows adheres to a manuscript style structure. As such, the first three chapters deal with laying the foundational framework for the analysis and results chapters. These introductory chapters provide the historical context, both in terms of the broad socio-political and educational climates, the literature review and methods employed in the framing of the study and the analysis and interpretations that form the bulk of the research work. Analysis and results have been organized into thematic chapters based on particular sites of analysis within the larger frame of the examination of historical and contemporary discourses of nation and national identity as they appear in social studies curriculum in the province.

The first analysis and results chapter deals with questions that relate to the influence of regional political culture on the development of narratives of nation and identity. More

specifically the chapter focuses on the interplay of the three dominant political ideologies in Canada (liberalism, conservatism and social democracy) and how these manifest in curriculum. The second analysis chapter extends one particular component of Saskatchewan political culture: the existence and resistance of patriarchal values. Focused on representations of women and gender in curriculum over the years in question, the chapter aims to provide insight into the dominant discourses of women in the national discourse promoted by curriculum and also consider the extent to which social studies curriculum reflects a male centred historical perspective. The third chapter of the analysis takes on a narrower focus to consider only the development of historical narratives of nation and nation building in the context of just the history curriculum in the province. Since history was phased out in the province for several decades, this chapter also differs from others in its lack of a focus on development over time in curriculum and includes examination of guides exclusively produced in the 1990s. The connection between identity, land and place in the development of historical and contemporary discourses of nation are the focus of the next chapter of analysis. In a country where so many narratives are woven around the distinct northern landscapes, and the regional context of Western Canada as a kind of utopian promised land, discourses of land and place have been central to projects of national identity in Canada. The final, and most important in terms of thinking about future curricular renewals and the role of nation building narratives within future social studies curriculum, examines discourses about Indigenous peoples with particular attention to content and examples that seek to uphold and maintain discourses of ignorance and innocence with respect to the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. I close with some final conclusions oriented around articulating major threads that emerged through the research as well as recommendations for the applicability of the research to future renewals and research.



## **Chapter 2: Socio-Political and Educational Climate**

The political culture, which might include more than one ideology and also encompasses popular views and values (Bell, 1994), that is reflected in the political arena is often the starting point for curricular change (Tomkins, 1986). In the realm of such a public institution with clear goals of socializing and otherwise preparing students to take their place in society, education is clearly influenced by the political culture, ideologies, and trends within both the education world and the broader public and political scene. Although educational theory and philosophy represents a distinct influence in shaping curricular aims and outcomes, these ideas operate within the larger context of the social and political climate of the time. This means that attempting to determine the character of education and educational aims within a particular era must certainly examine what was occurring outside of schools. This paper aims to examine the dominant ideologies and trends both within and outside of education which may have worked to shape the structure, organization and content of the social studies curriculum in the province of Saskatchewan from the 1970s to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During that period a number of ideologies and trends have dominated the Canadian landscape and in turn influenced how education has been carried out across the country. In the broad sweep of Canadian education history, Manzer (1994) explains that concepts of educational purpose, governance and policy design are drawn from the opposing political ideologies of liberalism and communitarianism and that of the two traditions, liberalism has continued to dominate since its foundation in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of a broad sweep of socio-political Canadian history, the period from the 1960s through to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has been characterized as a pendulum swinging back and forth and between the two very broad philosophical orientations of progressive and traditionalist educational purposes and aims. Education in the 1960s and 70s became heavily influenced by the political turn ushered in by Prime Minister Trudeau and multiculturalism within a bilingual and bicultural model framework. First gaining public mainstream attention through the calls for independence in Quebec, the 1970s became increasingly defined by a growing number of voices demanding increased rights and recognition in the political sphere. In this context, educational aims became heavily influenced by the discourse of multiculturalism and inclusion. At the same time, education in the late 1960s became increasingly influenced by a neoprogressive movement that sought to implement some of the progressive ideals of American

philosopher of education John Dewey, including a more individualized and inquiry based approach to learning. As Canada moved into the 1970s and the economy began to sink into a recession, public support for the neoprogressive approach to education began to wane. In the midst of cries for a return to teaching the “basics” of education, provinces began to abandon their progressive, individualized approach in favour of increasing attention to the “three Rs.” Characteristic of this move “back to basics” in education though is the variance in interpreting just what “the basics” were or what kind of philosophy underlined these attempts (Tomkins, 1986; Wilson, 1977). Although rooted in the same rhetoric of more traditionalist approaches to education, this movement, also apparent in government management planning, became increasingly oriented towards accountability, standardization and preparing students to particulate in the fast paced global economy in the 1980s and 1990s. Manifest most clearly in the new outcomes based education trend of the 1980s and 1990s, this move was influenced by and reflective of the ideological hold that neoliberalism had taken, and continues to hold, over much of the world. All of this is not to say that the narrative of trends and ideologies influencing the development of curriculum in the country is straight forward or simple. Despite the fact that it is relatively easy to identify the dominant flavour of education during a particular period, there can also be contrary ideologies at work within the same era or even the same policy documents, especially in the Canadian context of regional variation and provincial control over education. Although generally speaking Canadian education has been heavily influenced by the ideology of liberalism, in its various forms, and has swung back and forth between ideas and methods loosely labelled progressive or child centred and those counterparts labelled traditional (Titley & Mazurek, 1990), there is also a complexity and fluidity to the story. In order to reflect such fluidity and interconnectedness between and amongst some of the ideologies and trends at work in education this paper has been organized thematically. The intention is that this structure will support the understanding that reform be examined in light of how it might reflect and resist the prescribed and exclusive parameters determined by ideology and theory.

### **Ideological Traditions**

Understanding some basic points about ideology is important in understanding what informs the decision to endorse and apply particular philosophies of education. Ideologies are both a critique and articulation of the possibilities of humans and society. According to a simple explanation put forth by John Schwarzmantel (1998 as cited in Orłowski, 2011) ideologies are

comprised of three parts: a critique, an ideal and agency. Each ideology offers a critique of society while also articulating the ideal conditions for society and the role that people play within that society. If education is to encourage students to participate effectively or change current societal practices and structure, it is inevitable that educational ideas be informed by various political ideologies to at least some degree. In this way, ideology provides the foundation from which specific educational aims and policy take shape.

In the broad sweep of the nation's political history, Canadian society has been largely influenced by the three political ideologies of liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy. In thinking about Canada's more recent emergence as a welfare state in the post-war era, it is the influence of a type of social liberalism that has held significant sway in both the development of social and economic policies. Significantly influenced by a culminating report of research led by Canadian social scientist and McGill professor Leonard Marsh, Canada's shift in policies in the post-war era can be characterized by a brand of reluctant collectivism that embraces and upholds the liberal tenets of personal responsibility and independence. Although it did not experience the widespread political support and adoption as Marsh might have hoped, the Marsh Report (1943) laid the foundation for the post-war social welfare state in Canada (Maioni, 2004). The report mapped a dense and detailed proposal for the development and implementation of comprehensive social programs based on the ideals of a social minimum and the elimination of poverty. Despite the fact that the report was met with considerable criticism, its foundations, its tone, and its tenets came to infuse many social programs developed in the post-war era including unemployment insurance, the Canada Assistance Plan, family allowances, hospital and medical insurance, and the guaranteed income supplement (Maioni, 2004).

An important influence in the development of the type of welfare state articulated by Marsh was the work of British economist and Liberal politician William Beveridge. A student of Beveridge, Marsh's report reflects the kind of necessity driven collectivism central to the British politician's articulations of social liberalism. Instead of promoting collectivism and state intervention for its own sake, both Beveridge, as well as intellectual contemporary William Maynard Keynes, envisioned a kind of system of social programming and government intervention in the economy implemented only in instances where the normal solutions of free market capitalism failed. As opposed to advocating for a kind of collectivism in principle, both men embraced a reluctant form of collectivism born of necessity (Jones, 2013). Based on largely

on contributory insurance programming, such a system, Beveridge believed, would ensure the protection to engage in risks fundamental to economic growth while at the same time protecting and fostering the individualist values of personal responsibility and independence; a form of social security built on a foundation of cooperation of the state and the individual. The intent with such a system of programming was to ensure that people were able to meet their responsibilities, as opposed to removing them. A kind of hybrid of left leaning liberalism with its embrace of community, social justice, and social welfare, and centrist liberalism and its focus on personal freedoms, individuality, and private property, (Jones, 2013) the social liberalism articulated by both Keynes and Beveridge represents a liberally oriented approach to social welfare. Ultimately, it is a reluctant embrace of collectivist values where state intervention is premised not on intervention for its own sake, but intervention that aims to enhance the liberal values of personal liberty, widen opportunity, and promote common welfare (Jones, 2013).

Taken up in the educational context, Manzer (1994) contends that liberalism, divided into political, ethical and economic liberalism, has been the hegemonic ideology in Canadian education in particular. In the broader context of the political culture of Canada, Bell (1994) offers the same argument for the dominance of liberalism. Although Canadian political culture has made room for conservative and social perspectives, it is liberalism that has dominated Canadian society. Bell (1994) contends that with the full force of state, church, media, and educational system behind it, liberalism has been trained into all of us.

Liberalism differs most obviously and simply in terms of views concerning the individual and the community. Liberalism begins with the basic principle that each individual's wants and preferences are equally valid. An important qualification here concerns the idea of equality in liberal terms. Although there is a recognition that each individual's preferences are equal, liberals generally do not seek equal outcomes for each individual. Conversely, liberals believe that inequity is an acceptable and indeed inevitable outcome in individual pursuits for success. This individualism is then used to justify a reliance on private enterprise and property. For liberals there is no reason to question or not accept unequal outcomes that are the product of fair competition in the capitalist market (Manzer, 1994). This concept, also termed meritocracy, is a cornerstone of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism. Meritocracy is a term that refers to the process by which each individual arrives at their economic and social status as a result of their individual talents, skills, and effort. In addition to its ultimate acceptance of inequality, it is an intensely

problematic idea in that it assumes that everyone begins with the same set of advantages, effectively rendering people unconscious of privilege (Orlowski, 2011). Despite sharing a belief in the value of the individual in society, ethical and economic liberals differ significantly in terms of their views on the purpose of education for those individuals. Where ethical liberals stressed the importance of the growth of individual students as a primary aim of education, economic liberals feel that the main purpose of schooling should be to prepare students to participate effectively in the economy (Manzer, 1994).

As the Western world moved into the 1980s two distinct political rationalities started to gain significant influence in contemporary politics. Although often perceived as contradictory in many respects, both neoliberalism and neo-conservatism have some overlapping characteristics that result in a creative partnership that has important implications for democratization as both seek to disrupt open and participatory systems of political and economic organization. Grounded in economic imperatives above all else neoliberalism represents a “new” kind of liberalism that goes beyond the acceptance of the free market in the development of the individual and society to the promotion of an intense concentration on private enterprise at the expense of just about everything else in society. Between 1972 and the early 1990s the old liberal consensus had all but disappeared and been replaced by this intense form of capitalism known as neoliberalism. Characterized by the deregulation of private industry, tax cuts, privatization of the commons, and weakening of the collective bargaining of workers, neoliberalism has been a dominant force in both economics and society at large since the mid 1980s (Orlowski, 2011). In this context policy debate no longer revolved around questions of individual versus group based rights and became exclusively concerned with upholding private ownership rights over the participatory rights of citizens (Smith, 2004). As the world continues to become increasingly interconnected and the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized by its global nature, this new ideological climate has become enmeshed with the process of globalization (Duty & Merryfield, 2008) so that society is significantly affected by the operations of transnational corporations and international organizations like the World Bank. In the educational climate, represented as technological liberalism by Manzer (1994), there is the sentiment that although education should consider the tenets and characteristics of citizenship, the primary aim should be the requirements of efficient production and exchange in the global economy.

Where neoliberals are guided by a vision guided wholly by economic rationality, neoconservatives are guided by a vision of strong state grounded in a romantic appraisal of the past (Apple, 2000). Born of a convergence of interests across a diverse set of groupings neoconservatives include intellectuals and non-intellectuals, secular Jews and evangelical Christians just to name a few of the divergent and seemingly contrary identities. Despite its diverse nature with respect to ideological and social unity, neoconservatives are united in their calls for the revival of patriotism, the presence of a strong military, and an expansionist foreign policy directives supported by the presence of that strong military. What joins these diverse groupings together is the belief in strong, state-led moral-political visions that links together power and morality (Brown, 2006).

Viewed as part of a larger rise in right-wing political thinking, neoliberalism and neoconservatism converge and overlap in a number of ways to support policy reform that Brown says (2006) has serious de-democratizing effects for nations. In a broad sense, the success of the neoliberal agenda rests a great deal on its allyship with neoconservatives and their ability to draw widespread support from working class citizens in democratized nations. Harvey (2005) frames the neoliberal agenda as one which seeks to restore class power that had been eroded by the progressive policies of the post war era. Neoliberals, framed in this way, ultimately seek a return to the bygone era of the 1920s when the wealthy elite possessed a great deal of power because of their wealth. When understood in this way, as a project aimed at the restoration of class power, neoconservatives and their ability to draw a broad base becomes essential. In order to fulfill the goals of the restoration of the class system within democratized nations, neoliberals needed to find a way to get the non-wealthy sectors of society to buy in. Neoliberal goals could not be fulfilled without widespread support from other sectors of society. Toward this end, neoconservatives could help to provide the propaganda that would legitimize neoliberals' goals to restore class power. Neoconservatives' promotion and romanticization of a return to free market capitalism of a bygone era that had come under attack in the post war era through the implementation of increased regulations as well as expensive social programming aids the neoliberal agenda to restore class power (Gabbard, 2007). By selling economic liberalism as the past that needed to be revived, neoliberals coopted a powerful ally in the neoconservative base. In a narrower sense, there is overlap between the two ideologies in the desire to facilitate and maintain a strong military. While neoconservatives build an argument based on the desire to

spread their values to the rest of the world, neoliberals support the idea of a strong military because they require such force to bully foreign nations into adopting their economic policies. It is also a mutually beneficial convergence that works to prop up the neoconservative desire for a strong military to protect the American way of life. In practical terms, this means that both neoconservatives and neoliberals accept pouring a tremendous amount of tax dollars into a powerful military and the resultant military-industrial complex (Orlowski, 2011).

Examined with the limited context of educational policy and reform, Apple (2000) views neoliberalism and neoconservatism as two parts of a larger “rightward turn.” Comprising two out of the four major elements that characterize this turn, both elements have obvious implications for educational policy and reform. Neoliberal ideas manifest in education through the promotion of stronger links between school and business, in both philosophical and practical terms. Neoliberals view students as human capital where the ideal citizen makes their contributions to society as purchasers or consumers. In practical terms this means that neoliberal policies are oriented around curriculum reforms that target the development of marketable or job ready skills. Neoconservative values are apparent in the promotion of statewide standardized curriculum, national testing, the call for a return to “higher standards” (Apple, 2000), and the integration of Western, especially white/male, knowledge and values. Arising from its emphasis on issues of traditional morals and values, neoconservative policies and policy advocates generally press for the inclusion of elements like the Lord’s Prayer into the public school-day ritual, the teaching of “intelligent design” alongside evolution, and the elimination of progressive sex education curriculum<sup>1</sup> (Orlowski, 2011).

Apple (2000) contends that although seemingly contradictory at times, neoliberalism and neoconservatism work together in education in creative ways. Take for instance the two tenets of standardization as opposed to freedom of choice. Neoconservatives believe strongly that a tightly regulated standardized curriculum is essential because of the power such standardization has in the uniform promotion of good moral character and unified historical narratives that supports strong patriotism. Conversely, neoliberals promote the implementation of market

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<sup>1</sup> The Ontario sex education curriculum released under Katherine Wynn’s Liberal government was repealed by the Ford Conservative government. When the new curriculum was implemented in September of 2015, backlash mounted from what the news referred to as “social conservatives” over the inclusion of topics like gender identity, sexual orientation and anal and oral sex (The Canadian Press, 2019).

principles in education where parents and students have choice as “consumers” of their education. Although seemingly contradictory, these two positions or approaches can converge to help each other in the long run. The standardization that neoconservatives value so much can actually set the stage for the efficiency and engagement in the global economy that is valued by the neoliberal paradigm (Apple, 2000).

### **Political Ideology in Saskatchewan**

Although social democracy has had a strong influence in Canadian politics and national policies, it has particular strong roots in the provincial context of Saskatchewan (Bell, 1994). Where in the Canadian national context the acceptance of socialist ideas is attributed to the corporate collective developed by the legacy of feudalism (Fierlbeck, 2006), Saskatchewan’s agrarian roots and demographic characteristics are used to explain the dominance of the two social democratic<sup>2</sup> parties in Saskatchewan (CCF/NDP). Young (1969) argues that the individualistic nature and ambition that Prairie farmers exhibited combined with the need for government support in the harsh start up conditions in the province meant that they were willing to participate in politics. As these farmers experienced the value of cooperation in the sparsely populated rural landscape, they also became attracted to ideas that favoured the group over competitive self-interest (Young, 1969). In addition to the appeal of collectivist oriented policies, the fact that Saskatchewan was largely comprised of non-English speaking European immigrants who favoured socialist policies also attributed to the success of the NDP and its predecessor the CCF. This non-British/French heritage would also later contribute to Saskatchewan’s quick adoption of multiculturalism at the provincial level (Fierlbeck, 2006).

Despite the strong heritage of collectivist and social democratic ideologies in Saskatchewan, it too was swept up in the tide of neoliberal policies that began to dominate the domestic and international scene in the 1980s. The Progressive Conservative (PC) government that was first elected in 1982 and then again in 1986 would mark a clear departure from the earlier liberal policies of progressive taxation as the party began to adopt and implement policies that favoured and aided corporations and increased privatization of the resource sector (Warnock, 2004). The return of more collectivist-oriented policies seemed to be on the horizon

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<sup>2</sup> Technically speaking, the CCF saw themselves as a ‘socialist’ party. When the CCF shifted and transitioned into the NDP in 1961, there was a shift to the ideological right and the party took hold as *the* ‘social democratic’ party.



with the election of an NDP government in 1991, but unfortunately the newly elected government abandoned their election platform promises and continued the neoliberal direction that had been established by their predecessors (Warnock, 2004). Writing in 2004, Warnock argues that Saskatchewan has found itself in a transition period in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the split between moderate left (NDP/CCF) and the right (conservative) has all but disappeared and been replaced by a discourse of individual greed and intense preoccupation with the free market.

### **Social Tensions and the Emergence of Multiculturalism**

While most Canadians were content to be drawn into the burgeoning urban middle class during the 1970s, there were a number of groups that resisted the continuation of the social and political climate and protested in various forms. Whether francophone nationalists, feminists, Aboriginal people, or radical students, the 1970s was increasingly characterized by a growing number of calls for recognition within the political sphere (Tomkins, 1986). What began with calls for independence from francophone nationalists fuelled an upsurge in the demands of both Indigenous groups and what were termed “third force” minority groups (Tomkins, 1986). The initial federal government responses to the Quebec Crisis<sup>3</sup> would eventually create one of the most lasting identity markers promoted by governments and society: multiculturalism. Trudeau’s solution, which was an endorsement and continuation of the work of the Pearson administration, to the nationalist fervour in Quebec was the promotion of a bilingual and bicultural united Canada (Wallner, 2014). Following the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism the federal government officially endorsed the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual and bicultural framework with Trudeau’s assertion that while Canada recognized two official languages, it had no one official culture, thus cementing the idea that Canada’s identity rested on cultural pluralism (Tomkins, 1986).

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<sup>3</sup> Also commonly referred to as the October Crisis of 1970. It refers to the events including and surrounding the kidnappings of two political officials in Quebec. The crisis quickly became what is considered by some to be the worst example of terrorism committed on Canadian soil when one of the kidnapped officials Peirre Laporte, was killed. Fueled by nationalist discontent and rising unemployment in the province, Front de Liberation de Quebec (FLQ) vowed to use any means necessary to create an independent Quebec state. The FLQ committed a series of crimes over the summer of 1970 culminating in the kidnappings, which spurred a swift reaction from the federal government to implement the War Measures Act.

As francophone issues over cultural and linguistic preservation and the question of Quebec sovereignty moved into the spotlight in the 1960s and 1970s, so did the concerns of various minority and Aboriginal groups. By the end of the 1960s Aboriginal groups were pushing for recognition and a restructuring of the relationship with the government (Bumsted, 2008). Even though Aboriginal issues, as well as calls for increasing recognition of diversity within the framework of multiculturalism, gained wide attention across the country, recognition of general diversity and of the unique relationship with Aboriginal people gained quick and considerable attention in the regional context of Saskatchewan. Since Saskatchewan had a small francophone population and was largely comprised of non-French and non-British immigrants, debates about national unity and multiculturalism occupied little of the political landscape. These factors combined to result in the quick adoption of Saskatchewan's own multiculturalism act in 1971 and an increased emphasis on Aboriginal integration in school curricula by the Department of Education (McGrane, 2011).

### **Multicultural Education**

Since its inception multicultural education in Canada has been influenced by the introduction of the 1971 federal Multicultural Policy statements, the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act and regionally, by the 1971 Saskatchewan Multiculturalism Act (Kirova, 2012). Beginning in the early 1970s, the federal Multiculturalism Act influenced the creation and promotion of a number of various programs and approaches in education, including the introduction of heritage language programs and the implementation of anti-racist programs. Although the federal policy for multiculturalism had an impact on the shifting of curricula and education towards recognizing and celebrating diversity, the vagueness regarding the implementation of multiculturalism in education resulted in a variety of approaches.

Despite this variance, though Kirova (2012) identifies three goals that emerge from a synthesis of the components of multicultural education. Each of the various approaches to multicultural education, Kirova (2012) argues, share the goals of equivalency in achievement, positivity of intergroup attitudes, and development of pride in heritage, all of which would be achieved by removing ethnocentric bias, encouraging retention of heritage languages, and providing information about a variety of cultures. As racism received increasingly attention as a social issue, another increasingly common characteristic of multicultural education by 1980 was

the attention afforded to combatting prejudice, discrimination, and racism through the incorporation of human rights education and screening procedures for textbooks. At the same time that these policies for tackling broad based prejudice and discrimination, similar policy measures sought to stress First Nations cultural heritage in both its own and majority curricula (Tomkins, 1986).

In an attempt to analyze the variety of approaches to multicultural education, Werner (1977, as cited in Tomkins, 1986) identified and characterized four approaches to multicultural and ethnic studies in Canadian social studies curricula. Three of the four types as outlined by Werner (1977, as cited in Tomkins, 1986) generally favoured limited, contributions or surface level celebratory approaches to diversity and difference. Where the museum approach favoured the teaching of isolated and exotic details about other groups, the paternalistic heritage approach emphasized the dominance of the charter group, and the discipline approach focused on the use of history to explore various groups of people. Despite being the most promising of the bunch with a focus on an integrated approach that sought to highlight the conflicting interpretations that arise as a result of difference, the interdisciplinary approach was used the least (Tomkins, 1986).

Multiculturalism and multicultural education have experienced a problematic existence since its inception in the 1970s. Of the multiple criticisms of multicultural education, anti-racist theorists argue that it ignores racial difference and can therefore work to preserve and cement historic and current racial inequities. As difference is taken up in the realm of culture as opposed to race there is a shift from overt to covert racism that works to serve the construction of a colour-blind racial discourse central to Canadian national mythology. When taken up in the most simplistic forms, multiculturalism runs the risk of reducing cultures to knowable elements like food, dance, and dress. In reducing cultures in this way, they are also viewed as formed and fixed creating essentialized and stereotypical visions of cultures and cultural difference that are normalized in relation to whiteness (Kirova, 2012). On a practical level, multiculturalism is also criticized for the gap that exists between theory and practice that results in frustration on the part of practitioners in terms of actually implementing multicultural education in their classrooms (Kirova, 2012).

Despite the mass of criticism of multicultural education, Kirova (2012) also outlines a number of main points that emerge from an examination of post-multiculturalism both within and outside of educational theory. Nugent (2006 as cited in Kirova, 2012) observed that in the

last ten years there has been a shift away from the original focus on difference as articulated in the 1988 Multiculturalism Act to a stronger focus on “integration, civic participation, social justice, and national security” (Kirova, p. 276). Post-multiculturalism discourse within education emphasizes a critical non-essentialist approach to cultural difference that allows students to challenge racist discourses and is characterized by the idea of culture as historical and dynamic. Neither fixed nor formed, identities exist within a third space that recognizes and allows for contradiction and hybridity (Kanu, 2012; Kirova, 2012).

### **Education Expansion: Human Capital Theory**

At the same time that the Canadian socio-political and educational scene was dominated by demands for equality and diversity, there was also a tremendous expansion of education at all levels. Throughout the 1960s and into the first half of the 1970s education experienced a kind of mania that was at least in part due to the prevalence and adoption of the human capital theory by the federal and provincial governments. The theory held that in order to continue to grow the economy in an increasingly technologically industrially based economy the country needed to expand its wealth in the new capital of ‘knowledge’ and ‘expertise.’ Since education within this perspective is viewed as an investment for the future and a path to secure continued economic growth, increased government spending on education was required. This increased spending resulted in rapid expansion in the education sector in terms of both programming and enrolment. Between 1965-1975 national spending on education at all levels increased seven fold from \$1, 706, 000, 000 to \$ 12, 228, 000, 000 (Tittley & Mazurek, 1990). In addition to the societal significance of the resulting proliferation of education at all levels, the theory also views the process of education as serving very particular practical and economic aims. Since this educational expansion was underpinned by a concern for investment in students in terms of their labour potential, this theory is most aligned with more traditionalist approaches to education. Educational expansion is not viewed in terms of its value in providing personal growth and development for students, but rather in terms of its ability to contribute to the economy effectively and productively once their education is complete.

## **Progressive/Experimentalist Education**

Since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ideas that form the foundation of the progressive (experimentalist) education movement have held and continue to hold significant influence in the development of educational policy (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). Gaining significant support in the social fervour of the 1960s, experimentalist/progressive educators sought to develop in children the knowledge and skills associated with subject matter but also emphasized the importance of higher order critical thinking to the ability to solve personal and social problems outside of school once they became adult citizens in a democratic society. Despite the curricular turn of the late 1970s and early 1980s that emphasized the skill and drill model of basic education schools aimed at providing a rich and balanced experience for their students continue to attract parents who want more for their children (Tanner and Tanner, 1990).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the socio-political climate of significant social, political, and economic upheavals along with demands for diversity and equal opportunity created a favourable environment for the return to more progressive oriented curricula and teaching (Titley and Mazurek, 1990). A powerful coalition of those in support of progressive education influenced a near complete take over of the child centred paradigm in virtually every corner of the country as all ten provinces reconfigured curricula in alignment with such an approach (Wallner, 2014). There was much talk across the country about educational radicalism and innovation and calls from various quarters for a more relevant curriculum for students. In all, between 1960 and 1973 there were fifteen major provincial enquiries into education, each calling for sweeping and costly reforms (Wilson, 1977). The subject centred discipline approach ushered in by the influence of Jerome Bruner and his theory of education and learning was being superseded by a progressive, child and teacher centred thrust that in many ways reflected the movement towards decentralization in educational curricula and policy (Tomkins, 1986). This move towards decentralization was endorsed and implemented by many Ministries of Education across the country in the early 1970s as a strategy to deal with demands for greater diversity in the curriculum. In Alberta and Saskatchewan, for instance, teachers were required to develop one quarter of the content around issues and topics that were relevant and of interest to the students in their classrooms (Tomkins, 1986).

This increasing call for diversity in education meant that progressive ideas concerning individualized learning with a focus on self-fulfillment also gained favour. The 1968 Hall-

Dennis Report, which examined and offered recommendations for education in Ontario illustrates the influence of the progressive thrust that was taken up across the country (Tomkins, 1986; Wilson, 1977). The report championed discovery and individualized learning and favoured broad interdisciplinary learning areas, as opposed to strictly defined discipline based organization, just as Dewey had intended (Titley & Mazurek, 1990). Much more emphasis was placed on the individual learner along with a renewed interest in the values, ideals, and opinions relevant to the promotion of education. The Report's 258 recommendations sought to provide a greater emphasis on individualized learning by providing learning experiences in a more flexible structure while renewing attention to the socializing role of schools. This more flexible approach resulted in the recommendation for broadened areas of learning over the more traditional and rigid subject disciplines of the past. The Hall-Dennis<sup>4</sup> Report favoured labelling subjects into general areas like environmental studies, humanities, and communications. Although the recommendations from the report garnered considerable support from teachers and administrators alike, secondary schools in general were reluctant to accept the move to more general and interdisciplinary areas of study (Tomkins, 1986). Despite the influence of the Hall Report, and the Worth Report in the western Canadian context, Tomkins (1986) argues that the societal fervour and permissiveness of the decade 1965-75 was probably as much responsible for the shift in educational policy as were any reports or inquiries made by educators. These calls for innovation and a return to more child centred oriented curricula were also tempered by the mainstay of tradition. Even in Ontario and Alberta where the calls for these innovations were strongest and garnered the most support, the reforms and proposals put in place did not represent a significant advance to those reforms made in the 1930s (Tomkins, 1986).

### **Retrenchment, “Back to Basics,” and Beyond**

The neo-progressive thrust of the 1960s and early 1970s, brought about at least in part by the increasing permissiveness of society (Tomkins, 1986), was short lived. As the country receded into an economic recession, and public discourse shifted to addressing what was characterized as an increasingly troubled society, the progressivism that had flooded the educational policy climate between 1965 and 1975 came under attack and was eventually

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<sup>4</sup> The report is more commonly referred to as the Hall-Dennis Report, after the two co-chairs of the committee that produced the work: Emmett Hall, a Supreme Court of Canada judge, and L.A Dennis, a former school principal.

replaced with an agenda that would focus on accountability and standardization (Wallner, 2014). Often resurrected during periods of educational and social retrenchment, essentialism (“back to basics”) addresses criticisms against more progressive approaches to education. In the discourse of “failing” schools, essentialism promotes the adoption of an education that is based on the fundamental knowledge and skills. Essentialists believe that schools and curricula become sidetracked with attempting to develop and address the social and personal needs of students instead of focusing on “the exclusive task of training the intellect” (Tanner and Tanner, p. 337). Through media reports that crime, drug use, vandalism, divorce rates, and the spread of venereal disease were on the rise, the public started to invest in this back-to-basics rhetoric as the miraculous solution to society’s problems (Wilson, 1977). These social ills and economic constraints combined with restrictive budgets and decreasing enrolments resulted in a generally “less expansive, more restrained, and pessimistic outlook among many educators” (Tomkins, 1986, p. 315).

The changing nature of social needs and public demands make it difficult to discern the extent to which curricular change can be explained by its adherence to one ideology, theory, or approach. It is in this way that demands for more rigorous and essential skills-oriented curricula are accompanied by concerns that would be best explained by the influence of more progressive approaches to education like dealing with racism or providing for the needs of exceptional and minority students (Tomkins, 1986). Amidst the policy reform of core curriculum and a results-oriented education, there remains evidence of compromise in the continued commitment to child centred learning. Despite advocating an education focused on basic knowledge and skills structured according to traditional disciplines, the undertaking of the more specific tasks of curriculum development with the differences and needs of young people in mind reflects the dominance of the liberal tradition in education (Manzer, 1994). The extent to which essential skills can be debated also creates an interesting irony as the result sometimes meant a broadening of the curriculum to include an increasing array of essential skills. The variance of this essentialism prompted Wilson (1977) to question whether there was any recognizable philosophy of education in any provincial curriculum of the late 1970s. Both the Ontario and British Columbia core curricula spoke of goals but neither one made any mention of the philosophy underlying those goals (Wilson, 1977).

While the basics could mean different things to different people there was general agreement that these basics included measurable competence in reading, writing, and arithmetic. At the secondary school level, the return to basics also meant increased focus on an academically rigorous core and less electives for students (Tomkins, 1983). In most provinces across the country, the measures put in place sought to define school purposes in a narrower context and reduce the focus on the socializing aspect of schooling. The decentralization that had resulted from demands for more individualized and relevant curricula in the 1960s and early 1970s were abandoned in favour of curricula uniformity in the form of “core curriculum” (Tomkins, 1986) and the adoption of outcomes based education later on. Situated within liberal tradition through a shared ontological premise and assumptions about learning and problem solving as rational decision making, content oriented and common curricula depend on the idea of mastery learning that begins with identifying the desired pieces of knowledge and skills followed by a sequence of teaching and testing until those knowledge and skills are mastered (Manzer, 1990).

As the country moved into the 1980s, the attack on public schooling continued. On the national political scene Brian Mulroney proclaimed that education was “shortchanging many Canadians imposing a severe burden on our national competitiveness” (Wallner, 2014, p. 209). Part of the prescribed solution for the waning economy was tightening the connection among schools, employment, trade, and productivity. The public distrust in the government that prevailed during this time was dealt with through the introduction of a new managerial paradigm called New Public Management that called for performance-based measures and standardized reporting procedures. All of this translated into an increasingly unsteady time for education that saw the rise of standardized testing, a new approach to curriculum development, and a general increase in accountability of educators to political leaders (Wallner, 2014). Following a similar pattern that emerged across the country, Alberta oriented their curricula around the recommendations of the 1977 Harder Report that advocated a return to a simpler curriculum that was more employment oriented. Additionally, provincial standardized achievement tests were introduced in the province, as in many other provinces, and provincial comprehensive exams were reinstated in 1982 after being abolished in 1973 (Tomkins, 1983; Wallner, 2014). In this climate accountability became the key word. Schools were expected to deliver an education that provided tangible returns on investment by teaching students only the skills that had “readily discernible economic use” (Tomkins, 1983, p. 125).



As concerns around the quality of education continued into the 1990s, the back-to-basics movement that had been influencing education since the late 1970s influenced an approach to curricular development that sought to align the content of curriculum with the ideas of standardization and accountability. In this context, outcomes based education offered a tempered solution for those interested in responding to critics of education without reinstating the strict rigidities of the past. Adopted by all provinces, this new educational paradigm shifted the focus away from determining the content to be learned to specifying learning expectations that students would achieve. In this type of curriculum orientation, human activity becomes the most important feature of culture and all learning is defined in terms of what is observable and measurable (Wien & Dudley Marling, 1998). The return to the standardized testing of the early 1980s provided the means by which these outcomes could be assessed within this new structure (Wallner, 2014). The interprovincial consensus on the principles set forth by objectives based learning set the stage for the development of three collaborative initiatives in curricular development. Although the impact of the collaboration is limited by Saskatchewan's decision to go ahead with curricular reform before the committee had completed its work, the Western Canadian Protocol was formed and resulted in the creation of common learning outcomes in a variety of subject areas (Wallner, 2014).

Influenced increasingly by the economic rhetoric of neoliberalism, education in Canada continued to be framed in terms of its role in producing students who are able to participate effectively in the competitive global economy. Smith (2011) argues that since the middle of the 1990s public educational policy and practice have been under the influence of neoliberalism, resulting in the creation of new terms like the "new knowledge economy," which seek to reduce all learning and knowledge to commodities for international trade. In this climate, knowledge and learning have become an "industry" and as such, subject to the efficiency and standardization required for industrial production (Smith, 2011). Following along a similar argument, Joshee (2010) explains the influence of neoliberalism on education is most obvious in terms of the increasingly and explicit connection between schooling and preparation for employment.

In 1988 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Co-Development (OECD) asked the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) to prepare a report on current elementary and secondary school curricula across the country. Viewed as two sides of the back-

to-basics coin by Wallner (2014), the report revealed that there was a predominant trend towards infusing the curriculum with more direction while subjecting its outcomes to more rigorous and systematic testing. Demonstrating their position as a significant propagator of neoliberal discourses in education, in 1993 the CMEC issued a Joint Declaration that declared preparation for participation in the global economy as the primary focus of education. In 1996 another CMEC document did acknowledge two competing visions for education but did so in such a way as to render the preparation for employment vision much more reasonable and realistic. The narrower vision of preparation seemed much more reasonable when compared to the description of a vision of education that held the delivery of social, health, psychological and nutritional services as focal points (Joshee, 2010). By 1999, the educational policy framework was becoming further immersed in the rhetoric of neoliberalism. The Joint Statement of the CMEC released in 1999 placed the link between education and economic progress centre stage, while neglecting to even mention diversity or social justice objectives. Despite producing a report in 2004 to address equity and social inclusion in education, the CMEC maintained the neoliberal discourse of providing quality education that ensures the success of all (Joshee, 2010).

At the same time that neoliberal discourse has exhibited an increasing influence over educational policy, Joshee (2010) argues that recent years have also been characterized by a neoconservative discourse that seeks to glorify a particular version of the past that preserves the power of the dominant group in society. The story of the tolerant Canadian is used to reinscribe the dichotomy between us/them where the “we” represents the hardworking and virtuous dominant group and the “they,” usually Indigenous people, women, and other immigrant groups, represents the lazy and problematic outsiders, effectively situating any “problem” with the minority group and, reported in separate documents that highlight the deficits (i.e., the obsession with keeping and reporting stats on the dominated group) (Joshee, 2010).

### **Globalization and Global Education**

Closely associated with the push for effective participation in the economy has been the increasingly global context within which that competitive participation occurs. Schultz (2012) argues that educating for global citizenship has been a main focus in both the formal and informal school sector as well as amongst non-governmental organizations for at least the last decade. The earliest form of global education though came much earlier with the introduction of

what was usually termed development education in the 1970s. Focused on providing students access to information concerning the challenges of international development by adopting a holistic approach, this branch of education is very much rooted in and associated with diversity and multicultural education. Similar efforts to provide a broader perspective in education can also be seen in the addition of peace, human rights, and environmental education (Werner & Case, 1997).

In the 1990s, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canadian schools and community organizations joined together in attempting to educate students to become global citizens. Since that time significant decreases in funding and coordinated efforts have resulted in a reduction of emphasis on global education. Adding to this reduction, Schultz (2012) argues, is the existence of a number of various approaches to and understandings of just what global citizenship is. The various approaches to global education have developed alongside the various understandings and interpretations of the processes of globalization.

Using the work of McGrew (2000 as cited in Schultz, 2012), Schultz (2012) identifies three approaches to globalization that inform global education. Within the neoliberal understanding the principles of liberal trans-national trade and a single dominant global market are celebrated and a global citizen is one who is able to effectively participate in a liberal democracy that is driven by capitalism and technology. A radical understanding of globalization views the process as an accelerated mode of western imperialism that creates and reinforces oppression. Within this context a global citizen is someone who is able to see the oppressive forces of globalization and seeks to disrupt and challenge state and corporate structures that seek to maintain dominance. Lastly, the transformational understanding views globalization as a social, cultural, political, and economic process that results in new patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Reflective of the understanding that to create more just and equitable societies we must value our connections to others, citizens within this understanding are those who see themselves in terms of their intricate connections with others both inside and outside national boundaries.

## **Critical Education**

At a point in time where rapid change is commonplace to our everyday lives, preparing our students for what appears to be an uncertain future has invited a number of responses. For some educators, as evidenced by the influence of neoliberalism, the future of the economy is crucial and therefore education should focus on the preparation of students in the global economy. For others, who see less certainty in the future, the focus of education should be on creating the future, rather than maintaining the status quo. Within this broad view, education becomes the avenue through which to expose students to a broad range of experiences and exploration of the “big questions” in life to enable them to recognize and deal with current injustices and failings better than the generation that preceded them. If this approach is to be pursued, it means pushing back against the neoconservative and neoliberal discourses that have exerted significant influence over educational policy over the last few decades in favour of an education that promotes the broader goals of self-knowledge and democratic citizenship (Young, 2012). Despite the hold that the rhetoric of essentialist, neoliberal, and neoconservative discourses have taken over educational policy there are also clear signs that indicate the desire, especially within the educational community, to move towards educational policy that values diversity, equity and social justice. Joshee (2009) notes that many of the projects of the Canadian Studies Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage reflect social justice discourses. Most often associated with critical pedagogy, efforts to link social movements with educational reform have occurred since the 1980s. Adopting a critical lens, these approaches to education seek to call the dominant Eurocentric and masculine ways of knowing the world into question to promote more diverse and equitable ways of knowing (Morrow & Torres, 2007). Kanu (2012) explains that the recent addition of internationalization to educational discourse of reform is crucial to a postcolonial context as it embraces inclusive democratic knowledge production. Taken up within a hybrid third space, knowledge production is a collective endeavour that allows for the influences of both the local and the global as well as the historical and the modern to produce the circulation of knowledge that promotes equity rather than the “monopoly and privilege of one group” (Kanu, 2012, p. 222). In the regional context of Saskatchewan there is evidence within the most recent curricula renewals of the promotion of both collectivist ideas that are deeply rooted in the political culture of the province as well as inquiry-based approaches to learning (Porter, 2014).

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Since the 1970s educational policy in Canada has been influenced by a diverse set of factors drawing on ideologies from within political culture, social movements, and educational philosophy to create a narrative that is not easily organized into prevailing moods or characteristics of a given period. Over the last three and a half decades the pendulum has certainly swung back and forth between approaches to education which can be described most simply in terms of progressive or traditional, but to think about the history of the period in this way ignores the extent to which that pendulum analogy neglects the interconnected and overlapping nature of curricular and educational development. Despite the fact that the period since the 1970s has seen significant change, taken in the broad context of the entire period, these changes are tempered by an undercurrent of relative stability in Canadian education that Manzer (1994) would attribute to the legacy of liberalism. Despite moving through various versions of liberalism, education has maintained a vision of schooling that provides individual fulfilment of some kind, whether that be in preparation to deal with social and personal issues of their lives or in taking their place as economic producers and consumers in the global marketplace.

The progressive education movement that began in the 1930s in the United States was resurrected within the social upheavals of the 1960s and called for a more relevant education. Just as this movement was cemented across the country in curriculum throughout every province, the economic recession of the 1970s prompted questions around the quality of elementary and secondary education and ushered in demands for a return to the “basics” of education that would prepare students for gainful employment. Even within this sharp return to rigidity, the progressive and liberal tradition that many educators had taken up in previous years was maintained and the importance of the individual in the learning process was not completely abandoned. The years following the initial move towards accountability and standardization in education that began in the 1970s has remained a strong current in the development of educational policy since. Under the growing pressures of neoliberalism education has become increasingly focused on preparing students to take their place as effective economic contributors in the global marketplace. In this climate education has been evaluated in terms of performance-based standards associated with narrow outcomes that all students are expected to achieve. But this too represents a simplistic view of educational policy development that neglects to recognize

the impact that social justice and equity oriented policy and theory have had in influencing the kind of education students are exposed to across Canada.

At the same time that neoliberal policies promoting extreme capitalism at the expense of democratic values have worked to institute a climate of standardization and accountability in education, schools and educational policy have also been influenced by the continued efforts of those advocating a different kind of education focused on developing citizens who will develop the skills and knowledge to question and resist inequitable economic and social structures. Much like the characteristics of broader societies, educational policy cannot be explained or characterized solely in terms of the dominant. A critical understanding of the processes of both stability and change in Canadian curriculum are dependent on the examination of dominant ideologies and discourses and those that oppose and seek to disrupt the status quo.

### **Chapter 3:**

#### **Literature Review**

An examination of literature dealing with the development of social studies through the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is the focus of the discussion that follows. Common to this literature is the attempt to divide the field of studies into short periods of time. Typically divided into categories spanning ten to twenty years, these periods of social studies education are accompanied by discussion concerning the character and nature of social studies during that period within various contexts, whether provincial or national. A second common feature is the frequency with which history education appears in tandem with social studies. As such, a brief discussion of history education in the Canadian context has been included.

The third common thread within the historical literature on social studies is found in a number of authors (Clark, 1996; Osborne, 1997; Richardson 2002; von Heyking, 2006) who specifically address the historical development of the representation of national identity. Since any study of curricula, especially those which deal explicitly with national histories and identity formation, will involve questions of what and whose knowledge is valued the literature reviewed also includes, although to varying degrees, discussions of issues of race, class and gender.

Although not explicitly addressed in any deliberate manner in the broad historical overviews of the subject, the studies that considered the historical development in the narrower provincial context all called the representation, or non-representation in some cases, of issues of race, gender, and class into question. Generally speaking, the trend that emerges from this point about the present treatment of issues of race, class, and gender is that social studies education has become increasingly inclusive but not necessarily anti-oppressive, anti-racist or, as Orłowski (2011) might argue, a social studies influenced by a critical left pedagogy. An overview of the existing literature highlights a point Clark (1997) makes that despite the central place of history within social studies, the history of social studies education in the Canadian context has not received considerable attention. Although a few in depth studies (Orłowski, 2011, Richardson 2002; von Heyking, 1996, 2006) specifically focuses on social studies in the Canadian historical context have been published since Clark (1997) noted this irony, when considered in the narrower context of Saskatchewan there is very little which deals explicitly with the history of social studies.

Saskatchewan is briefly considered in discussions of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) and there are several authors who address Alberta and British Columbia (Clark 1996; Orlowski, 2001, 2011; Richardson, 2002; von Heyking, 1996, 2006), but to date no extensive studies on the subject within the province exist. Although somewhat limited in breadth, the existing literature yields a depiction of social studies as a field significantly shaped by the educational and socio-political climate of a given decade, and is increasingly inclusive, in its representations of Canadians. Within each decade, changes were crafted which pushed the focus and approach into alignment with the prevailing thinking of the time, in turn influencing issues of both content and philosophy.

### **Social Studies Education in English Speaking Canada 1960s to 2000s**

In order to begin to understand the nature of social studies and the various approaches to it, a number of authors discuss the beginnings of social studies and the climate in education and society from which it was established. The brief overviews of the development of social studies in the Canadian context by Sears (1997), Osborne (1997, 2011) and Clark (1997, 2004) all attribute the development of social studies largely to the influence of educational trends in the United States. Osborne (1997) explains that since history during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had gained ground as an academic discipline in its own right, some American educators reacted by suggesting the creation of a new subject that would represent a combination of materials from history, geography and other social sciences to study contemporary concerns in order to prepare students for informed and intelligent citizenship. Taken as a theoretical enterprise that sought to investigate and examine social issues that were relevant to students and their societies through an integrated approach, it was very much grounded in Deweyan progressive education (Sears, 1997). Acknowledging the continued influence of the United States on Canadian social studies, Clark (1997, 2004) explains that Canadian educators have chosen to benefit from the significant amounts of money and energy put into social studies in the United States in order to incorporate what works, discard what does not and work towards developing uniquely Canadian ideas and approaches. Although the extent to which the subject's interdisciplinary or integrated approach was adopted varied, social studies was a common curriculum term in the western provinces by 1930 (Tomkins, 1983).

While historical explanations often include some discussion of the establishment of social studies in the early twentieth century, much of the conversation around the subject of social



studies also addresses how to define social studies and the ways it can be differentiated from other subject areas it incorporates such as history, geography and political science. Oriented not just to questions of content and orientation, but also about the sort of society educators wish to shape, debates about the nature and purpose of social studies have attracted contributions from politicians, educators, academics and the general public (Sears, 1997). It is perhaps most useful to begin with the assertion that social studies is a contentious subject area in terms of both content and methodology. It is a subject area with varying definitions and approaches but unified by its interdisciplinary nature and its focus on the goal of citizenship (Shields and Ramsay, 2004). Both Tomkins (1983) and Sears (1997) note that despite the existence of social studies throughout much of the twentieth century, the extent to which the integrated and interdisciplinary nature of social studies has been adopted is inconsistent. Reflective of the reluctance to embrace the interdisciplinary approach, social studies as a subject area has been dominated by history in some provinces, a fact particularly evident at the secondary level.

As the first province to introduce the subject at the secondary level, this reluctance is least evident in Alberta where there has been clear commitment to the integrated framework (Osborne, 2011) and most evident in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, which both insist on teaching history and geography as separate disciplines (Sears, 1997). Tomkins (1983) also contends that the subject has carried much more negative connotations in the Eastern provinces when compared to the West. Despite these claims, Sears (1997) argues that the general trend since the 1970s in Canadian education has been a move away from the teaching of history and towards a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach in social studies. Noting another general trend, Shields and Ramsay (2004) maintain that while some more recent curricular developments reflect some change in addressing issues of a national or global nature at the lower elementary level, social studies in most provincial and territorial curricula continues to reflect the traditional “expanding horizons approach” which begins with local community issues in lower elementary, provincial and national in upper elementary, and finally into national and global in junior high.

### **The Structures of the Disciplines**

Once the subject of social studies was firmly established across the country by the mid-twentieth century, the nature of both the methodology and content adopted is represented as one

significantly influenced by the prevailing thinking of the time, both in terms of education and society. Clark (1997, 2004), van Manen and Parsons (1983), Tomkins (1983) and von Heyking (2006) all describe the social studies of the 1960s, termed the “New Social Studies,” as heavily influenced by the work of Bruner and his structures of the discipline theory of education. During this time social studies was increasingly losing its standing in the United States and Canada as a desirable, rigorous academic subject. Part of the larger attack on progressive education and its focus on the child, it was considered by many to be a school subject that had lost its focus (Clark, 1997). Bruner’s development of a psychological and educational rationale for an increasingly demanding curriculum turned into the solution educators were searching for.

In this approach, students are not simply provided with the answers, but instead learn the concepts and techniques of the particular discipline in order to work with and think about the information provided to them (Clark, 1997). The rationale within the structures of the discipline approach was that in learning to master these key concepts and inquiry skills of the social sciences, students would be led to a personal discovery (van Manen & Parsons, 1983). Although embraced for its more rigorous academic focus, this concentration also presented a challenge in the context of more fluid and interdisciplinary subjects like social studies. A subject contentiously defined and interdisciplinary in nature, social studies educators and academics found it somewhat difficult to determine the structure of the discipline of social studies (von Heyking, 2006). Even with this challenge, the structures of the disciplines approach had significant impact in leading to new innovations in the field. Under the assumption that the development of better resources would lead to better learning, large social studies projects led by social scientists received generous funding from both educational and government organizations especially in the United States (van Manen & Parsons, 1983). Providing a specific reference for its influence, Clark (1996) argues that the 1968 revised social studies curriculum in British Columbia reflected the profound effect of Bruner as social studies became an umbrella term for discrete courses in history and geography at the secondary level.

### **Values Education and Canadian Studies**

In the climate of growing social unrest and student activism of the 1970s, the structures of the disciplines movement started to lose ground because of its perceived lack of personal and social relevancy (van Manen & Parsons, 1983) and ignorance of the hidden curriculum of

gender, social class, and ethnic and religious issues so that by the mid 1970s, it had ended in Canada as well as the United States (Clark, 1997). Coupled with these concerns over the inclusion of issues of relevance to contemporary society were growing concerns about the changing nature of Canadian identity in the context of bilingualism and multiculturalism and fears over the growing influence of the United States in politics and society. It was in this context that two movements shaped the nature of social studies in Canada during the 1970s: values education and Canada Studies.

The concern around social issues of gender, race and class meant that the 1970s saw a shift to moral and social issues-oriented education in both United States and Canada. Drawing attention to racism, poverty, and the war in Vietnam as issues of crisis in the United States, Jerome Bruner signalled a new emphasis within the field of social studies, this time on teaching students to evaluate and determine their own values so that they could become active decision makers in both public and private life (Clark, 1997). Canada, too, was experiencing its own “crisis of values” during the period, including the October Crisis and renewed societal concerns like sexism, First Nations discontent and activism and a breakdown in federal and provincial relations. The reaction in the Canadian context mirrored what was happening in the United States, namely the push to reorient the focus of provincial social studies curricula and classroom resources (Clark, 1997).

Van Manen and Parsons (1983) outline four social issues program types that defined many Canadian social studies curricula in the 1970s and early 1980s. Using the introduction of courses like Black Studies, Women’s Studies and Third World Developmental Studies as evidence of a growing desire to encourage students to develop a critical sense of awareness to the need for social change, van Manen and Parsons (1983) explain the emergence of a social studies approach centred around participatory democracy and the questioning of institutionalized beliefs and authority. Growing concern over a perceived lack of good morals on the part of youth resulted in an increased emphasis on moral education and valuing processes oriented social studies, usually taking the form of either the values-clarification approach or stages of moral reasoning. In the wake of environmental concerns there was a third program type that focused on the environment and the urgent crises man had created as a result of our interactions with the natural world. This sort of program type often made use of field trips and studies of the various aspects of local community issues. The last of the program types, the Canada studies and

citizenship education approach, is characterized by an increased emphasis on Canadian content and social action (Clark, 1997, 2004). Referring specifically to the development of social studies in the province of Alberta, von Heyking (2006) explains that the neoprogressive curriculum introduced in the province in 1971 too reflected the wider push for values education that other educational contexts experienced during the period. In Alberta this curriculum grew out of the belief that if students were intended to solve global problems, then first needed to be equipped with the appropriate set of values.

The identity component of the “crisis of values” in the Canadian educational context is well represented by the findings of a major survey of Canadian history and social studies education across Canada undertaken by Hodgetts in the late 1960s. Viewed as a direct result of fear over American cultural domination and loss of Canadian identity (Clark, 1997), the final report of the study was published in 1968 and revealed a less than ideal state of Canadian history and social studies in Canadian classrooms. As a direct result of Hodgetts’ study and his findings, the Canada Studies foundation was established in 1970 and continued until 1986 (Clark, 1997). In an effort to remedy the issues of Canadian content and delivery that Hodgetts’ had reported in his study, the Canada Studies Foundation<sup>5</sup> worked to develop and fund projects. Of the three groups that the Foundation divided its work into, Project Canada West involved the four western Canadian provinces (Clark, 1997). As a result, there was a marked increase in the production and publication of Canadian materials during the period and provincial social studies curricula also reflected the same increased focus on Canadian content (Clark, 1997).

In British Columbia social studies curricula of the period, Clark (1996) explains that Canadian content in grades one through twelve increased from 45 percent to 60 percent and that two out of the four major goals for social studies were related to Canada studies. Also commenting on the emphasis of Canadian content, Tomkins (1983) asserts that while modern world history remained popular with its concentration on events and processes like the Industrial Revolution, imperialism, ideologies and war, Canadian content tended to dominate senior high school social studies after 1975. Working within the parameters of Alberta, von Heyking (2006)

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<sup>5</sup> The Canada Studies foundation was formed in 1970 following the National History Project. The organization surrendered its Charter in 1986, having fulfilled its mandate of creating and disseminating programming and resources that promoted Canadian history and Canadian content. The organization oversaw the development and production of more than 150 volumes of teachers’ manuals, stimulated a new market of Canadian textbook publishing, and helped to create a network of over 2000 educators across the country.

explains that texts used throughout the period tended to cast Canada's close relationship with the United States as one which came at a high cost and American cultural influence as something to be feared. Authors of those texts often differentiated Canadian values from American ones with an emphasis on Canada's international role as helper and fixer through brokering agreements through the United Nations and the Commonwealth (von Heyking, 2006). Further reflecting this call for increased Canadian content, the 1971 social studies program was criticized for its lack of Canadian content, especially at the secondary level (von Heyking, 2006).

### **Skills Development and the Renewal of Citizenship Education**

The decline of Bruner's disciplinary emphasis in the 1970s meant that by the 1980s several scholars had noted the move away from offering history as a separate course. In this way, an increased emphasis on social studies in the period of the 1980s can be noted. As social studies curricula renewal began to take place in the 1980s and early 1990s there was a move away from the values and social-issues oriented approaches of the 70s to an increasing emphasis on skills development (Clark, 1997). This emphasis on values and social issues did not disappear completely though. The focus on bilingualism, biculturalism and multiculturalism that had dominated public debates around the changing nature of Canada during the 1970s was coupled with an increasing globalized climate to influence a new area of emphasis on global education (Sears, 1997). Linked with a growing interest in providing students with multiple perspectives in the social studies curriculum, many Canadian jurisdictions developed one or more programs that would fall under the umbrella of global education. This branch of social studies education intended to instil the importance of being knowledgeable about global issues, the skills of being able to view issues from multiple perspectives and the disposition to act with their fellow global citizens to make the world a better place (Sears, 1997).

A renewed area of emphasis within the new focus on skills development, this time viewed through the lens of political education, was the area of citizenship education. In their account of the nature of citizenship education within social studies in the period, Shields and Ramsay (2004) argue that emphasis rested on ideas of responsibility and accountability and that the focus on social activism that had dominated during the 1970s did not return until the late 90s and 2000s. Conversely, Clark (1997) argues that with the exception of Alberta that backed away from the social action approach, citizenship still retained some ties to the previous era of social issues through its emphasis on social action (Clark, 1997). Within the Core Curriculum of

Ontario for instance, participation in service activities in the home and community as well as those related to global and environmental issues were included. In Manitoba, the 1985 curriculum mentions participation in volunteer work with the elderly or participating in a political campaign (Clark, 1997).

This renewed emphasis on citizenship education experienced during the 1980s was not to be long lived. Osborne (1997) argues that there was a distinct omission of citizenship and citizenship education during the 1990s in favour of the focus on the economic benefits of education. Furthermore, that the increasing focus on economic rationality has rendered citizenship education obsolete as it seeks to raise questions and prioritize issues that reach beyond those of economics (Osborne, 1997). Despite this concentration on economic rationality in the context of the back to basics movement as well as the infiltration of neoliberal policies into the field of educational practice and policy, there is evidence to suggest some sustained effort in Saskatchewan to incorporate citizenship education.

Incorporated in 2012 as part of the Citizenship Education Project developed by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Government of Saskatchewan, Consentus is a foundation that administers, supports, and fundraises for citizenship education programming (Consentus, 2020). Working from research that suggests Canadian citizens are becoming increasingly detached from and apathetic towards the political and social institutions which govern them, the foundation aims to focus on strategies for democratic and social justice oriented engagement in the field of education (Consentus, 2020).

### **The Resurgence of History and the “Softer” Side of Social Studies**

Of the three contemporary trends in social studies identified in the early 2000s, Clark (2004) argues that the most dominant has been the resurgence of history education. In addition to this resurgence, Clark (2004) briefly notes that development of regional curriculum initiatives and a continuation of the citizenship momentum that was identified in the preceding period are two less dominant trends of the period. Reminiscent of the climate surrounding Hodgetts’ 1968 report, at the turn of the twenty first century there was a vigorous debate about the place of Canadian history in schools. Just as Hodgetts’ study had served as an impetus for debate in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, it was Granatstein’s 1998 publication of *Who Killed Canadian History* that renewed the debate some 30 years later. In this publication, Granatstein condemned

university professors, provincial departments of education, the federal government and private interest groups for their focus on and implementation of programs of narrow issues like gender, labour, and regional histories at the expense of a broad sweeping Canadian history (Clark, 2004). This demand for increased history education for Canadian students spurred a number of educational initiatives including the first National Conference on the Teaching of History held in 1999 and again in 2001. Debates centred around the teaching of national histories versus more critically oriented disciplinary and interdisciplinary histories. The early 2000s also saw the establishment of the privately funded Historica Foundation that held popular summer institutes for teachers and developed teacher resources (Clark, 2004).

Showcasing the growing emphasis on regional histories and issues, the 2000s also saw a number of initiatives focused on developing common regional curriculum. Despite the development of regional initiatives like the WNCP, Clark (2004) cautions that the actual impact of the work in the area of social studies has been more contentious than in other curricular areas. As such, the curriculum developed based on the Common Curricular Framework has been inconsistent throughout the provinces. For instance, Saskatchewan chose to go ahead with curricular renewals throughout the 1990s before the WNCP had finished its work. Even though Clark (2004) notes the inconsistent influence of the project, Shields and Ramsay (2004) argue that the WNCP influenced a shift in social studies curriculum to represent an approach which favours a more fluid understanding of multiple and overlapping understandings and conceptions of citizenship as it brought Indigenous and francophone perspectives to a more visible space for many Western teachers. In specific reference to citizenship, Shields and Ramsay (2004) claim that as the public discourse of citizenship moved towards concerns over human rights, language rights, nationalism, globalization and equality, discussion around multiculturalism became concerned with inclusion, developing respect for diversity and entrenching anti-racist and equality programs in schools. Perhaps owing to this more inclusive approach, the authors also make the commentary that “softer” social studies concepts such as story, the importance of identity in citizenship, and belonging have become important issues in the new social studies curricula and are apparent in the language of the WNCP. Speaking to the wider nature of social studies during the era, Shields and Ramsay (2004) comment that Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the Yukon have been the provinces and territory to adopt more interdisciplinary or

integrated approaches to social studies where various disciplines are implicitly addressed within the context of key themes or topic areas.

Although their focus is more narrowly placed on the nature of citizenship education within social studies, a more recent study of educational policy documents before and including 2012 by Pashby, Ingram and Joshee (2014) provides considerable insight into the ideological influences at work in current social studies curricula. The authors use a critical discourse analysis approach to examine current discourses of diversity in Canadian citizenship education in order to determine the extent to which these discourses reflected prominent discourses of the past and present. Reiterating what the authors describe as widely documented evidence for the rise of neoliberal discourses in policy on education and citizenship, the findings from the study indicated that social justice oriented discourses are being overshadowed by those that promote social cohesion and a narrow understanding of Canadian history and identity. In both provinces examined, Ontario and Alberta, the social justice-oriented approach is present but is often problematized by the contemporary neoliberal approach that conflates citizenship with character education, rendering social action a personal choice (Pashby et. al., 2014).

### **History Education**

Discussions of social studies education and its development are often accompanied by some commentary concerning history education. Due to this close connection between the two subject areas, some brief commentary regarding history education follows. From the 1890s until the 1970s history education in the Canadian context was dominated by the theme of nation building and was intended to instil in students a sense of pan-Canadian unity. Although the approach was not without its critics, it only started to lose ground in the 1960s (Osborne, 2011). History curricula characterized by the theme of nation building in English speaking Canada until the 1960s took on a chronological form organized around traditional topics like European exploration and settlement and Confederation. While criticized on pedagogical grounds for turning history into a memory game that failed to offer opportunity for analysis, the overt emphasis on urban capitalist development and war heroes coupled with limited and largely stereotypical treatment of women, First Nations and other immigrant groups meant that this style of history education garnered criticism from various perspectives including feminist, socialist, agrarian and internationalist critiques (Osborne, 2011).



In the social context of the 1960s, social history and its focus on previously omitted narratives and voices began to gain serious ground. In what was a surprisingly quick shift, textbooks and history curricula in the 1970s started to reflect this type of social history. In so doing these new curricula and resources began to highlight the stories like the Winnipeg General Strike, residential schools and racist immigration policies that had been omitted by earlier history education. As opposed to the wholesale adoption of a single meta narrative, this new approach to history education encouraged the analysis of competing narratives in the development of historical thinking skills (Osborne, 2011). The shift away from simply memorizing the grand meta narrative of Canadian history, meant that by the late 1970s history was valued more for what it could provide students in terms of their intellectual development and less for what it could provide students in the way of historical facts and patriotism.

It was in this climate of mounting concerns over contemporary issues that history education also started to lose ground. Largely represented by the values movement in education that was closely linked with emphasis on contemporary issues, the focus shifted to preparing students to deal with the issues of the day. This new focus meant that the knowledge and skills of today became much more important than those of yesterday. When coupled with the findings of Hodgetts' study that history was doing little to prevent the increasing threat of American influence, history education began to lose its place to social studies (Osborne, 2000). This trend in the decline of history education continued into the 1980s as education became increasingly focused on the development of skills to prepare students to function effectively in the increasingly global high-tech economy. In an era focused on science and literacy and generic skills like problem solving and decision making, history occupied an increasingly faded presence (Osborne, 2011).

As noted by Clark (2004) in the context of social studies more generally, the 1990s represents a period in education of renewed emphasis on history education. In his overview of what he terms the five crises in the teaching of history in Canada, Osborne (2000) explains that the fifth crisis revolved around concerns that Canadian history had all but disappeared from Canadian classrooms. In the midst of renewed concerns over Canadian unity brought about in part by the Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords,<sup>6</sup> fears that history was losing its place in the

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<sup>6</sup> The Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords were both failed attempts at constitution amendments aimed at bringing Quebec into the constitutional fold. While the Meech Lake Accord polled well among Canadians, the set

school curriculum and the consequences of this became prominent in public discourse (Osborne, 2011). In addition to the influence of Granatstein, Osborne (2011) points to the 1991 argument by University of Toronto professor Michael Bliss that social history had “privatized” history at the expense of national unity based on shared historical experiences. Together with Granatstein’s similar but blunter concerns over the case of the state of Canadian history education, the two publications gained considerable attention in the public sphere and represented a climax of the debates about history education that had been circulating since the late 1980s (Osborne, 2011). Worried over issues of the loss of place for history in education, overemphasis on acquisition of generic skills over basic knowledge, and overemphasis on social history topics like gender, race, class and other nuanced and challenging aspects of the Canadian past, these history debates had one concrete result: they effectively halted the decline of history education in the school curricula that had begun in the 1980s (Osborne, 2011).

In this context two new approaches to history education emerged. One was part of a renewed emphasis on citizenship education while the other prioritized historical thinking. By the end of the 1990s a new kind of national history had taken hold in Canadian history education. Less concerned with the role that history had to play in encouraging unity or identity, this new history valued national history for its contribution to democratic citizenship. Historical thinking, referring to the critical thinking skills required to understand, analyse and, generally make sense of the past, had always been a part of history education in the preceding decades but what was new during this decade was the attention it was afforded. Historical thinking was viewed as an indispensable goal of any history program and there was also a sustained effort within the academic and educational community to define what exactly historical thinking was and to develop appropriate strategies for teaching it (Osborne, 2011).

Though the old style of nation building history that dominated history education to the 1960s had lost much of its appeal in the current era, it still commands a following. Citing

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of amendments ultimately failed to be ratified when Elijah Harper, a Cree member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, filibustered against the proposed amendments because of a failure on the government’s part to consult with Indigenous peoples. A renewed proposal was put together in 1992 by the then Mulroney government, this time including provisions for Aboriginal self-government, and gained the support of the federal government and all 10 provinces, but fearing backlash over what might be perceived as political backroom decision-making, it was decided that the accord would be put to a national referendum. 54.3 percent of the votes cast nationally opposed the Charlottetown Accord. Ultimately, the failed accords represented the fact that Canadians could not come together in agreement on Constitutional Reform and also meant Quebec has yet to official endorse the Canadian Constitution, which is a sticking point for many in national unity.

Granatstein's 2007 re-release of *Who Killed Canadian History* as evidence, Osborne (2011) notes that there are still occasional complaints that the schools do not teach the unifying, heritage building history. The difference now, Osborne (2011) argues, is that these debates receive nowhere near the public media attention that they had garnered in the 1990s. Today, advocates of history as factual narrative afford some importance and attention to historical thinking, and proponents of historical thinking allow space for the teaching of some kind of national history; after all, historical thinking cannot occur in a vacuum. The criticism is not the teaching of Canadian national history, but of teaching a Canadian national history represented as a single authoritative narrative that does nothing to develop historical thinking (Osborne, 2011).

### **Identity and Nation Building in the Social Studies Curriculum**

As evidenced by Osborne's (2000/2011) overview of the history of education in Canada, Canadian history across the country was defined and represented as a series of events in the building of the nation from the arrival of Europeans, to New France, to conquest and British rule, to Confederation, and so on. The result of this type of nation building history is the promotion of a Eurocentric view of Canadian history that had little time for women, First Nations or so called ordinary people (Osborne, 1997). Additionally, identity and nationalism up until the Second World War was overwhelmingly linked with Canada's ties to Britain. In spite of strong efforts to develop a unified Canadian identity grounded in common historical experiences, "Canada lived with the paradox that any attempt to create a single vision of national identity was itself a threat to national identity" (Osborne, 1997, p. 46). The effect was an attempt to embrace this diversity, but on particular terms with particular aims.

Tracing the changing nature of Canadian identity that began to move away from this overt reliance on Britain in the context of Alberta social studies, Richardson (2002) explains that as Canada's ties with Britain became more distant following the Second World War, Canadian elites struggled to reformulate a Canadian identity. Further problematizing efforts to create a distinctly Canadian identity, Canada's economic and cultural ties with the United States became critical (Richardson, 2002). In the midst of this doubled colonial relationship and out of this kind of third space, Canadian political elites developed the lynchpin theory. The lynchpin theory carved out Canada's role, and subsequently its identity, outside of its own borders in the arena of international affairs. Since Canada had strong ties with Britain and was also economically and geographically linked with the United States, Canada would be able to act as a kind of

diplomatic middleman in the international arena. The theory served a dual function which effectively made Canada's strong lack of a unique identity a point of virtue while at the same time increasing its international status (Richardson, 2002). Despite this shift to cooperation and international affairs, Richardson (2002) maintains that nationalism and the cultural heritage of Britain continued to ground issues of national identity in Alberta until 1971.

Richardson (2002) explains that by the 1970s the United States had effectively replaced Britain as Canada's external point of reference. In the broad Canadian context, Osborne (1997) explains that the focus turned away from Anglicizing assimilation to an acknowledgment and even celebration of a Canadian identity rooted in multiculturalism. In the provincial context this meant many provinces carved out space for regional studies in their programs of study (Osborne, 1997). This break from Britain as mother country is also noted by Clark (1996) in the context of British Columbia social studies during the same period. Clark (1996) uses the prominence of American figures in textbooks from the period to cement the argument that as Britain moved into the background, the United States moved into that space. In the Alberta Program of Studies, French Canadian nationalism and the question of diversity were two new domestic additions, which accompanied this shift away from Britain as the base for Canadian identity. Joined with concerns over how to represent ethnicity in the curriculum, French Canadian nationalism was represented as a positive force in contributing to the "uniqueness of duality" (Richardson, 2002). Continuing the trend of resting Canadian identity in a kind of colonial relationship, the United States had replaced Britain and Canadian identity was increasingly represented as being found within the interaction between French and English-speaking Canadians. This trend continued into the 1981 Program of Studies but was accompanied by the notion that Canadian identity was at least in part a reflection of difference. While linguistic and cultural differences rooted in the French English heritage of Canada are recognized, ethno-cultural diversity is virtually absent and when the topic is addressed, there is clear promotion of the idea of cultural uniformity (Richardson, 2002). In characterizing the representation of Canadian identity in the period 1945-1981, Richardson (2002) asserts that the period was increasingly defined by uncertainty and transition. The four program guides from the period reveal no fixed symbolic identity but instead represent a number of shifting responses "to the loss of the imperial fantasy, to the more threatening colonial relationship with the United States, to the rise of French nationalism, to the undeniable fact of growing pluralism" (Richardson, 2002, p. 78).

Richardson (2002) argues that the uncertainty and uneasiness that characterized the period 1945-1980 became even more pronounced in the 1990 Alberta Program of Studies. The guide represented an increasing acceptance of the role of pluralism in the question of Canadian identity but retained its modernist qualities that established fixed referents for identity as rooted in particular shared historical experiences and limited students from considering and examining their own ideas concerning a national identity (Richardson, 2002). Richardson's (2002) final remarks are that the distinguishing and continuous tenets over the last thirty years has been the adoption of a fundamentally modernist approach coupled with a general dismay over the question of Canadian identity. As Richardson (2002) argues for some degree of continuity over the last thirty years, Clark (1996) too concludes that in the period 1925-1989 Canadian identity experienced both stability and change. Stability in the sense that social studies maintained its aim of citizenship education and change in regard to the representation of Canadian identity increasingly reflective of diversity and inclusivity. While Clark (1996) and Richardson (2002) advocate a presence of the theme of identity within British Columbia and Alberta social studies, von Heyking (2006) offers some strong conclusions regarding its limited presence. Von Heyking (2006) concludes that the neglect of history for its perceived inability to contribute to "useful" education has meant that history education and the history of the nation have not fared well in Canada. With the adoption of social studies came the focus on history only in terms of how it could solve the problems of the present. As a result of this neglect, von Heyking (2006) asserts that "no coherent treatment of the nation's past was ever included in the social studies curriculum" (p. 154). The ultimate result of this neglect, von Heyking (2006) argues, is that through the period in question, students were left with little historical consciousness and were provided with little opportunity to develop a sense of self or understanding concerning their place in a changing world.

Where Clark (1996), Richardson (2002), and von Heyking (2006) developed conclusions concerning the nature of Canadian identity as promoted by official policy documents in a predominantly thematic sense within the context of a particular province, a study of educational policy documents in the period 1930-55 from across Canada by Joshee and Johnson (2007) provides relevant commentary concerning some historical discourses of nationhood. Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014) utilized the historical discourses identified by Joshee and Johnson (2007) in their examination of current citizenship education discourses and offer a summary of

each of the three discourses. In the Commonwealth discourse Canadian identity is rooted in Christian traditions that represent Canada as “a trustee of the British Empire’s noble past” (Pashby et.al., p. 9). Effectively placing white supremacy alongside liberty, the commonwealth discourse represents freedom as an ordered liberty under the control of the Crown. Cultural diversity is recognized but it too is connected with Britishness and seen as evidence of the strength of the British Empire. Perhaps the most recognizable of discourses to recent generations of students, the mosaic discourse depicts Canada as inclusive and respectful of all cultures. Here, there is a celebration of diversity as the underlying hallmark of Canadian identity but that this diversity resulted from Christian values and the British traditions of openness and tolerance. The last of the discourses, the social action discourse, is characterized by its emphasis on action that promotes a better and more equitable future achieved through the actions of an engaged citizenry. Just as the mosaic intersects with the commonwealth discourse, this social action discourse also displays elements of the mosaic discourse in relation to the treatment of minority rights. In the searching for evidence of the historic discourses in more contemporary policy documents, Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014) conclude while the mosaic discourse was most obvious, there is also evidence for the commonwealth discourse in the promotion of Canada as a defender of human rights and leader in peacekeeping as it is framed in the larger context of Canada’s role in the spread of the British values of tolerance and openness. Also, that while neoliberal notions of social cohesion dominate current education policy documents, these ideas are tied to the historic mosaic discourse, which implies that inclusion of diverse groups has already happened (Pashby et.al., 2014).

Although nation building and identity formation taken up in a modernist and assimilationist manner have the potential to be ineffective and problematic at best and intensely harmful at worst, Osborne (1997), Richardson (2002), and Sears (1997) all point to the importance that identity formation has in fostering a sense of belonging and community amongst students. Osborne (1997) argues that in addition to its potential for exclusion and perpetuation of the dominant in society, education that teaches national identity can be liberating and emancipatory too because national self government assumes that people are able to govern themselves as citizens as opposed to subjects. Richardson (2002) argues that the exclusion of some form of national identity raises the potential risk of what Charles Taylor calls hypertrophy where individualism works to produce an emptiness and absence of any emotional attachment to

society. Building on this notion of disconnect from community, Sears (1997) too warns that there is a risk of minimal development of communal connection in that it would render people unlikely to take part in the effort required to work towards a common good. The challenge is in developing and adopting an approach which fosters a sense of unity while also recognizing variety in belonging that is evident in recent scholarship (Battiste & Semaganis 2002; Blackburn, 2009; Burrows 2000; Kymlicka, 2004) around citizenship and the changing nature of what it means to be a member of the nation state (Richardson, 2002). Where Sears (1997) finds a solution in developing historical thinking skills that pay attention to “the fluid and contested nature of democratic ideas across both time and place,” (p. 355), Stanley (2006) offers a kind of three step process for imagining a history education that emphasizes a web of overlapping histories. Through an emphasis on personal histories and their connections to place, this three step process that honours the here and now while at the same time affirming how those spaces have been “constructed and shaped by people who have gone before us” (Stanley, 2006, p. 47).

### **Race, Class, and Gender in the Social Studies Curriculum**

Since curricular development always involves questions of content, a critical understanding of curricular development across time inevitably involves questions of whose knowledge is valued. The history of school curriculum is situated within this struggle over whose knowledge is of most importance and so includes class, gender (Sheehan, 1986) and race based distinctions. In this way, school programs, like the promotion of vocational courses to children of blue-collar workers and academic programming to the children of white collar workers, have been shaped so as to reproduce accepted and dominant class, race and gender discourses and practices within society (Sheehan, 1986). These issues of what kinds and whose knowledge become even more pronounced in the examination of social studies because it seeks to deal explicitly with citizenship education, nation building and identity formation. A hegemonic process that also includes conflict, negotiation and resistance, these teachings about national unity and national identity often hide significant differences in race, class and gender so that “it could act as a legitimizing cover for what were in reality the self-interested motives of the political and economic elite” (Osborne, 1997, p. 43).

Although Clark (1996) and Richardson (2002) both noted a move away from identity as rooted in British heritage and traditions and Osborne (2000/2011) noted a move towards more inclusive narratives through the adoption of social history in the arena of history education,

recent studies continue to affirm the conclusions brought forth by Hodgetts' 1968 study of history education in Canada, namely that the underlying value system in education is that of the white and middle class culture. Despite the fact that multiculturalism has been entrenched within official articulations of the Canadian state since the introduction of the Multiculturalism Act (1971) and in the regional context of Saskatchewan since 1974, studies also indicate that the current approach to multiculturalism is frequently at odds with the reality underlying Anglo-conformity (Sears, 1997).

In an examination of the renewed social studies curriculum in British Columbia, Orłowski (2001) raises the same concerns and argues that although the guides include reference to ethnicity, a close examination reveals that ideas of white supremacy continue to influence students in subtle ways because racial discourse and the impact it continues to exert is completely ignored. In contrast to these omissions concerning issues of race, there is an increased emphasis on the experiences of First Nations peoples and a few are written in such a way as to acknowledge the unfair and racist treatment of First Nations peoples by white society. These efforts are mitigated by the fact that they are taken up within a multicultural perspective rather than making use of anti-racist pedagogies developed by postcolonial and anti-colonial scholars (Orłowski, 2001).

Building greater depth to this analysis of race within British Columbia social studies curriculum and classrooms, Orłowski (2011) uses three racial discourses identified by Frankenberg to characterize the representation of race in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to examine racial discourse in social studies curriculum and classrooms. When considering the essentialist discourse, which attributes the superiority of whiteness based on biological birthright, Orłowski (2011) found that where this discourse has all but disappeared from current curricula, historic examples are evident and supported with specific reference to the 1941 and 1956 guides. The second discourse explored, the colour blind discourse, assumes that beneath the surface everyone is the same and equal. Orłowski (2011) contends that this discourse was prominent in the 1968 social studies, reflecting the influence of liberalism that was making its way across western nations at the time. In this discourse, race relations are depicted in terms of conflict and cooperation, hiding exploitation and any notion of power. For instance, imperialism is presented as a natural and necessary process, concealing the exploitation and marginalization of the groups of people it was built on. Clark (1996) also notes the power blind approach in the period from



1960 to 1975 and describes issues of race and ethnicity as taken up in terms of the contributions of minorities to dominant society. The only two exceptions to this approach were in the representations of First Nations peoples and East Asian immigrants. Where either group is even addressed, they are presented as problems to Canadian society.

Although early contributions of First Nations groups are acknowledged, they are still largely ignored or treated as a problem or disruption in contemporary Canadian society (Clark, 1996). Race cognizance, the third discourse discussed by Orłowski (2011), recognizes the role of skin colour and other factors like social class and gender as determinants of the amount of power and privilege an individual is accorded (Orłowski, 2011). Orłowski (2011) notes that this is the approach that is most closely aligned with a critical left pedagogy and its aim for institutional change, but he does not cite any examples from current curricula. The fact that this discourse highlights the institutional and structural causes of racism, sexism and poverty and has yet to replace the colour blind discourse in mainstream society (Orłowski, 2011) may account for the absence of concrete curricular examples. Recognizing this absence of a critical left orientation in an analysis of the renewed 1997 social studies in British Columbia, Orłowski (2001) generally criticized the curricula for being too vague for teachers, who are themselves a product of dominant ideologies, to take on the topics of colonialism and racism in any way that would allow students to see their lasting impacts in contemporary society.

Similar concerns have been voiced around the inclusion of women in education policy documents and textbooks in a way that values the work of what was once called the private sphere as equal to the more public skills of political participation (Sears, 1997). Changes in curriculum that focus on girls and schooling began several decades ago during a political climate where energetic grassroots organizations made some gains. Second wave feminist scholars and their research pointed to the marginalization and silencing of women's voices in the educational arena. The attention brought about by the work of such scholars and their work resulted in the introduction of curricular reforms aimed at remedying the absence of female voice and narratives from curriculum and curricular resources, including concerted efforts to upend androcentric historical narratives. Courses like Women's Studies and Black Studies began to emerge and reflect the trend of questioning institutions and authority in renewed social studies curriculum during the 1970s and early 1980s (van Manen and Parsons, 1983). Where women are included it is sometimes in problematic ways that do not deal with the issues of defining gender (Osborne,

2001) and ignore the historic experiences of non-white and ordinary women (Clark, 1996; Osborne, 2001). Also noting the problematic treatment of gender in social studies education, Loutzenheiser (2004) argues that K-12 curricular conversation and lessons around gender often rely on oversimplified notions that focus on the experiences of girls and women. Unfortunately, by the 1990s the movement became less visible in the public sphere and women's issues were diminished in the context of broader social justice concerns as well as headlines concerning problems of boys dominating the media (Loutzenheiser, 2004). Mirroring the approach to multiculturalism and ethnic diversity that has dominated curriculum at times, Loutzenheiser (2004) maintains that instead of seeking to disrupt current institutions and structures that establish and maintain gender inequity through critical analysis of roles of gender, race and/or sexuality, most social studies curricular change that has focused on gender issues has been focused on an add and stir approach. Developed with a goal for curricular inclusion in mind this is an approach where lessons are added piecemeal throughout a course, but the main goals and objectives remain unchanged (Loutzenheiser, 2004).

Although notably less evident in the literature reviewed, the issue of class within social studies development is addressed by Osborne (1988), Clark (1996) and Orłowski (2001, 2011). Osborne (1988) specifically mentions the increasing recognition that curriculum has ignored or stereotyped women, First Nations, and other minority groups in ways that reinforce white supremacy and cultural dominance but few studies deal with the ways in which education deals with or fails to deal with social class in this country. In the portrayal of Canada as a classless society, the omission of issues of class works to hide and reinforce the class bias that aims to keep many working-class and economically disadvantaged children in their place (Osborne, 1988). Orłowski's (2001) analysis of the 1997 British Columbia social studies curricula suggests that this trend to omit and ignore issues of class has continued for some time. Orłowski (2001) highlights the fact that there are no outcomes that relate to social class and related issues such as labour struggles, free trade debates, and trade unionism have been ignored in the renewed curricula. Teachers who wish to address corporate hegemony in this neoliberal environment would be left to do it on their own. Aligning with the narrow and often neglected representation of class within the curricula that Osborne (1988) and Orłowski (2001) note, Clark (1996) too reinforces the notion of narrow representation of class issues in remarking that course texts from the 1980s, as was true in the previous decade, continued to represent a narrow range of socio-

economic situations. In later examinations of earlier texts in British Columbia, Orlowski (2011) identifies a similar trend. Although the 1980 curriculum brought back issues of corporations and unions, citizens were consistently identified and defined as consumers, thereby normalizing the central capitalist concept of buying wants and not just needs. The 1988 guide had a similar approach to its 1968 and 1980 predecessors in its treatment of economic issues. By concentrating on the Industrial Revolution as opposed to more contemporary labour issues, the message is that labour unrest and struggle are firmly situated in the past, effectively hiding current power structures (Orlowski, 2011). In arguing that the 1997 guide pays even less mind to issues of class, Orlowski (2011) notes that class is not even included within the list of factors that influence identity. Continuing to reflect this class blind approach, the 2005-2006 curriculum employs the same strategy and omits issues of class from its contents (Orlowski, 2011).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Generally speaking, the development of social studies in Canada has been influenced by the prevailing educational and societal trends of the time. Its early beginnings are rooted in American progressive education that wished to provide a more relevant, less academic course menu for students. Backlash against the supposed lack of rigour in social studies and progressive education caused a shift to what were considered more rigorous approaches, resulting in the implementation the ideas of Bruner and the ‘structures of the disciplines.’ Also criticized for a lack of relevancy, the ‘structures of the disciplines’ approach started to lose ground in the social context of rising concerns around social issues. In order to prepare students to address these growing concerns, they needed to have the values in place to do so. Whether through the values clarification<sup>7</sup> or moral education and valuing processes, this trend resulted in a movement that emphasized the development of values in students. An additional social concern that gained prominence in the 1970s was concern over the loss of Canadian identity. Hodgetts and his 1968 report concerning the state of Canadian history in classrooms across the country spurred the second trend that would carry through into the 1980s, the integration and emphasis on Canada studies. As Canada moved into late 1980s and 1990s there was a renewed call for an emphasis

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<sup>7</sup> Values clarification is an educational approach that refers to the on-going process of reflecting on and identifying one’s own values. The hope is that in the clarification of one’s values, students will be able to see how their values are shaped by various influences in their lives and perhaps work to change some values that they may begin to understand are negative in some way to their personal well-being or the well-being of others.

on skills within the curriculum. While Clark (1997, 2004) argues for a renewed emphasis on citizenship, Osborne (1997) contends that this skills emphasis in the increasingly neoliberal climate led to a decline and near complete omission of citizenship in favour of prioritizing vocational skills associated with effective participation in consumer society.

The 2000s has seen a re-emergence of an emphasis on history education as well as regional initiatives and a continued, as Clark (2004) maintains, emphasis on citizenship education. In the midst of these developments ideas concerning identity, race, class and gender have become more inclusive but not yet reflective of contemporary calls for anti-racist or anti-oppressive strategies which seek to draw attention to the structural and institutional roots of injustice and inequities in society. As is suggested by von Heyking (2006) in her concluding remarks for identity and citizenship education in Alberta during the 20<sup>th</sup> and very early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is essential to recognize the inherent fluidity and interconnectedness of one era with another. One historical period does not come in and simply erase the one that preceded it. Rather, the messages and ideas of one era linger and permeate so that the result is a variety of aims and goals, sometimes contradictory, which reflect both past and contemporary thinking.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Methodology**

As a historical examination of the Saskatchewan social studies curriculum, this study draws on a number of approaches, ideas and theories within general historical study as well as the more specific fields of intellectual history, educational history, critical theory and discourse analysis. Most notable amongst the discussions concerning the nature and purpose of history will be R.G. Collingwood (1946) and his *The Idea of History* as it has informed the thinking that guides the historical study and the methods it will employ. As this study seeks to investigate ideas of nation building and national identity that permeate the curriculum through time, the study is also heavily influenced by the field of intellectual history. The Canadian perspective in the field of intellectual history is provided by discussion of the work of A.B McKillop (1987) and Owrarn (1990). Since the ideas within the curriculum inform the dominant knowledge systems at work in the classroom, the study is also grounded in the field of educational history. The intent is to uncover the ways in which the ideas held within the curriculum influence the broader educational experience of students and teachers by thinking about what it means for them and society at large that these are the ideas that dominate the curriculum. The primary focus on the study of ideas as presented within the context of the official curriculum means that this work is tied to the field of curriculum studies and, more specifically, curriculum history. In this context, the work of Parkes (2011) and his explanation of the development of the “New Curriculum History” or critical reconstructionist curriculum history frames the approach.

The influence of the New Curriculum History and the focus on textual analysis leads to a discussion of the influence and incorporation of some concepts associated with discourse and discourse analysis. Grounding this discussion, as well as each of the historical and curricular orientations, is the influence of critical theory and, in the specific context of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the context of framing this study, the influence of critical theory and CDA are inextricably linked with an approach which seeks to uncover the master narratives regarding national identity and nation building at work in curriculum which serve to highlight and perhaps glorify particular stories at the explicit expense of others. The multidisciplinary nature of historical study has resulted in a framework which draws on and borrows from the tenets of several disciplines and approaches to render a curriculum history that

highlights the influence of the past on our present situation, while using that historical knowledge to frame possibilities for reconstructing a future social studies curriculum that moves towards a more balanced national narrative—one that honours a variety of histories of the people who have inhabited these lands in the past, those who continue to inhabit them today, and those who will continue to in the future.

### **Historical Thinking**

As this study entails source analysis of a historical context, explicating the approach to historical thinking and analysis that guides my work serves as a logical starting point. According to R.G Collingwood (1946) history is the study of *res gestae*: the actions of people that have been done in the past. Historical study, as opposed to scientific study that deals with matters of natural processes, is therefore primarily concerned with investigating the things that people have done in the past. Defined in perhaps a broader sense while succinctly implying the degree of subjectivity that comes along with the creation of historical accounts, Turner (1973) describes history as “all the remains that have come down to us from the past, studied with all of the critical and interpretative power that the present can bring to the task” (p. 201). Also implied within the definition is that history is separate from simply events or things that have transpired in the past. Turner (1973) suggests with this definition that history is not history until it is questioned, studied, interpreted and criticized by historians attempting to compile an account of those events or things that happened in the past. Gilderhus (2007) notes that for historians there is an inevitable acceptance of a worldview that sees events as the result of cause and effect relationships as opposed to the result of randomness or chaos; it is a view that accepts that “things happen for reasons, and that inquiring minds can grasp them” (p. 7).

History conceived in terms of investigating the cause and effect of historical events as the result of human agency involves the study of what Collingwood (1946) refers to as the *inside* and *outside* of an event. The outside of the event is what is actively perceived in the real world; bodies and their movements, while the inside of the event refers to that which can only be described of in terms of thought; the thinking that informed the action (Collingwood, 1946). For Collingwood, this *inside* of the event was integral to historical study. Historians need not only be concerned with the event as it occurred but must also investigate the inside of the event - the processes of thought. Studied in the context of curriculum studies, the outside of the event can

be seen as referring to the end published product, while the inside of the event as referring to those motivations, assumptions and goals which informed that product.

If historical events are to be viewed and studied as a culmination of the inside and outside of a historical event, all history becomes the history of ideas. The specific field within historical thinking and study that aims to deal with the development of ideas is intellectual history. Intellectual history is concerned with the study of ideas and their connection to an external, social context (McKillop, 1987). A common theme within the discussion of the methods and focus of the intellectual historian is a point of emphasis in distinguishing intellectual history from the history of ideas. Across several introductory comments concerning the nature of intellectual history McKillop (1987), Skinner (1985), Collini (1985), Kuklick (1985) and Levine (2005) all discuss the importance of placing texts and the ideas examined within them into a larger context. Levine (2005) argues that the first steps in the study of texts in the field of intellectual history is to place them within the context of their composition. Furthermore, thought should be conceived as dynamic and reactive as it changes and responds to the concrete problems and situations implicated by the context within which those ideas are conceived (Levine, 2005). In his explanation of the use of the term intellectual history in place of the history of ideas, McKillop (1987) clarifies the difference in focus between the two approaches in terms of the neglect of the external context in the work of the history of ideas. Despite this iteration of the integral role of context in the work of intellectual history, McKillop (1987) notes that for the intellectual historian the initial task remains to examine the ideas themselves. He argues for a Canadian intellectual history that aims to place ideas within a broad social context and focusses on the origin, character, and ramifications of the ideas as the centre of the study. These principles of intellectual history and O'Wram's (1990) further assertion that intellectual historians work from the premise that ideas "are considered a major force in the shaping of historical events as a whole," (p. 48) inform my study of the development of ideas of nation, national belonging and national identity. My aim is to explore the impact of those ideas in the context of social studies curriculum and speculate on the potential ramifications of such ideas on understandings of nationhood, national belonging, and national identity, all the while paying critical attention to the larger social, political, and educational context within which those ideas have been developed and articulated.

Across much of historiography, the utility of history is stated in terms of its link with the present. For Collingwood (1946) this notion is tied with the idea of self-knowledge for people in that we can use history as an avenue through which to discover more about ourselves, both in an individual and collective sense. In her exploration of the merits of educational history in the field of teacher education, Lemisko (2013) adopts this Collingwoodian approach to the utility of history and argues that when history is seen as a living process that infiltrates our present situation, “it seems that history is the way to help people learn to think for and about themselves” (p. 56). Lemisko (2013) argues that adopting a Collingwoodian position that the past is alive in contemporary society can help to develop a better understanding of current practices and the thinking that underpins those practices. This understanding gained through historical knowledge can then be used for the betterment of contemporary society because those ideas do not belong to a past that is dead and gone. Instead, the past is a living entity that, when incorporated and critiqued in our contemporary society, can be used for our own advancement (Collingwood, 1946).

If we wish to look at the evils of the past and think about how to move beyond them to something better, we must first seek to understand those evils. Zinn (2006) in his classic critical analysis of American history, takes much the same approach but adds that we must not only focus on the failures that dominate the past. He argues that this kind of approach “is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat” (p. 11). Instead, a creative history is one that “anticipates a future without denying the past, it should emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those episodes of the past when people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win” (p. 11). Zinn’s (2006) comments serve as an important reminder that if we hope to imagine a future that is different, one that tells a variety of stories about our histories and the places we inhabit, historical study undertaken in whatever context, whether it be educational or otherwise, must search for the unexpected and the novel as well as the dominant currents.

Zinn’s (2006) work on rewriting the more traditional American histories that dominated the literature is also helpful in the context of the focus on national identity and nation building of this study. Zinn (2006) offers the integral point that when considering national histories, we need to reject the state’s memory as our own. For Zinn (2006), to accept the history of any country as a unified family or community is to neglect the conflicts at play between conqueror and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, and the dominator and dominated in the



context of gender and race. Jenkins (2003) also highlights the need for this critical lens in historical study, arguing for a change in stance concerning the question of the nature of history. Since history is forged in the conflicts between the dominant and the dominated, and because there is a great difference between what history looks like for a revolutionary versus a conservative, instead of asking “what is history”, Jenkins (2003) argues that the question historians must ask themselves in articulating the nature of history should be “who is history for?” (p. 22). As productions and recreations in their own right, historical accounts have aims and purposes, ones that should be admitted and stated so as to allow readers an open reading of the historical account. Tempering this critical lens with reason in the context of the sudden and insistent demands of the 1960s to include previously omitted voices and narratives in historical accounts, Woodward (1973) reminds us: “in times like these the historian will be hard put to maintain his creed that the righteousness of cause is not a licence for arrogance, that the passion for justice is not a substitute for reason...that myths, however therapeutic, are not to be confused with history” (p. 490).

Burke and Milewski (2012) offer a similar understanding and highlight the complexities at play when investigating the history of schooling. Burke and Milewski (2012) remind educational historians that the study of the history of schooling should not be told as a record of steady progress, as was the case before revisionist historians in the field began to challenge that view, nor should it be told as one always dominated by governments acting out their will on helpless teachers and students. “It [schooling] is a story of exclusion as well as inclusion, of regression as well as progress, and the effectiveness of the public school system has been mediated by factors of race, gender, language, and class” (Burke and Milewski, 2012, p. 3). Despite the fact that the critical perspective seeks to uncover and highlight the dominant and perhaps manipulative narratives presented in the official curriculum, there must also be a willingness to affirm and celebrate instances where the marginalized were able to secure a space in the story(ies).

Much of this critically oriented commentary regarding history and the history of education is underpinned by the aim to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions at work in formal texts. In his discussion of the merits of history education, Kleibard (1995) argues that if educational history is able to uncover, question, scrutinize, and challenge some of those taken for granted assumptions that are embedded in our thinking then it is certainly useful. The historical

knowledge that results from investigating the history of schooling provides an avenue through which to better consider present initiatives and practices. As Christou and Bullock (2013) assert in their discussion of the history of social studies in particular, those who do not have a sense of the past will be less able to recognize the problems and critique their own practice and programming. Clarke (2013) mimics these statements and adds that history of education scholarship provides educators with “a wide array of insights that can inform understanding of why things are the way they are today, which will in turn, help with seeing how they might shape a better future” (p. 32). Furthermore, that a focus on ‘best practices’ in education absent of any historical development, is simply a reflection of an establishment that seeks to preserve the status quo. Osborne (2006) too warns against the short-sightedness that can dominate educational theory and practice if there is no consideration of the history of current developments. He argues that challenging the conventional wisdom of our times can help to challenge being misled by those dominant ideas and help avoid being governed by the short-sighted here and now.

In terms of the methods applied in historical work, there are varying approaches depending on the object of study. Since this historical analysis is primarily concerned with the development of ideas, it is useful to consider some methodological points set out by Collingwood (1946) that he argues a historian must employ to produce historical accounts. The central nature of the processes of thought form the foundation of what became three main features of Collingwood’s approach to historical study. Lemisko (2013) summarizes these three acts of thinking that underpin Collingwood’s approach to “doing” history. Lemisko (2013) explains that in Collingwood’s approach to historical knowledge, both knowledge and understanding must be constantly recreated through the active process of thinking. Three of these active processes of thought then form the foundation for Collingwood’s method of “doing” history. Re-enactment, or the rethinking of the event, involves trying to get inside the head of the author/agent to try and determine what thoughts were guiding their thinking. Interpolating is the process of thinking through the gaps in the sources as historians try to arrive at conclusions regarding that evidence. Not only must the historian think through the actions of the author/agent and inevitably fill in some gaps that arise across sources, the historian must also critically question those sources. Put another way, the historian must put the author in the witness box and attempt to shake their testimony and uncover what they might be trying hide by posing questions that aim to uncover intent and purpose (Lemisko, 2013). When examining the curriculum documents, it

will be essential to the goal of crafting a critically-oriented analysis to not only rethink the ideas and bridge the gaps found within the sources, but also question the intent of the authors.

In addition to these tenets of “doing” history, Collingwood (1946) also argues for a number of general requirements. First, he notes the dominant role of questioning in historical study. Each of the steps in the process of producing an historical account rely heavily on the asking of questions and the asking of those questions in a particular order. Drawing from the teachings of Socrates, Collingwood (1946) argues that the historian can find illumination of the subject matter at hand by posing intelligent questions of themselves. Although primary questions have been formulated to guide this study, Collingwood’s remarks serve as an important reminder of the central nature of questioning in historical study and that much thought must be given to how I formulate my questions and how I proceed to answer them for myself. Second, Collingwood (1946) points to the importance of context by stating that any historical study must be contextualized. In other words, the history must be situated in the wider time and place within which it transpired. Representing an added layer of selection, the process of determining exactly which elements to bring to light are mediated by the overarching goals of both the research and researcher. As such, one central aim of the study is to situate the social studies curriculum in its educational, political and societal context. This context will provide an avenue through which to critically examine trends and/or countercurrents within the field of curriculum development with special attention to the ideas of nation and identity. Third, is the matter of evidence in historical inquiry. Collingwood (1946) argues that the historical account must stand in relation to evidence. Underpinning Collingwood’s (1946) particular stance on evidence is the argument that the importance of sources in historical study rests in asking what the evidence means instead of simply determining whether it is true or not. He warns against the dangers of creating history that simply focuses on copying the details contained in reliable sources, something he calls scissors and paste history. Real history, according to Collingwood (1946), occurs when historians step outside such work and come to their own conclusions regarding the sources. Taking up this challenge to do real history means that the examination of documents will be taken into account in terms of the kinds of thinking represented and analysis will involve a considerable degree of interpretation based on the critical aims and orientation of the study.

Looking at sources in terms of what they mean inevitably leads to questions and concerns about subjectivity in the historian’s craft. As noted above by Jenkins (2003), Turner (1973) and

Woodward (1973) in their discussions concerning the work of historians', subjectivity plays a central role in historical study as it relates to the aims of the historian as well as attempts at defining what exactly history is. Although Jenkins (2003) pushes too far into the postmodern approach in characterizing history as only a "representation of the past through the form we give to its reality" (p. xi) to suit the approach in this study, he does offer some useful points about the situated and ideological nature of historical study. He notes that we should be mindful in historical study that "the histories we assign to things and people are composed, created, constituted, constructed, and always situated literatures" (p. xi). Similar to the ideas expressed by Jenkins (2003) in terms of asking "who is history for?", Zinn (2003) argues that the historian's distortion occurs as more than simply a technical issue, it is ideological. The process of selection and simplification in any historian's work will always produce emphasis, intentional or not, and therefore support some kind of interest, whether that be economic, political, racial, national or sexual (Zinn, 2003). The same line of thought is expressed by Collingwood (1946) as he too points to the inevitable subjectivity that is involved in the study of history: "However hard he [sic] tries, he [sic] is always selecting, simplifying, schematizing, leaving out what he thinks unimportant and putting in what he regards essential" (p. 236). Additionally, for Collingwood (1946) the act of rethinking the inside of an event also involves the issue of subjectivity. The rethinking or re-enacting of the event, which is the only way to investigate the thoughts of the human actor, is carried out in the context of the historian's own mind where they criticize and judge those ideas (Collingwood, 1946). In light of these issues around subjectivity in the study of history, it is helpful to consider what can temper these concerns around representing history "as it was." Gilderhus (2007) notes that while good historians assume their reliance on primary sources sets them apart by providing a link to a knowable past, they also know that the writing of history involves a certain degree of literary and imaginative faculties. These primary sources, in this study the bulk of which will be represented by the official curriculum documents, are certainly not identical to the past, but they do provide an important link to the past and means of obtaining information about it (Gilderhus, 2007). In addition to the general subjectivities involved in any historical account, subjectivity in this study comes in part from the critical stance required to examine the stories of nation and identity that are borne of the dichotomy of us/them and inclusion/exclusion. Pre-empted by this critical stance, the resulting examination is intent to

engage with hidden assumptions that seek to maintain unequal power relations in society as understood within the frame of discourse analysis.

### **Curriculum History**

As a work of educational history concerned with the development of ideas within the curriculum, this study is also informed by curriculum studies and curriculum history in particular. In speaking to the general methodologies of curriculum theory, Parkes (2011) explains that due to its typical combination of approaches identified with history, philosophy, and literary studies and empirical and scientific study, curriculum theory does not have a single methodological foundation. This means that curriculum studies are underpinned by a variety of theories and methods depending on the focus and perspective of the study.

In his overview of contemporary developments in the field of curriculum theory and approaches to it, Pinar (2004) outlines three theoretical orientations in the field. The last orientation or approach that Pinar (2004) speaks to are the developments towards what is called the reconceptualist approach. This approach, characterized by a tendency to see research as a political as well as intellectual act, distinguishes the work of curriculum theorists like Apple, Burton, Mam and Molner from the work of traditionalists and conceptual-empiricists<sup>8</sup> such as Ralph Tyler, Laurel and Daniel Tanner, and George Posner who are primarily concerned with matters of efficacy and “knowledge transfer” from one generation to the next (Pinar, 2004). Another distinguishing feature of the reconceptualist approach to curriculum theory is its emphasis on the wider historical and intellectual currents of life. Those theorists that subscribe to such an approach argue that “comprehension of curricular issues is possible only when they are situated historically” (Pinar, 2004, p. 154).

In a more recent discussion of various developments in curriculum theory and studies, Parkes (2011) also notes three distinct approaches to curriculum theory. It is his discussion of the development of curriculum history towards the New Curriculum History or postmodern critical reconceptualist curriculum theory that helps to further situate my own study within the

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<sup>8</sup> These two approaches are joined together here in an attempt to distinguish the work of curriculum theorists who adhere to the reconceptualist approach to curriculum research. For traditionalists, the practical application of research for teachers in schools is the driving force behind research. These researchers work within the parameters of “conventional wisdom” in the field. Conceptual-empiricists adhere to the view that education is not a discipline in itself but an area to be studied by the disciplines. Their work is primarily interested in employing the conceptual and the empirical in the sense that social scientists apply them, that is developing hypotheses to be tested (Pinar, 2004)

field. In a broad discussion of what he argues are the two primary questions dealt with by curriculum theory, the nature of the relationship between curriculum and society and the relationship between educational theory and practice, Parkes (2011) identifies an orientation in curriculum studies that deals with the former relationship. In studies that focus on the relationship between curriculum and society, the purpose of the work of social reconstructionists who adopt a critical theoretical stance is to uncover the implicit and hidden assumptions that are contained within curriculum. These curriculum theorists seek to use curriculum as “a vehicle for liberation and emancipation, societal transformation, individual empowerment, and/or cultural critique” (p. 23). This critical reading, Parkes (2011) argues, is the result of the myriad of omissions and selections that are inevitably part of the creation of any curriculum.

This issue of omissions of curricular texts is explored by Parkes (2011) in reference to the work of Eisner (1979). Using the work of Eisner (1979), Parkes (2011) argues that curriculum theorists are well advised to study not only what is explicit and implicit in texts but also what schools neglect to teach: the null curriculum. Identifying the influence of both deconstructionist and poststructural approaches, Parkes (2011) outlines several common strategies or points of emphasis that help with a focus on the null curriculum. Employing the work of Boje (2001), Parkes (2011) outlines the following areas of focus in attempting to uncover or examine the null curriculum: recovering voices that are absent from the text, finding exceptions to stated rules, and tracing the unsaid. All of these omissions and selections open the text to be read as a political, racial, gendered, institutional, or historical text. The possibilities into how these texts can be read is quite limitless but involve some kind of focus on and disruption of what the author has presented as commonplace to allow for the critical questioning of the text. Acknowledging the influence of the deconstructionist poststructural approach to textual analysis, as recognized by Parkes (2011) here, this examination of the social studies curriculum will be one that attempts to recognize and account for null curriculum through the untold and marginalized narratives of particular voices in the context of the nation.

Underlying these ideas about how to approach the historical study of the curriculum are ideas about the ways in which the “text” of the curriculum is perceived. Although critical reconceptualist curriculum theory draws on a number of theoretical perspectives and has no one common definition of “text”, Parkes (2011) notes that there are a number of commonly held assumptions in relation to the perception of texts. He notes that a flexible concept of text has

been adopted by hermeneutists, critical theorists, postmodernists, poststructuralists, post-colonial theorists and curriculum reconceptualists. The adoption of a flexible notion of text means that it is a term that “accommodates all human practices, products and representations, including curriculum” (Parkes, p. 28, 2011). This flexibility allows for the text to be read in a number of different ways, outside of what had been the author’s initial intention. In addition to this broad overview of the approach to text within curriculum theory, Parkes (2011) offers helpful insight into how curriculum text can be perceived and studied as a discursive formation that is an educational experience but also a record of statements that govern what we think about education. When viewed in this way, “curriculum is an ensemble of methods and strategies that inscribe principles for action or set parameters for particular styles of reasoning” (p. 38). In the context of the social studies curriculum and the representations of nation and national identity, the curriculum is viewed as a guide which may not be the only factor in determining the messages that students receive about nation and identity, but it does, along with textbooks and other recommended resources, carry heavy influence in setting the stage for such content and discussions.

### **Discourse Analysis**

If curriculum is viewed as a discursive formation it is pertinent to discuss the concept of discourse and how it is approached within the critical reconceptualist perspective. Parkes (2011) begins a discussion of the influence of linguistics on curriculum theory by explaining that the New Curriculum History is representative of what many term the ‘textual turn’ that occurred in curriculum studies where work began to exhibit a heavy influence from the interpretive and deconstructionist oriented approaches of hermeneutics and poststructural theory to critique and reconceptualize curriculum. Influenced by hermeneutics and poststructural theory, the concept of discourse became central to studies focused on interpretative and deconstructionist aims. The concept of discourse itself is defined and characterized in a variety of ways depending on the context of the discussion or study. In forming my own thinking around discourse analysis, and how I may go about an analysis that draws on discourse analysis from a critical perspective within the context of the social studies curriculum, I have found some explanations and descriptions set forth by Orłowski (2011), Parkes (2011), Meyer (2001), Wodak (2001), Jäger (2001) and van Dijk (2001) influential. Highlighting the integral relationship between

knowledge and power, Orlowski (2011) explains that “discourse can be seen to be a social theory in which repeated usage by certain experts result in increased social power for some people usually at the expense of others” (p. 37). He adds that discourse is always connected with power and that discourses can either work to reinforce or challenge unequal relations. Parkes (2011) argues for two conceptions of discourse that dominate educational literature: literary and linguistic. Similar to the idea presented by Orlowski (2011) that discourse can be seen as repeated expert messages, within literary and cultural studies, discourse can be seen as a synonym for “authoritative statements” or “master narratives” that stand in relation to one another and dictate particular power relations. These authoritative statements or master narratives can also be “so seductive that often it is impossible, difficult, or dangerous to think otherwise” (Parkes, 2011, p. 34). Discourse viewed in this way, as intimately connected with notions of power, is heavily influenced by Foucault. Termed “serious speech acts” by Foucault, knowledge and power are joined in the acts of discourse. So, in a Foucauldian sense, all discourse analysis is the analysis of knowledge systems and their relationship with power (Parkes, 2011). Jager (2001) adds a simple explanation for this relationship between discourse and power through his argument that “as ‘agents’ of ‘knowledge’ discourses exercise power” (p. 37) and it is in this way that discourse contributes to the structuring of power relations within society. From this perspective, discourse is a central concept through which to explore the relationship between the text of curriculum documents and the ways in which that text both reflects and constructs dominant ideas about the meaning of nation and national identity for students in social studies classrooms. The emphasis on the relationship between knowledge and power that is represented by and representative of language provides an approach to the curriculum text that supports the goal of critically examining the dominant and marginalized narratives of nation and national identity.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

The field of discourse analysis presents a wide array of approaches to the study of language and its relationship to the social world. The critical component of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is useful in offering some methodological and theoretical insight into approaching a study of text that wishes to highlight the discourse(s) surrounding ideas of nation and national identity. Although CDA is identified as a distinct approach to discourse analysis that stems from the three overlapping traditions of discourse studies, feminist poststructuralism, and critical



linguistics (Rogers et al., 2005), Meyer (2011) explains that one of CDA's defining characteristics is that it represents a diverse set of approaches and does not adhere to one set of methods or operate within just one discipline. It is a set of assumptions that can be combined with any sub discipline in the humanities and the social sciences. As such, it is better defined as a perspective, a critical one, (vanDijk, 2001) rather than an approach, theory, or method. Orłowski (2011) views it as an approach that aims to highlight the implicit and hidden meanings contained within text and a critical tool that can be used to expose those underlying assumptions.

Despite the diverse nature of CDA, Meyer (2001) offers some unifying points that CDA researchers and studies share. Meyer (2001) argues that the most evident unifying factor amongst studies that adopt the CDA perspective "is a shared interest in the social processes of power, hierarchy building, and exclusion and subordination" (p. 30). Wodak (2001) points to three unifying concepts within CDA noting the centrality of history, power and ideology that figure prominently across CDA studies. Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, and O'Garro (2005) also identify the nature of power relations in their discussion of some unifying factors that emerge across the field of CDA studies, arguing that many CDA studies share the assumption that facts are always grounded in the context of historically constituted power relations; that there is always privilege in society and that privilege leads to unequal access to various aspects of life. It is here where we can start to see the link between critical theory and CDA. The aim of CDA is to uncover and make transparent social inequalities that appear in and are constructed by discursive acts. Put another way by Wodak (2001), CDA adopts the approach taken in critical theory to raise awareness in agents; the aim is not only to explain and describe the inequalities as created and reproduced in discourse, but to "root out a particular kind of delusion" (p. 10). That is, the aim is to uncover and make clear the coercive elements that work to otherwise conceal the nature of power relations. Most CDA studies take the side of the underprivileged and attempt to show the ways that the privileged in society use language to stabilize and even intensify inequities (Meyer, 2001). Wodak (2001) argues that a number of direct and indirect links between CDA research in the tradition of critical theory become evident when one considers some of the central concepts and social phenomena that CDA studies focus on. These common links include the attention afforded to the nature of what counts as knowledge, the acquisition and maintenance of power in society, the function of ideology, and

the ways in which discourse is constructive of and constructed by social institutions (Wodak, 2001).

### **Discourse-Historical CDA**

Out of the cluster of approaches to CDA there is one particular approach that lends additional guidance in terms of framing a historical study which draws from discourse analysis: the discourse-historical approach of CDA. Drawing further on the perspective of critical theory, the discourse-historical approach adheres to the socio-philosophical orientation and aims to produce social critique (Wodak, 2001). The discourse historical approach attempts to incorporate a wide array of contextual historical information that discursive texts are embedded within and seeks to analyze a historical dimension of discourse by exploring the ways that particular discourses develop and change over time (Wodak, 2001). The impact of this discourse-historical approach can be seen in two ways. Firstly, the underlying aim within the general approach of CDA studies to uncover and reveal social inequities supports an aim to investigate the discourse of nation and national identity represented and constructed in the social studies curriculum as the narratives associated with such topics are inherently exclusionary and power laden. Secondly, the branch of historical CDA highlights the impact that historical knowledge concerning the social and political climate within which discourse is embedded has on understanding how particular dominant ideas concerning nation and national identity have developed over time within the social studies curriculum.

Due to its diverse and multi/interdisciplinary nature, CDA also draws on a number of procedures and methods in carrying out the work of a critical approach to discourse analysis. Just as there are a number of unifying factors in the perspectives and assumptions held by those who do the work of CDA, so too there are a few unifying points in terms of the methods and procedures used in CDA. An important perspective in CDA which relates to the ways in which texts are perceived is the point that it is very rare, perhaps especially so in the context of curriculum studies, for a text to be the product of a single author. Since texts are often the product of several authors with viewpoints and interests of their own, they often become “sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak, 2001, p.11). As curriculum texts and the texts that inform them are often the work of full committees of people comprised of varying stakeholders like government,

public and post secondary institutions and teachers associations they certainly become sites of struggle where varying intents and perspectives can be critically examined.

Speaking explicitly to process in CDA, Wodak (2001) notes that CDA generally sees its procedure as a hermeneutic process that aims to grasp and produce meaning relations. This process holds that each part can only be understood in the context of the whole but that this whole is only accessible through its component parts (Wodak, 2001). VanDijk (2001) offers some practical insight into the seemingly overwhelming nature of discourse studies in a general sense by offering that no discourse analysis can ever be a complete or full analysis. Such a study of even a small section of text would fill hundreds of pages “because it would have to consider many hundreds, if not thousands, of relevant units, levels, dimensions, moves, strategies, types of acts, devices and other structures of discourse” (p. 99). It is because of this that any discourse analysis must make choices about what to examine in order to study a particular social issue.

In relation to my study, this will mean that the choices I make will reflect a concern for the intertextual relationships amongst curriculum documents as well as between curriculum and historical context as well as an interest in examining the historical development of the ideas of nation and national identity. In addition to the holistic and subjective processes of CDA, VanDijk (2001) and Wodak (2001) both note the fluidity of the process. VanDijk (2001) explains that within CDA the processes of problem formulation, description and applications are closely connected, while Wodak (2001) notes that the steps within the analysis are “taken several times, always coming and going between the text, ethnography, theories and analysis” (p. 93). Taken in the context of my historical analysis, the fluidity offered by CDA serves as a guiding framework for navigating back and forth between text and context through processes of analysis and the drawing of conclusions.

### **Methods: Primary Source Analysis**

In addition to the overarching questions that guide the purpose and aims of the study in an overarching manner, it was necessary to develop more specific and narrow questions in order to guide analysis and interpretations of those sources. The central questions guiding the entire study focus on uncovering and examining the master narratives of Canadian history and Canadian identity in social studies curricula. These central guiding questions intend to examine the nature of discourses of nation and national identity, especially the extent to which discourses

of nation in the curriculum work to support or challenge exclusionary and/or harmful narratives. The actual process of interrogating the primary source documents unfolded over several rounds of analysis, each guided by its own set of interrogative questions connected to the particular discourses or topics under investigation. The first step undertaken in the primary source analysis was an overarching, broad, and general interrogation guided by a set of questions aimed at uncovering possible discourses or topics to interrogate in more detail. Informed by my overarching research questions and my research into the historical context of the period with specific attention to nation building and identity, I posed the following questions during the first round of curricular analysis:

1. Who and what has been included in the development of the nation and the Canadian identity? Who or what has been excluded?
2. Of these inclusions and omissions, which are more prevalent?

As I proceeded through each of the guides, I compiled a set of curriculum analysis notes that included excerpts from all of the guides under examination. Once I had completed this initial set of analysis notes, I read back through each of the pages and colour coded excerpts that I felt reflected a particular discourse or theme. For instance, I highlighted all references that I interpreted as reflective of particular political ideological traditions in green. This initial round of primary source analysis, along with the overarching guiding questions, forms the foundation for the narrower focus for each individual chapter. The broad questions that guide the study along with this initial round of curricular analysis led to the identification of five topics for more intensive investigation:

1. Representations of political culture, namely the influence of liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy
2. Representations of women and gender
3. Representations of land and place
4. Representations of Indigenous peoples

In addition to these items, it also became apparent through this initial round of analysis that it would be pertinent, because of the length of the history curriculum guides as well the nature of the study in terms of my aim to uncover discourses of nation building, to dedicate a chapter to the examination of the development of the nation as articulated in the subject discipline of history.

Once these narrower points of focus were identified, I went back into the curricular documents as well as my original analysis notes in order to interrogate those documents more fully within the specific context of the discourses and themes under consideration. For each one of the specific areas of focus I first completed secondary source research in order to gain an understanding of the nature and function of particular discourses related to the topic under investigation. For instance, with respect to representations of Indigenous peoples, I compiled secondary sources focused on the examination of representations of Indigenous peoples in both the broad societal as well as educational contexts. With this understanding of prevalent discourses in that particular area in place, I then returned to the primary source documents and my initial notes, asked the following questions, and compiled a new set of notes based on the responses to those questions. The wording for each subset of questions relied to some extent on the particular theme under examination but all included questions related to:

- a. how what I was finding in the curricular documents paired with or challenged my understanding based on secondary source analysis
- b. trends in historical development over time
- c. how these representations could be linked with broad societal and or educational trends
- d. the implications that such representations and omissions have on larger questions of Canadian identity and the development of the Canadian nation state.

The final steps in the process for each round of curricular analysis were focused on providing interpretations and conclusions that link together my re-constructed picture of the various discourses or themes and the primary source documents themselves. Finally, my interpretations extend into thinking about implication for the development of discourses of nation in social studies curricular documents. Interpretations and conclusions are based on providing evidence for the relationship between those interpretations and the curricular documents. An appendix to illustrate these initial stages of content analysis has been provided for the chapter that deals with political culture. Although the main criterion in constructing my final interpretations and conclusions is a demonstration of the relationship between the re-constructed picture of the past and the curricular evidence used to create this picture is met in each instance with respect to the various discourses explored in each chapter, these final interpretations are a result of my own bias in terms of selections and omissions. It is my hope that such limitations of personal

perspective are at least partially mitigated by an open and transparent explanation of both the epistemological underpinnings and methods of document interrogation and analysis outlined above.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In addition to the issue of general subjectivities manifested in the choices and interpretations that historians make that has been addressed in the context of the historian's craft, there is also the closely connected issue of reflexivity. As a critically oriented historical examination of the discourse(s) of national identity and nation building in the social studies curriculum carried out by a social studies teacher, reflexivity becomes an important final point to address. The issue of reflexivity is raised by Parkes (2011) and Rogers et al. (2005) in the context of the New Curriculum History and CDA. In particular reference to historical textual study in the context of curriculum theory, Parkes (2011) argues that a reflexive turn was brought to the work of curriculum historians through the adoption of the view that the process of interpretation and examination is also connected to the production of new texts by the historians. Much like the work of any historical study, the practices of paraphrasing, restating, quoting and omitting required to arrive at an explanatory historical account result in a practice that is fully open to subjectivity (Parkes, 2011). Rogers et al. (2005) also note the importance of reflexivity in research agendas, but argue that it is of particular importance to studies that seek to embrace Critical Discourse Analysis.

Since educational researchers are often members or ex-members of the sites that we seek to study, as is the case here, we bring with us our own histories of participating within those institutions. In this way, we embody "what Fairclough (1992) refers to as 'members' resources' or what Gee (1999) refers to as 'cultural models' around our participation in schools that includes beliefs, assumptions, and values within those contexts" (Rogers et al. 2005, p. 382). These notions of reflexivity are important to recognize and clarify as I work to acknowledge the assumptions and personal histories that I bring to a study of school curriculum as a British immigrant social studies teacher.

As a social studies educator with an academic background in historical study, I have ideas and experiences that inform my reading of the Social Studies curriculum. In my own experiences with the grade nine social studies curriculum I have encountered and observed the different ways that a curriculum can be read and explored depending on the assumptions and

perspectives of the reader. In relation to the study of these texts on a much broader and in-depth scale, those experiences I bring to the research are reminders that my analysis is one inherently shaped by the researcher. In addition to this practical classroom and teaching experience, I also bring my background as a British immigrant to my study of the ideas of nation and national identity. Realizing that my learning has been partially shaped by the stories I was told about nation and national identity is an important component in attempting to produce a historical account aimed at disrupting some of those same learning experiences. Those taken for granted assumptions about who counts and who does not in the stories of Canada and Canadian identity are ones that I have been told as a student and those which I aim to disrupt as an educator.

Taken in sum these influences inform a historical study of the social studies curriculum that embraces history as events that have occurred in the past that result from human action. These human actions are informed by and carried out through deliberate and thoughtful action that in turn reflects and is reflective of the larger educational, political and social context. Decidedly influenced by Collingwood's (1946) ideas about historical action and thinking and underpinned by a concern with the development of ideas as represented by the field of intellectual history, it is a study that seeks to explore the actions of those who had a hand in creating the social studies curriculum in its final form by investigating the ideas that informed its creation. The investigation of these thoughts in relation to their impact on the curriculum begins to take a critical turn in the context of the focus on nation and national identity and in a view of the curriculum that seeks to disrupt and reconceptualize.

Greatly influenced in a broad sense by critical texts in historical study like Howard Zinn's (2003) *A People's History of the United States* and reminders of the value of historical inquiry from the field of educational history from the likes of Burke and Milewski (2012), Kleibard (1995), Christou and Bullock (2013), Osborne (2006), and Clarke (2013), this study is also one aimed at critically examining the ideas that inform the stories our curriculum tells about nation and national identity in the hopes of offering possible future directions. This direction forward is grounded in critically examining the curriculum as a discursive formation that rests on an interpretation of discourse that places the relationship between knowledge and power centre stage. The formulation of a methodology that honours this grounding in both mainstream historical analysis as well as historical discourse analysis while offering critique is one that fully embraces the subjectivity and bias of a critical perspective. It is an approach that is willing to

critically examine the ideas that inform our stories of nation and identity in light of the power they have to shape the contours of our collective identity and thinking. Ultimately, this multidisciplinary critical approach to the intellectual educational history of the discourse of nation and identity within the social studies curriculum provides the perspective and approach necessary and fitting to a study that seeks to challenge the taken for granted assumptions that students learn and experience via the official curriculum.

As a manuscript style dissertation, each of the five analysis chapters that follow has been written as separate articles targeting one theme in particular. Each of those five analysis chapters includes concluding thoughts pertaining to that particular theme, and a final chapter offers overarching final thoughts focused on the relationships between each of those themes. The final concluding chapter also includes considerations for relevancy and future research.



**Chapter 5:**  
**Reflections of Political Culture:**  
**Ideological Orientations in Saskatchewan Social Studies**

Viewed as a starting point for curricular change (Tomkins, 1986), political culture, encompassing both values and beliefs as well as ideologies (Bell, 1994), is an interesting avenue through which to consider regional socio-political context in relation to curriculum history and reform. In the realm of such a public institution with clear goals of socializing and otherwise preparing students to take their place in society, education is clearly influenced by the political culture, ideologies, and trends within both the education world and the broader public and political scenes. Although educational theory and philosophy represents a distinct influence in shaping curricular aims and outcomes, these ideas operate within the larger context of the social and political climate of the time. This means that attempting to determine the character of education and educational aims within a particular era must certainly examine what was occurring outside of schools.

This chapter aims to examine the connection between political culture and Saskatchewan social studies and also the extent to which these connections reflect the distinct political culture of Saskatchewan. Specifically, I examine these socio-political influences within the context of the social studies and history curriculum in the province from 1970 through to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I begin by highlighting and defining three ideological traditions that have dominated the political scene in the Canadian context: liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy. Next, I consider the more specific provincial political culture of Saskatchewan, focusing primarily on the development and eventual dominance of social democracy in the province. Analysis is drawn from 25 grades seven through twelve social studies and history curriculum guides spanning the years 1970 to 2008. From this foundation, examination of the social studies and history curriculum in the province suggests that these guides reflect a kind of ideological tug of war where the deep regional history of social democratic tendencies compete with liberal, neoliberal, and conservative principles to produce discourses of nation that speak to representations of Canada as a liberally oriented social welfare state with conservative tendencies.

## **Ideology, Political Culture, and Curriculum**

According to a simple explanation put forth by John Schwarzmantel (1998 as cited in Orłowski, 2011) ideologies are comprised of three parts: a critique, an ideal, and agency. Ideologies put forth a critique of society while also articulating the ideal conditions for society and the work that people do within that society. Political culture in Canada can be broadly characterized by the influences of its three main ideological traditions: liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy. In addition to these dominant political ideologies, Canadian political culture and society have also been heavily influenced by Keynesian economics and the more recent policies of neoliberalism.

In the broad sweep of Canadian education history, Manzer (1994) explains that while concepts of educational purpose, governance and policy design are drawn from the opposing political ideologies, it is liberalism that has dominated since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although Canadian education policy, purpose and design has been influenced by the ideologies of conservatism and liberalism, Manzer (1994) contends that liberalism, divided into political, ethical and economic liberalism, has been the hegemonic ideology in Canadian education. Political liberalism (also known as reform liberalism) differs from classical liberalism in its belief in a stronger, more interventionist role for government in society. Government goals oriented around the cultivation of the individual were intimately connected with nation building goals of unity and cohesion and were to be carried out through the implementation of universal education to ensure the adoption of a uniform set of values and knowledge. Ethical liberalism branches out in its concern for individual fulfillment and growth for its own sake, as opposed to the pursuit of individual education as part of the wider goal of nation building for reform liberals. Despite sharing a belief in the value of the individual in society, ethical and economic liberals differ significantly in terms of their views on the purpose of education for those individuals.

Where ethical liberals stress the importance of the growth of individual students as a primary aim of education, economic liberals feel that the main purpose of schooling should be to prepare students to participate effectively in the economy (Manzer, 1994). In the broader context of Canadian political culture, Bell (1992) offers a similar argument for the dominance of liberalism. Bell (1992) contends that with the full force of state, church, media, and the educational system behind it, liberalism has been inculcated into students.

In its classic form liberalism values the individual above all else and favours laissez faire economics where free market capitalism prevails. Put simply, liberalism begins with the basic principle that each individual's wants and preferences are equally valid. First to articulate the liberal principles of government, John Locke (1632-1704) believed that the purpose of government was to preserve its citizen's rights to freedom, life, and property. He viewed lawmaking as the supreme function of government as this was the foundation upon which an individual's willingness to participate in the social contract was formed (Kelly, 2013). Articulated by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* in 1859, another important tenet of liberalism is the belief that individuality is the foundation of a healthy society. Mill believed that the restriction of unorthodox ideas through social intolerance threatened to dull minds and limit the development of society (Kelly, 2013). Spurred by a central question in political theory around the appropriate balance between individual freedom and social control, Mills built an argument for government intervention in the "harm principle." According to Mills, government intervention was necessary and justified in circumstances where individual liberties led to the harm of others in society (Kelly, 2013). In this way, Mills is perhaps the most famous and frequently cited political theorist for a pragmatic liberalism tied to a principle of collective well-being, as opposed to abstract, inalienable rights (Kelly, 2013).

The focus in liberalism on the individual and the belief in the equal validity of each individual's wants and preferences, comes with an important qualification. Although there is a recognition that each individual's preferences are equal, equality of outcome is not commonly accepted within liberalism. Conversely, liberals believe that inequity is an acceptable, natural, and inevitable outcome of the individual pursuit of success. This individualism is then used to justify a reliance on private enterprise and property. For liberals, there is no reason to question unequal outcomes based on talent, skills, and effort (Manzer, 1994). Also known as meritocracy, this belief is a central tenant of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism. Based on the myth that merit underpins all success and failure, it is a harmful notion that ignores the role that systematic or institutional exclusion and marginalization play in individual people's lives. In this way, it is a hegemonic strategy that effectively renders people unconscious of privilege (Orlowski, 2011).

In contrast to an embrace of progress and change by liberals, conservatism is predicated on the values of stability and tradition. Threatened by the concepts of societal change and progress, adherents to conservative ideology seek to preserve the status quo in the face of

economic, social, and political turmoil and favour a society where everyone has, is aware of, and understands their place. The role of the individual is to maintain tradition and stability for the good of the larger community (Orlowski, 2011). Irish philosopher and political theorist Edmund Burke (1729-1797) became a promulgator of conservative ideas most notably through his reactions to the French Revolution. Written in 1790, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, clearly positioned Burke as a conservative thinker through his disdain for revolutionary thinkers and action. A Whig himself, Burke favoured progress in society that was slow, gradual, and mindful of tradition. Viewed as the classic rebuttal to would-be revolutionaries, Burke argued that a complete dismantling of the political system and society was both foolish and arrogant (Kelly, 2013). Skeptical of individual rights and arguing instead for the values of tradition and habit, Burke believed that the unruly individual must be controlled for the good of the rest of society (Kelly, 2013). Redistribution of wealth was also viewed unfavorably by Burke because, he argued, it would result in only marginal gains for the rest of society. For Burke, it was the landed aristocracy, with their large land holdings, who prevented the monarchy from overreaching itself (Kelly, 2013). Should these large land holdings be dismantled in favour of more equitable distribution, the power, self-interest, and inherited political power that prevented the monarchy from overreaching its powers would be lost.

Where liberalism and conservatism recognize, accept, and to some extent work to maintain, inequitable social and economic structures in society, social democracy is defined by its concern for the well-being of all in society through equitable access to services and opportunity. A hybrid of socialism and liberalism, social democracy represents a unique development (Orlowski, 2011) and also holds particular importance for examining political culture in Saskatchewan. Representing the evolutionary branch of worker-based calls for political and social reform, a development precipitated by both the Russian Revolution (1917) and the founding of the Communist International (1919), social democrats were driven by the belief that the working class could increasingly direct state policy towards abolishing poverty and redistributing wealth more equitably (Whitehorn, 2015). These early social democrats argued that political democracy (the right to vote) must be extended to include economic and social democracy, as well (equal rights to education, medical care, pensions, employment, and safe working conditions) (Whitehorn, 2015).

In the Canadian context social democracy is best represented in the political arena by the New Democratic Party (NDP) and its predecessor the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). J. S. Woodsworth, the first leader of the CCF, was convinced by his experiences with working class people of urban slums that socialism was the solution to poverty. First elected to the House of Commons in 1921 for Winnipeg Centre North under the slogan “Human Needs before Property Rights”, Woodsworth moved a resolution every session calling for the replacement of capitalism’s competitive profit motive with public and co-operative ownership of the means of production and distribution. Once the Depression struck, Woodsworth joined together with labour and socialist groups to form a federal socialist party. In 1933 the group adopted a social democratic manifesto, chose Woodsworth as their leader, and became the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (McNaught, 2015).

In addition to the dominant ideologies of liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy, Canadian society and political culture has also been significantly impacted by the two opposing economic paradigms of Keynesianism and neoliberalism. Keynesian economics gained widespread support in the aftermath of WWII as Canada, and most of the Western industrial world, attempted to evade an economic downturn like that seen in the 1930s. As evidenced by the Great Depression, it appeared that laissez faire economics were problematic and that a different kind of system was needed to ensure economic supports during periods of economic downturn. Keynesian economics provided the solution through valuing a balance between private enterprise and government intervention and promoting a social security safety net for all citizens that mitigated the effects of unbridled capitalism (Bumsted, 2008). The creation of the social welfare state is directly related to the success of Keynesian economics across much of the Western industrialized world during the 1930s.

As general rates of profit fell across the developed world between 1973 and 1980 and big business called for large scale restructuring of economic policy, neoliberal economics emerged as the dominant economic imperative of the day. Characterized by a shrinking welfare state, deregulation of the private sector, free trade, attacks on organized labour, and regressive taxation policies that promote inequality, neoliberalism is an economic paradigm that benefits the few at the expense of the masses. As Canada moved into the 1980s, economic policy became significantly impacted by this new form of intensive capitalist liberalism.

By the early 1990s the old liberal consensus was effectively replaced and policy debate focused almost entirely on upholding private ownership rights over the participatory rights of citizens (Smith, 2004). The exponential increase in both global communications and transnational corporations has meant that neoliberal policies have become enmeshed with processes of globalization (Duty & Merryfield, 2008). The result of which has been the increasing impact of transnational organizations like the World Bank on citizen's lives across the globe. In the educational sphere, neoliberal policies, termed technological liberalism by Manzer (1994), can be seen in the neglect of citizenship in favour of focusing primarily on issues of efficiency, standardization, and exchange in the global economy (Smith, 2011). Terms like the 'new knowledge economy' that aim to commodify learning would be indicative of such shifts. Under the influence of neoliberalism, knowledge and learning became another branch of industry, subject to the same standardization and industrial production systems (Smith, 2011).

### **Agrarian Populism and the Rise of Social Democracy in Saskatchewan**

To describe regionalism as a separate ideology would be an incorrect assumption, but it is a crucial element in the examination of political culture and its influence on education. When a province chooses to emphasize its own rather than national interests and concerns, it is the provincial point of view, or its political culture, that is passed along to students (Bell, 1994). This point becomes particularly salient in the context of the unique regional political culture of Saskatchewan. While social democracy is not absent from the rest of the national political landscape, Saskatchewan is the only province where a social democratic party has dominated the political scene in the past (Bell, 1994). Admittedly, the province has seen the election of Liberal, Progressive Conservative and now the conservative Saskatchewan Party, but the common denominator in the province since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century has been a loose coalition of forces coming together on the right to oppose the CCF/NDP on the left (Warnock, 2004). If one is opposed to right wing politics in Saskatchewan, then one is likely to find a natural home with the NDP. Although this is a study focused on the development of curriculum in the historical context of the 1970s onwards, in order to understand the implications of the regional political culture, it is imperative to provide a brief historical sketch of the development of social democratic ideology in the province in the early to mid-20th century, including the regional factors that contributed to its eventual dominance in the province.

An appreciation of the history and success of social democratic ideas in the province of

Saskatchewan begins with an understanding of the role of populism in calling for greater control over both economic and political decisions in the province. In Saskatchewan the term ‘populism’ has always been linked with the farmer’s movements and a politics of the people that stood in opposition to the domination of the economy and government by the rich and powerful. It was a movement, comprised of labour and left activists from the United Farmers organizations and many settlers of either British or Scandinavian background with experience in social democratic parties, aimed at government reform that would enable the popular majority to have a voice in and even direct government policy (Warnock, 2004). Of the four variations of prairie populism that Laycock (1990) identifies, it was the social democratic brand that took hold in Saskatchewan. The introduction of socialism by way of primarily British settlers resulted in the adoption of reform socialism where cooperatives were supported as a means to achieve more equitable distribution of wealth and political power, but not as a system to replace capitalism. The cooperatives of Saskatchewan were “peoples’ capitalism” as opposed to a socialist alternative (Warnock, 2004).

At least partially responsible for the fervor with which agrarian farmers came together and organized was the extent to which these groups consolidated their efforts to forge an alliance against large corporate interests and the political clout of central Canadian businessmen and politicians (Warnock, 2004). In the context of the hinterland-heartland<sup>9</sup> (Alcorn, 2013) dynamic where large industrial financial capital and power was concentrated in Central Canada (Quebec and Ontario), Prairie farmers had little control over their local economies. Not only in the Canadian context, but also in the American midwest, popular, grassroots revolts and protests took aim at eastern corporations or trusts. For a good number of Western farmers, who took particular aim at the activities of corporations like the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Canadian National Railways, and the Canadian Manufacturer’s Association<sup>10</sup> (Warnock, 2004), central Canada represented all that stood in the way of their path to a decent living and political control over their own livelihoods.

These sentiments of alienation, once rooted in the lack of political power as expressed by

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the notion of the West as hinterland see ‘The West as Promised Land’ in chapter 8 p.231.

<sup>10</sup> Founded in 1871 and subsequently incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1902, the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association aimed to promote and represent the interests of both Canadian manufacturers and exporters.

Prairie farmers, continued, and continue to permeate through the political culture of the province. In the 1982 provincial election, for instance, the provincial wing of the Western Canada Concept movement won more votes than the Saskatchewan Liberal Party candidate in over a third of Saskatchewan's constituencies (Elections Saskatchewan, 2009). Most recent manifestations of these alienation sentiments are grounded in the push for resource extraction in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. Aggravated over failed attempts to push through the Energy East pipeline, and dealing with restrictions on the sale of wheat on the open market for Saskatchewan farmers, the issue of Western alienation has been proclaimed a real "threat" and "danger" to Canadian unity across the media. As turmoil over perceived failures on the part of Prime Minister Trudeau to hear the concerns of Westerners, former Premier Brad Wall summed up his sentiments with these comments, "[Trudeau's] actions and his government's actions may well have some westerners wondering if this country really values Western Canada, the resources we have, and the things we do to contribute to the national economy and to quality of life for all" (Wall, as quoted by Valiante, 2017, paragraph 12). Clearly, the historical roots of alienation remain a concern for many Westerners.

### **Saskatchewan Politics 1944-2008**

The ideological direction of the British socialists was combined with the voting support of continental Europeans to propel the CCF to victory in 1944 (Warnock, 2004). Once the CCF secured power in 1944 the party began to implement a system of social security and welfare that would eventually become engrained within the regional political culture of Saskatchewan for years to come. In Saskatchewan, the Fordist system of production<sup>11</sup> and the Keynesian welfare state were established after WWII by CCF Premier T.C Douglas. The government developed and implemented policies that included government intervention and spending that would help to diversify the economy, increase incomes and wealth, and grow the welfare state. Despite a change in government to the Liberal Party under Ross Thatcher in 1964, the Keynesian welfare state and progressive taxation developed by the CCF/NDP government remained largely unchallenged (Warnock, 2004). The push for progressive government intervention continued once the NDP were back in power in the province in 1971. Under the Blakeney government

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<sup>11</sup> The old capitalist system, also referred to as the "industrial model" and "Fordist production," emphasized capital accumulation, mass production and consumption and was closely identified with the nation state, the rise of the trade union movement, and the rise of the Keynesian welfare state (Warnock, 2004).



(1971-82) social programs were introduced, the minimum wage reached the highest rate within Canada, and social assistance rates were increased significantly (Warnock, 2004).

Support for the Blakeney government started to wane following the deep recession of 1980-81. Saskatchewan, much like the rest of Canada and the majority of industrialized nations, began to experience increasing pressure from the capitalists and big business for structural changes to bring about profit gains. In this growing climate of deregulation and reductions in government spending for social programming in favour of promoting capitalist profits, the NDP was replaced in 1982 by the right-of-centre party in the province, the Progressive Conservatives. With growing support from small business, land rich farmers, and those elements that supported the traditional patriarchal family, the Progressive Conservative government won power in the 1982 election and quickly began to implement government planning and policies that matched and supported the political ideology of both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan (Warnock, 2004). The Devine government (1982-1991) ushered in significant changes to the social democratic legacy that the CCF/NDP had spent years entrenching within the province through attacks on organized labour, privatization of Crown corporations, reductions to resource extraction royalties and strong support for the politics of the free market as well as free trade deals with the United States (Warnock, 2004).

Exasperated by the failings and corruption<sup>12</sup> of the Devine government, by 1991 Saskatchewan residents were calling for a return to the “Saskatchewan Way” that reflected the communal and cooperative ideology historically articulated by the CCF/NDP: a mixed economy with a progressive and caring welfare state. By the time the Progressive Conservative Devine government left office, it had left the province with a 15 billion budget deficit. Not only had the Devine government run the province into economic hardship, but twelve members of the government had also been charged with fraud for their roles in a scheme that defrauded taxpayers out of more than \$837, 000. Riding this wave of calls for reform, the NDP government of Roy Romanow formed government after a landslide win in 1991. Despite these calls from the public and running on a platform of returning to the tradition of state intervention to ensure the wellbeing of all, the NDP government of Romanow almost completely abandoned

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<sup>12</sup> The party left the province with 15 billion in debt by the time they left office and twelve members of the government had also been charged with fraud for their roles in a scheme that defrauded taxpayers out of more than \$837, 000.

the traditional CCF/NDP approach in favour of a neoliberal strategy and continued with the policy of capitalist restructuring that had begun with the Tories (McGrane, 2011; Warnock, 2004).

Using the theoretical apparatus of the Third Way, McGrane (2011) describes the process of dilution during the 1980s and 1990s that ultimately resulted in a significant move to the centre as a more liberal party for the NDP. The Third Way is a term that emerged in the 1990s to describe European social democracy's transformation into a more moderate ideological stance. This watered-down version of social democratic ideas makes a number of concessions related to the core principles of equality and the relationship between the state and the economy. For instance, where social democracy relies on a deep notion of equality that guarantees benefits to all, the Third Way adopts a shallow notion of equality based on merit. Additionally, Third Way social democrats see the free market as a mechanism that ensures autonomy and generates wealth for society, where traditional social democracy contends that the free market should be restrained through expanding public ownership to produce a redistribution of wealth. Under Romanow, the NDP sold the remaining government equity in the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Oil and Gas Corporation, Cameco, and the Lloydminster Heavy Oil Upgrader. The weakening of the social welfare state continued and K-12 schooling as well as higher education suffered budget cuts up until the 2003-04 budget. Additionally, health services were streamlined and experienced cuts too, basic social assistance rates were frozen, and dependence on food banks increased (Warnock, 2004).

While the history of the party has shifted within the larger socio-political climate, it is the collectivist ideology of the NDP that remains constant. Deeply tied to co-operative traditions, and like a cooperative itself, the NDP's direction and organization is based around its members and their ideas. The strong dominance of the CCF/NDP in the province of Saskatchewan has resulted in a strong social democratic tradition where the majority believe in social programs for all and a mixed economy that supports public ownership of utilities. While more recent policy decisions of the NDP in the 1990s and early 2000s indicate the adoption of the Third Way and a tendency to embrace neoliberal practices, this diluted social democratic approach retains its cooperative roots and continues to support the notion that the government play a role in reducing inequality through an effective welfare state (McGrane, 2011).

These new policy directions by a party that used to clearly represent a left position within

the province have resulted in a significant change in the political landscape. No longer is there a clear split between a moderate left (CCF/NDP) who want greater control over the Saskatchewan economy and greater benefits for all and the right (Saskatchewan Party) who want less government control and larger private profits (Warnock, 2004). Increasingly frustrated by their inability to influence government policy, as evidenced by the disappointing performance of the Romanow and Calvert governments, Saskatchewan voters have responded by opting out (Warnock, 2004). Voter turnout rates in the provincial general elections have been falling steadily since the 1991 election (83 percent) reaching just 58 percent by 2003 and have remained low (53 percent in 2016) (Elections Saskatchewan, 2016). Those who are engaging most deeply in the election process are increasingly voting in favour of the conservative and stridently neoliberal policies of the Saskatchewan Party in increasing numbers, which is resulting in further entrenchment of neoliberal policies in the province.

### **Analysis and Interpretations**

Just as the history and policy decisions of the NDP cannot be understood as monolithic and simplistic, the development of these social democratic influences on curriculum must be considered with respect to the nuanced and conflicting nature of philosophies and aims that form part of curriculum. Despite the fact that it is relatively easy to identify the dominant flavour of education during a particular period, there can also be contrary ideologies at work within the same era or even the same policy documents, especially in the Canadian context of regional variation and provincial control over education. Although generally speaking Canadian education has been heavily influenced by the ideology of liberalism, in its various forms, and has swung back and forth between ideas and methods loosely labelled progressive or child centred and those counterparts labelled traditional (Tittley & Mazurek, 1990), there is also a complexity and fluidity to the story. In order to reflect such fluidity and interconnectedness between and amongst some of the ideologies and trends at work in education, the rest of this chapter has been organized thematically according to the various elements of political culture reflected in the guides, as opposed to chronologically. I grouped findings based on their connections with the prevailing political ideologies in the Canadian context (liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy) as well as the economic paradigm of neoliberalism and the regional element of Western alienation and discontent. These categories then serve as a basis to develop interpretations and conclusions regarding the role of political culture on the discourses of nation

and national identity. The intention is that this structure supports the understanding that reform be examined in light of how it might reflect and resist the prescribed parameters determined by ideology and theory.

### **Social Democracy**

With the exception of the 1970s, there is ample evidence across both history and social studies curriculum throughout the years in question of the influence of the regional political culture of Saskatchewan. Since liberal discourse dominates the social studies curriculum throughout the 1970s, examples of social democratic principles were few. Social Studies 30 (1978) did provide some opportunity to highlight the social democratic preference for a moderated approach to capitalism. In exploring the character of the Canadian economy, it is suggested that students understand that “Canadians have developed a mixed economy” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978, p. 8). Suggested activities around economy do offer some opportunity for questioning of the development of aggressive and harmful economic practices as students examine “foreign ownership, government versus private ownership, influence of multinational and conglomerate corporations, inflation, foreign trade and tariffs, unemployment, labour relations, income policies, government involvement in economy” (p. 23) as economic issues of the day.

The limited influence of social democratic ideas begins to wane in the 1980s as more and more examples of those principles become apparent. Reflective of the regional context of the Prairie farmer and the establishment of the cooperative movement, a number of the social studies guides from 1980 forward have been clearly influenced by social democratic ideas. Content during this timeframe includes a number of specific references to the cooperative economic paradigm as well as more nuanced nods to the values of the collective so entrenched in social democratic ideology. Framed within the context of Western settlement and the farm economy, both Social Studies 8 (1987) and History 30 (1997) pay homage to the history of cooperation in the province. Explored within the topics of labour and interdependence, a suggested site of study in Social Studies 8 (1987) is the pioneer farm and its comparison to modern farm operations. In the context of this suggested activity, students are encouraged “accept the need for cooperation among individuals” as a value objective. History 30 (1997) develops a historical narrative of the settlement of the West and the rise of cooperatives in the context of wider environmental conditions. One suggested activity is for students to investigate the conditions that led to the

development of coops in the West, where settlement patterns, a sparse population and a sense of isolation are key factors.

Both the grade seven and eight guides from 1999 as well as the grade 10 guide from 1992 explicitly include content and objectives that speak to development of the cooperative movement and structure in the province. The grade seven guide in particular pays considerable attention to the concept of cooperation and the development of cooperatives in the province. In one such example, students are to understand and appreciate the importance and historical significance of cooperation to Saskatchewan people and understand that “cooperation is a fundamental component of prairie culture” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1999, p. 85). Once students explore the basic concept of cooperation and its historical connection with the development of agriculture in the province, the next two topic areas detail the specifics of the historical development of the Wheat Pool and the changes experienced by this organization in the context of the expanding global marketplace (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999).

Core values and tenets of social democracy are explored throughout all three levels of history at the secondary level in the 1990s. Primarily underpinned by a perspective that favours the history of ideas, as developed chiefly by the Western European tradition, the history guides focus on cause and effect relationships through time brought about by the changing landscape of beliefs, values, paradigms, and ideologies. Students are introduced to three major ideological traditions of Western society, liberalism, conservatism, and socialism early in History 10 (1992), and then move on to consider the relevancy and merits of these ideological traditions in a variety of contemporary situations. Framed in the context of economic decision-making at the grade 10 level, students are exposed to the earliest developments of workers’ rights in Europe in the 1700s. Students are expected to understand that “a bitter debate developed between those who believed that the marketplace was the best arbiter of social justice, and those who believed that the government ought to intervene on behalf of those [workers] who needed protection” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p.258). Framed within the larger topic of “protection of workers” there appears to be a concerted effort to ensure that students are exposed to some early efforts in Europe to protect and fight for better conditions of workers through content that explores the formation of unions.

Keynesian economics are examined in History 20 (1994) as an example of the various approaches to economic instability of the depression years. Keynesian economics gets a closer examination again at the 30 level (1997) in the context of the rise of the welfare state and reform liberalism. This content then builds to consider the expansion of the welfare state in the Canadian context with examination of the development of a number of government policies during the 1960s, including the Canada Pension Plan, Medicare, Canada Assistance Plan, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

The regional historical political narrative of Western alienation and discontent and the rise of the democratic socialist party (CCF) receive considerable attention in the context of the Canadian Studies focus of History 30 (1997). Farmer discontent and hardships on the Prairies in the beginning to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century are linked in the curriculum guide with social democratic ideals as farmers gave voice and support to a political orientation which perceived government intervention as a mitigating force in the face of growing inequities. While in the national context it is more general social and economic conditions that “gave rise to new political movements that articulated a role for government in securing the well-being of the citizenry...”(Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 343) it was the combined forces of Western alienation, settlement patterns, and a sense of isolation that worked to encourage support for the development of a political party that aimed to take a more active role to ameliorate inequalities on the Prairies. Key understandings revolve around the importance of both farmer and labour voices in the movement and also the “proactive role for government in promoting the well-being of the citizenry (Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 346).

In addition to bringing about widespread support for the ideology of social democracy as manifest in the CCF party, farmer discontent as well as regional disparity resulting from the heartland-hinterland relationship also forged the creation of alternative marketing mechanisms in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by western farmers to help ensure their economic well-being. Such economic alternatives are explored in detail within grade seven and 8 as well as History 30 (1997), all of which outline the history and development of wheat pools and the wheat board in Saskatchewan. As History 30 (1997) moves to consider some of the historic obstacles that the nation had to overcome in its pursuit of unity, regionalism is portrayed as an area of concern that has “presented Canada with numerous challenges” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 218). Concerns over regional disparity continue to be emphasized over

several pages of the curriculum guide with the plight of Western farmers highlighted and those in Quebec and the Maritimes who struggled to secure their interests against the threat of a centralized government. According to the History 30 (1997) course, the two major issues facing Canada in the 1990s were the response to Quebec nationalism and regional disparity, something included in both the overview of the final unit of study as well as the more detailed objectives and content. The overview of the final unit (The Forces of Nationalism) states, “The future of the nation will depend greatly on the response of Canadians to the challenge of Quebec Francophone nationalism and the challenge of regional disparity.” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 404). Furthermore, that the “future of the nation will, in part, depend on how well the interests of the regions are perceived to be addressed by the populations of those regions” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 409).

Social democratic and Keynesian principles also permeate some critique of what would have been at the time (late 1980s and early 1990s) contemporary political policy and decision making. Through its adoption of a slightly critical tone of the Mulroney government, History 30 (1997) is indicative of the social democratic tradition in the province. Termed the “neoconservative” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 503) orientation in the guide, it is a position that “challenged the concept of the interventionist government, placing the blame for the West’s economic woes largely on government” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 503). The guide also draws attention to the economic turn towards the triumph of the marketplace mentality unfolding since the 1980s, under the influence of both the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. Content from the guide explains that “The Canadian political scene did not remain impervious to the political rise of neo-conservatism” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 542). Framed within the objective that students “Know that neo-conservatism which called for a limited role for government and the promotion of economic globalization, did not go unchallenged” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 542), core content goes on to outline the influence of the Reagan and Thatcher governments on the Mulroney government, the reductions in federal contributions to social programming under the Mulroney government as well as Mulroney’s privatization of Crown corporations. The suggested activity attached to understanding the limited role of government and the expansion of privatization is for students to “focus on how the privatization of previously government

operated and funded services would affect themselves and the Canadian community” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 543). Such outcomes provide the potential for students to critique the individualist aims of neoliberal policies.

By 2008, the notion of the importance of collective wellbeing is much more obvious. A number of the philosophical underpinnings of the guides, which would appear across all curriculum guides produced in and after 2008 in the province, are clearly influenced by the collectivist tradition. Of the three Broad Areas of Learning, one is building a sense of self and community. This aim of community building is framed by a focus on exploring diverse perspectives to enable students to live in a pluralistic society. In addition to the Broad Areas of Learning, a number of the cross curricular competencies speak to the importance of the collective, as well. Social responsibility, for instance, begins with the individual in the sense that individuals must build the self-esteem and sense of belonging which then translates into a belief that “one can contribute to collective wellbeing and make a positive difference” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 5). This sense of belonging, which is cultivated through a sense of connectedness with others, enables students to “make choices that are motivated by concern for the collective wellbeing” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008, p. 5). The renewed framework for social studies education in the K-12 years also reflects a new emphasis on collective wellbeing, cooperation and interdependence. Of the four goals that guide all outcomes for social studies K-12, two are explicitly informed by notions of collective existence: interactions and interdependence and dynamic relationships. The individualistic orientation of the conception of citizenship, which had been a real focal point throughout the 1980s and 1990s, undergoes considerable restructuring in the context of the renewed focus on the collective wellbeing of society in the newest curricular renewals of 2008. Here, citizenship is conceived in more service oriented ways as “the ability and willingness to contribute to collective wellbeing through personal and collective decisions and actions” (Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008, p. 3). It is an orientation and approach to citizenship that clearly values the collectivist tradition of social democratic ideology.

### **Liberalism and Neoliberalism**

The 1970s guides are decidedly individualistic in nature focusing explicitly on the development of man in his various environments. Social Studies 9 (1971) for instance includes



the statement, which is maintained throughout the 1970s, that social studies is the “study of man in time and place” and the aim of this course in particular is “to enable him [sic] for his [sic] lifetime to be a student of man” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 9, 1971, p. 1). This is a sentiment that continues into Social Studies 10 (1972) where the emphasis of the program is “on the individual and how he [sic] lives in, and reacts to, his [sic] ever expanding and constantly changing environment” (p. 1). Course content is subsequently broken down into three sections that explicitly focus on the individual in a variety of contexts: “Man: A Focus on Himself, Man and His Community and Man in His World” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 10, 1972, p. 1). Even where the community, societal, or cultural patterns or structures are considered throughout the 1970s, the focus is tempered by and framed within a tie back to the individual. For instance, where students consider the structure and organization of feudal society in Social Studies 10 (1972) the content revolves around the impact of that structural organization on the individual. Additionally, Social Studies 20 (1973) defines culture as “the sum total of all that influences man [sic]” (p. 1). The study of culture is also framed in terms of individual growth and knowledge as it is the study of culture that will lead to “a greater understanding of his [sic] own culture” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 2). The only real representations of the collective that are not framed in liberal terms are those from Social Studies 30 (1978) in the context of exploring the Canadian identity. As such, the only real instances where the collective is central is to serve the larger project of nation building.

This focus on the individual in society continues into curriculum produced throughout the 1980s. The Social Studies 7 (1988) guide was the second to emerge from the comprehensive curriculum development process undertaken by Saskatchewan Education throughout the 1980s. The renewed program of K-12 social studies was conceived as a course of studies “based on the needs and interests of Saskatchewan students” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. v). Functioning within the broader climate of skills and objectives based curriculum, the 1980s social studies guides structured learning objectives in terms of individual skills and understandings students must reach. The most pronounced evidence for the liberal discourse through guides produced in the 1980s comes in the context of the grade eight course of study. Titled “The Individual in Society”, the course focuses on civics type content that explores the roles that individuals have in societies and the factors that influence participation in society.

Students explore culture, self, roles, interdependence, and citizenship in forming their understanding of the place individuals hold within their communities and the wider society.

The liberal discourse is most evident in the 1990s within the context of the exploration of rights and freedoms, especially at the secondary level. At a foundational, philosophical level, individual freedoms form the basis of individual rights in the Canadian context. These individual rights then provide the foundation for teaching values in both social studies and history curriculum of the 1990s. Included within all the guides from the decade, the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom is outlined using three different perspectives. The first is the view that in a pluralistic society there are no set values and so social studies should be value free. Second is the clarification process where students are encouraged to come to their own conclusions with respect to issues of values. Finally, there is the third and final view that puts forth the notion that there is some basic consensus on fundamental moral and ethical values and that these values can be taught in a meaningful way (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992). Curriculum guides from the 1990s favour the third perspective and outline the values of “human dignity, basic rights and responsibilities as defined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, [and] respect of and tolerance for individual differences” as fundamental to Canadian society (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 17).

In History 10 (1992), students are to understand that freedom is a “significant value in Canadian society...[including] freedom to live one’s life according to the dictates of one’s conscience” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 11). The importance and value of the individual can also be seen in the representation of historical events and processes as well. The treatment of changes to French society brought about by the Revolution completely ignore the core value of the fraternity of brotherhood that the movement embodied. Instead History 10 (1992) curriculum focuses on French society as it attempted “to move from an absolutist political organization to one based on principles of equality and liberty” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 27). Such commentary again highlights the prevalence of liberal notions of individual rights and freedoms as paramount when compared to a relational value like fraternity.

Neoliberal orientations are most evident in the social studies curricular renewals of the late 1980s and 1990s. Social Studies 7 (1988) encourages students to: “Value Saskatchewan as a storehouse of resources” and “value Canada as a storehouse of resources” (Saskatchewan

Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 23). Together, such discourse supports a common construction that persists into modern Canadian narratives about economy and place, one that represents Canada as a limitless haven for resource extraction and development; Canada and the Canadian people just need to tap into natural resources and then can benefit from this endless supply. It is a representation that supports extraction and production without concern for the long-term effects on environment and communities, and also one that conceals the fact that these are finite, non-renewable resources.

This exploration of natural resources then builds into content focused on the distribution of such resources. Following an objective that states simply that “resources are not distributed evenly” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 23) are subsequent objectives that deal with population distribution and its relationship with resources availability and production. Although not explicitly stated in the objectives, this type of sequencing leads to the implication that distribution of resources is linked with population distribution and not with power.

Reflecting the influence of economic constructions of people, processes and the natural world, one of the goals included within a series of statements for K-12 social studies education in the province is the point that students learn to “*function effectively* within their local and national society which is enmeshed in an interdependent world” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 3; emphasis added). This focus on interdependence also hints at the promotion of the positive effects of globalization often promulgated by neoliberal discourses. In Social Studies 7 (1988) globalization is represented as a positive factor in improving the standard of living as well as an inevitable progression of human societies: “appreciate that linkage systems are critical to the development of human potential” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 60). Similar sentiments are articulated in History 30 (1997) where globalization and its processes are represented as a natural force that countries need to adjust to in order to compete in the international arena. This idea is reiterated further along in the guide where the focus is on articulating the importance of predication in the global marketplace as essential to economic viability at home.

Problems of wealth distribution are covered in the international context by History 20 (1994) and the point is made that many developing countries are unable to pay even the interest on their loans from international organization such as the World Bank. The neoliberal

perspective is present in the omission of the structures that work to produce such circumstances for developing nations. There is no mention of International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, structural adjustment programs, the impact of free trade agreements on developing economies, or local business infrastructure. In similar fashion, Social Studies 20 (1994) includes an overview of the issue of wealth distribution and the widening of the global impact gap. Students even learn that this is the result of a few making much more at the expense of others in society, but fails to include any content on the causes of this current situation or how it might be ameliorated. Compounding this neoliberal approach is the fact that a few pages later in the same guide, multi and transnational corporations are depicted as part of progress as these entities work to make important links between individuals and societies. Social Studies 30 (1997) takes much the same approach as it includes content around the privatization model and the push back that existed in the 1980s around government intervention but does so without questioning the validity of such a model and also within the larger context of promoting competition in terms of its positive impact on efficiency and competition as a core component of the Canadian worldview.

### **Conservatism and Neo-Conservatism**

The Tory touch that Horowitz (1966) argues is integral to the Canadian ideological landscape, appears throughout social studies curriculum during the period under examination. The most evident examples of the conservative influence come in the representations of social stratification. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1990s, questions of class and social hierarchy are often naturalized.

Social Studies 9 (1971) represents both class and social hierarchy as naturally occurring elements of society. Speaking to the idea of economic stratification in early societies, Social Studies 9 (1971) includes the statement that “rich and strong individuals enjoyed more rights and privileges than did the poor and weak” (p. 23). The idea of social hierarchy as represented in History 10 (1992) is certainly reflective of the conservative tendency to accept and support this type of societal organization. The concept itself rests on the idea that certain people have “special abilities and responsibilities ...which in turn means that they should have special powers and privileges...” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History, 1992, p. 124) The topic of class is also naturalized as opposed to problematized in this same curriculum guide. Students are to “know that societies have organized their members into a hierarchy in which certain people are able to control more resources, organizations and or people than others” (Saskatchewan

Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 128). Hierarchy is further entrenched and naturalized by these guides and takes one step further by weaving in the notion of meritocracy as students are to “know that a hierarchy based on merit is legitimate” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 322). Despite articulations of farmer advocacy in the western regional context that were especially pronounced in History 30 (1997), History 20 (1994) tempers this activist fervor with the point that desire for greater decision making powers within society “has the potential to contribute to both political and social instability” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 503). Not only does this guide represent these calls for increased rights as problematic, there is also the suggestion that these calls for increased participation are perceived as opposed to experienced: “[there are people] who *feel* that they have had limited access to the decision-making processes that affect their lives” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 504; emphasis added). The use of the word “feel” implies that the situation is subject to interpretation and perhaps even based more in perception than reality.

These conservative notions of the allure of tradition and stability are complemented by equally conservative notions of citizenship. Such articulations of citizenship aim to preserve the status quo and revolve around the importance of understanding one’s role and place within society as understood through the civic duties of citizenship. The overall impression is that good citizens are those who know the structures and procedures of their government and have a responsibility to know this information. All of this information and description of civic activities is presented without any indication of questioning or critiquing current structures or procedures. Social Studies 8 (1987) even seeks to define citizenship in relation to understanding and upholding current structures and processes: “[citizenship is] the exercising of rights, privileges and responsibilities as a member of the community” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1987, p. 6). Such emphasis on duty and responsibility reflect the most conservative approaches to citizenship that seek, above all else, to cultivate a citizenry that preserves tradition. This concentration on civic duty and responsible citizenship does wane to some extent within the renewals that occurred in the 1990s, but what remains constant is the focus on citizenship as an individual pursuit. By 1999, the aim of K-12 social studies is to “graduate students who have a sense of themselves as active participants in and citizens of an interdependent world” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 3).

Statement is much more in line with progressive notions of citizenship that place value on active participation rather than fulfilling civic duty and responsibility.

### **Cross-currents: The Intersection of Liberalism, Conservatism, and Social Democracy**

In addition to pinpointing explicit reflections of the three dominant political ideologies of the Canadian landscape, an important finding through this analysis has been the extent to which these social studies guides elucidate the complexity and nuanced interplay of those ideologies within the same period. Although the 1970s guides were largely influenced by and reflective of the dominance of liberal discourse in Canadian education, social studies from the 1980s, 1990s and now 2000s is indicative of the extent to which all three ideologies can work to inform a number of guides and outcomes within the same era and even within the same document.

As evidenced in the discussion of social democratic influences on the curriculum, there are a good number of examples that speak to the prevalence of the regional influence of the cooperative and collective mentality. While this may be the case, there are also a good number of examples that demonstrate the tempering of this influence by placing it within the context of individualistic and capitalistic pursuits. Social Studies 7 (1988), for instance, highlights the importance of interdependence within societies but does so within the context of its contribution to the development of “human potential.” In similar fashion, the 1999 grade eight Social Studies guide places the appeal and advantages of the cooperative framework within the wider framework of individual needs. Directly following an objective that relates to the cooperative model of interdependence, students learn that individual needs are met through interdependent relationships. Again tempering the cooperative movement with its individualistic merits, Social Studies 10 (1992) speaks to the cooperative efforts of farmers, but also indicates that “each farmer was an independent entrepreneur who attempted to make the best choices about things like efficiency and investment” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 10, p. 218). At the 30 level, in the context of economic development, the social democratic principles of cooperation and social welfare are identified as integral to “the creation of a good life” but are directly followed by the idea that Canadians also accept the hallmark neoliberal view that “people are responsible for looking out for their own well-being” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 211). Here, the value of cooperation is immediately tempered with the idea that we are each responsible for our own success or failure.

This interplay between the tenets of liberalism and social democracy is again evident in the 1990s history curriculum guides through sections that outline the values objectives for the course. A strong current that runs through each of the 1990s guides is the question of individual interests versus the wellbeing of the collective. Common to this theme is the exploration of the right balance between individual freedoms and the continued wellbeing of communities. A foundational objective within History 20 (1994) is for students to understand that societies must work towards a balance between individual and collective rights. Although not required content, the course also includes objectives that deal with the acceptance of inequality within classical liberalism. It is a suggested activity for students to consider the effects of classical liberalism on educational opportunities, health, working conditions and the struggle for gender equality (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 331). Later on in this course, the exploration of four different paradigms of development in contemporary times culminates in a suggestion for students to consider which “paradigm would best fulfill three personal goals and ensure the future well-being of their society?” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 561). Such a weighing clearly exhibits the interplay of social democracy on one hand and liberalism on the other. In another instance included in the exploration of Soviet and Eastern European shifts to democracy, it is suggested to “have students prepare a short paper addressing the following issues: the importance of order within a society; the importance of freedom within a society; the need for a balance between order and freedom within a society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 435). Here the focus is on the conservative orientation to place value on the preservation of order and stability, weighed against the value of individual freedoms so central to liberalism.

Adding more weight to this ideological tug of war is the fact that both history and social studies guides of the 1990s include undertones as well as explicit examples of not only liberal and social democratic principles but also conservative and neoliberal orientations too. Where there is evidence of neoliberal principles, these points are countered to some extent by evidence of a critical tone in relation to neoliberal policies. Of the various economic development models that students explore in Social Studies 30 (1997), the community development model characterized by its cooperative and collective approach to the improvement of standards of living for all is included. The guide at one point articulates some concrete criticism for the privatization model through the statement that “an economic system which makes its decisions

solely on the basis of production efficiency without consulting people about their lives is marginalizing them” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 246).

The most recent curricular renewals also demonstrate the difficulties involved in characterizing curriculum according to a singular overarching ideology. Despite attempts to frame the newest renewals (2008) in collectivist, social justice oriented aims, the outcomes contained within the guides provide little opportunity to pursue such goals. In the context of citizenship goals in particular it is easy to see the influence of both conservative as well as more collectivist, social justice oriented notions of citizenship. While the introductory philosophical orientations for the goals of citizenship clearly reflect a desire for students to value the communities they inhabit and act to promote collective wellbeing, the exploration of citizenship in the Social Studies 8 guide contains allusions to the more traditionally oriented goal of responsibility. Citizenship is framed and defined as “responsible,” but the same outcome also refers to “civil disobedience” as a potential avenue to getting involved in the Canadian political system (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008, p. 23).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Although there is evidence and presence of the development and principles of social democracy, the above examples also illustrate the extent to which it is a diluted form of social democracy that is more reflective of liberal notions of individualism and individual ambition. The changing nature of social needs and public demands, at both the national and regional level, make it difficult to discern the extent to which curricular change or consistency can be explained by its adherence to one ideology. The social studies documents in question reveal a number of instances where calls for community based needs are accompanied within the same document, page and even outcome, by a liberal approach. Social studies in the province of Saskatchewan during the latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st are reflective of the combination of forces that work together to shape curriculum. In the national Canadian context this means there is evidence of an interplay of the three dominant ideological traditions of liberalism, social democracy, and conservatism. At the same time that there has been, and continues to be, a dominant liberal tradition in Canadian education, focused on the rights of the individual in society, there is ample evidence of the history of social democracy interlaced throughout the guides. Taken in the narrow context of the shifting political climate of



Saskatchewan since the 1980s under the influence of neoliberal policies, much of the development from the 1990s is indicative of McGrane's argument for a "crowding of centre."<sup>13</sup>, especially, in the valuing of economic competition for its role in fuelling efficiency and higher profits and the positive impacts of globalization.

Taken in the wider context of the discourses of nation represented in such a mix of ideological traditions, Saskatchewan social studies constructs a narrative of regional socio-political development within the wider context of the pursuit of a unified, but plural nation. Regional discontent, alienation, and a unique political culture of cooperation and the collectivist tradition are focal points throughout the years, but these themes are also accompanied, especially in the history and social studies 30 level courses, by concern over the challenges facing the Canadian nation. It is key to recall that, according to the perspective represented in History 30 (1997), one of the most important challenges facing the Canadian nation is regional disparity. There is reflected in the guides representation of Canada as reliant on the cooperation from and appreciation of all of the regions of Canada, remnants no doubt of Saskatchewan farmers' concerns and their fight for a voice in politics of early Saskatchewan farmers.

If the most recent (2008) renewals are any indication of the focus that may form the foundation for curricular renewals at the secondary level, there is promise that the history and values of the Saskatchewan brand of social democracy, at the very least its value of the collective, will be honoured. Even more hopeful, as this is currently missing from the most recent curriculum renewals, is the addition of the potential for meaningful and effectual change at the hands of pressure from grassroots organizations and the collective voice, something a focus on regional political history in the context of Saskatchewan could certainly provide.

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<sup>13</sup> *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre* provides in-depth insight and examination of this current trend in Saskatchewan politics.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Discourses of Women and Gender**

#### **Contributions Approaches and Non-Sexism in Social Studies Curriculum**

Even though Saskatchewan regional political culture reflects the progressively oriented values espoused by social democracy, there is also a history of deeply entrenched patriarchy in the province; a point that adds a layer of regional influence into the study of the curricular representations of gender in the province. In the same way that Saskatchewan's political ties to social democracy are linked with its long history of rural and farm communities, the dominance of patriarchal structures and values are linked with the continued importance of farming in the province (Warnock, 2004). Despite state sponsored aims to limit the official participation of women in the political and economic spheres, women's integral roles in both the settlement and development of the West are undeniable. From the time of settlement right up to present times, the work of women in the province has remained integral to the stories we tell about not only Western development, but also Canadian development. In addition to a history of entrenched patriarchal values, Saskatchewan's history is characterized by the strong under current of women's roles in both the private and public spheres. From the earliest days of settlement, Prairie women have always lobbied for public measures and reforms that would improve the lives of women and children (Langford & Carter, 2017). Taken in the narrower context of the field of education and curricular reform, Saskatchewan approaches to gender issues have also been strongly influenced by broad sweeping socio-political trends and educational research and practice.

As social unrest and concern over equality rights proliferated during the 1970s, social studies curriculum in Canada shifted to reflect those concerns and became increasingly focused on emphasizing both the moral and social issues of the day. Part of these growing concerns around marginalization and discrimination was the continued inequality between men and women in contemporary society. While second wave feminist scholars and their research pointed to the marginalization and silencing of women's voices in the educational arena, curricular reform unfolded and attempted to remedy these absences through the inclusion of women and their stories within social studies and history courses. Courses like Women's Studies and Black Studies began to emerge and reflect the trend of questioning institutions and authority in renewed social studies curriculum during the 1970s and early 1980s (van Manen and Parsons, 1983). At

the University of Saskatchewan courses in women's studies were ushered in by Irene Poelzer. Beginning her teaching at the University in 1970, Poelzer developed a six credit course titled "Women in Education" that focused on examining knowledge and society from women's perspectives. The first of its kind in Canadian Colleges or Faculties of Education, the course was initially met with some resistance and was maintained on the margins for several years. Fortunately, Poelzer gained a reputation for innovative teaching and the course continued to draw curious students resulting in its ultimate success (Hallman and Lathrop, 2006). Within this discussion of the life of Irene Poelzer, Hallman and Lathrop (2006) remind the reader of the general dominance of men in the university setting at the time. Despite the huge expansion of universities that occurred in the 1960s, the year that Poelzer began her teaching career at the University (1970) only 13% of professors across the country were women.

Despite the fact that these early attempts to include women where they had been previously invisible represent an important first step in the process of curricular reform to remedy harmful and discriminatory practices, the disappointing reality is that much research to date (Bernard-Powers, 2001; Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018; Guppy and Luongo, 2015; Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco & Woysner, 2007; Powers, 1995; Schmeichel, 2011) suggests that progress towards gender equity in social studies curriculum since the 1970s has been minor. The reality is that the current climate of conservative curricular reform, that has existed since the mid to late 1980s, is dominated by neoliberal policies that emphasize individual merit and work to disguise structural inequities in society. In addition, the recent emphasis on "overachieving girls" and "underachieving boys" has meant that the focus on gender issues as they pertain to women and girls' systematic inequality has fallen, for the most part, by the wayside.

This chapter is focused on exploring representations of women in Saskatchewan social studies curriculum at the middle and secondary grade levels from 1970 to the most recent curricular renewals beginning in 2008. In order to situate and contextualize analysis of women's stories in social studies curriculum in the province, I will begin by providing a brief sketch of second wave feminism in the limited context of education. From here, I will outline some major feminist orientations that serve as a basis for interpreting the favoured approach to representations of gender and women's history found within the curriculum documents. Analysis and interpretation of the curriculum documents leads to the conclusion that issues of gender in middle years and secondary level social studies curriculum in the province of

Saskatchewan have at worst reinforced and reinscribed traditional, harmful notions of gender and women's history, and at best include women in ways that do not disrupt the hegemonic dominance of constructed gender expectations and norms. The study of gender, as a socially constructed concept that represents one of the major ways that people organize their lives (Lorber, 2005), is essential to social studies. Its function as a structural determinant for both roles and appropriate behaviours means that gender shapes many of the processes and practices of both yesterday and today's major sectors, including family, work, politics, economics, law, education, medicine, military, religion, and cultures (Lorber, 2005). If a major purpose of social studies is the goal of understanding the organization of societies, both past and present, at home and abroad, students must be exposed to how gender works in conjunction with other power systems, like race and class for instance, to privilege some groups while disadvantaging others. As such, both current<sup>14</sup> and future curricular renewals must provide both gender and women's history a central place in social studies.

### **Women's History on the Prairies**

Until more recent research and publications, much of the historiography dealing with the Canadian Prairies has paid limited attention to women and their work (Kubik & Marchildon, 2015). Either completely invisible from the narrative or added as an afterthought to the overarching androcentric narrative, Prairie women and their work was, up until the 1980s and 1990s, largely hidden from official historical narratives. Despite these historic omissions, what becomes clear from the emerging historical record focused on Prairie women is that their work was invaluable to settlement and the development of the agricultural wheat economy in the West (Kubik & Marchildon, 2015; Rollings-Magnusson, 2015; Wiebe, 2017). Indeed, settlement and development of the West could not have happened without the hard work of women, and their children, as homesteaders and labourers. Not only were women and their work central to the success of the family farm, women also took on important roles in the paid labour force. Women played important roles and made invaluable contributions through their work in fields like nursing, journalism, teaching, political activism, and union organizing (Kubik & Marchildon, 2015).

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<sup>14</sup> The process of curricular renewal is currently underway for secondary social studies guides.

The nature of Prairie women's contributions in the earliest days of settlement and development unfolded in the face of state efforts to limit women's independence and their share in the growing agricultural economy. Rollings-Magnusson (2015) argues that a common thread which runs through Saskatchewan legislation that affected women's rights was the assertion and maintenance of male dominance and the family structure. Legislation prevented women from participation in political life, restricted shares in matrimonial property, and limited women's control over their own reproductive lives. Intended essentially to ensure that women remained dependent on men and fulfilled their roles as mothers and wives, early legislation in Saskatchewan, as was the case elsewhere, ensured that independence was hard to attain for many women. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872,<sup>15</sup> for instance, was willfully crafted so as to prevent single<sup>16</sup> women from acquiring homestead property. Intentionally designed to encourage women interested in the work of farming to find a husband as opposed to settling on their own, women could only acquire land through the Act in instances where she could meet the government criterion as 'head of the household' (Rollings-Magnusson, 2014). It was not until 1930 in Alberta that homesteading laws changed to allow single women to obtain homesteads. Although a significant shift in policy, in practical terms the change was diminished by the fact that by 1930 much viable land for suitable for homesteading had already been distributed. Manitoba and Saskatchewan made similar changes to their homesteading laws but decided that these lands would have to be purchased by women. In this case women were able to access homesteading lands but did not receive the same opportunities to obtain 'free' lands as did their male counterparts (Rollings-Magnusson, 2014).

The eventual changes to numerous discriminatory laws, including the homesteading laws, came about gradually and after years of consistent lobbying and agitation from women, their organizations, and their supporters (Rollings-Magnusson, 2015). In spite of state maintained patriarchal structures, women made huge, often unrecognized, contributions to the success of the family farm (Kubik & Marchildon, 2015) and were able to secure title to homestead lands in their own right (Rollings-Magnusson, 2014). Women's labour, both on the family farm as well as in the paid labour force, became, and continues to be, invaluable to social and economic

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<sup>15</sup> The Dominion Lands Act was the federal legislation that laid the groundwork for land development in the West. The Act allowed for lands in Western Canada to be granted to individuals, companies, and municipalities. This is also the piece of legislation that set aside reserve lands for First Nations peoples in the West.

<sup>16</sup> Women who had never been married and had no children.

development of the Prairies. The availability of women and children as cheap sources of labour in the early agricultural development of the province made a significant difference in the ability of farms to support settlers and develop the commodities that were required for the development of an agricultural economy (Rollings-Magnusson, 2015) intended to feed industrial manufacturing and production in the east.

In the narrower public sphere of politics, Prairie women have a long and rich history of activism. Some of the earliest efforts at securing equal political rights, namely, the right to vote, have strong ties to prairie women's activism. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Prairie women lobbied successfully for both the right to vote, as well the right to be recognized as "persons" under the law. Under mounting pressure from activists lobbying for equal political rights, Saskatchewan became the second province in Canada to legislate electoral equality between men and women. It was also in that same year, 1919, that Sarah Ramsland became Saskatchewan's first female MLA (de Clercy, 2015). Some ten years later, Prairie women activists would secure another milestone in political rights through their legal victory in the Persons Case. Provoked by five Prairie activists, the 1929 Persons Act had important implications for women farmers with respect to the property ownership rights. Although the case itself focused on the right for women to serve as Senators, the case had important implications for wider legal rights of women, including property rights. Once recognized as persons in their own right under the highest law in the land, the British North America Act, the denial of rights based on narrow interpretation of the law became increasingly difficult.

Despite some of these important reforms and historic victories for women's rights, including changes to matrimonial property rights that worked to recognize the invaluable work of Prairie women, it is also important to note the challenges that persist when it comes to the attainment of gender equity. In the more recent past, for instance, important changes to matrimonial laws during the 1970s did make headway in terms of granting women equal rights to property and land ownership, but it was not until the 1990s that official agricultural statistics began to reflect that women on family farms were indeed farmers because women could now list their names in response to the "Farmer Operator" question (Wiebe, 2017). Similar challenges can also be noted in the political sphere. Despite the fact that first female MLA was elected in the province in 1919, once Ramsland lost her seat in 1925, there would not be another female MLA in the province until 1943 (de Clercy, 2015). This gap in female representation meant that

entry for women into key legislative positions would be delayed for many more decades afterwards. While female representation has climbed since that drought, the playing field is still heavily skewed in favour of men. As of 2019, only 15 of 61 Saskatchewan MLAs are female, comprising approximately 24 percent of the total representation. At the municipal level female representation is lower still, with just 13 percent of mayors across the province identified as women (Sullivan, 2019).

### **A Very Brief History of Feminism in Education**

Scholars exploring the history of feminism in the North American context point to the development of three waves of feminism. Despite more recent critiques of the ‘wave’ metaphor to explain and analyze various feminist movements, it remains a widely used conceptual framework used in understanding the history of feminism, especially with respect to its development in the United States (Laughlin et.al., 2010). Although structuring its development over time into these three broad chronological categories reflects an oversimplification of the development of theories and approaches that fit under the umbrella of feminism, or feminisms as a survey of secondary literature surely suggests, it does provide a useful starting point for an overview of feminism and education and how those developments have perhaps influenced the representations of women in curriculum. While such a broad survey of the development of theories and approaches to feminisms will miss some of the nuance and complexity of the social, political, ideological, and epistemological orientations of the various branches of feminisms, the space and time required to consider such an extensive analysis are unsuitable to the constraints of this one chapter. The brief historical context which follows provides the base from which to consider feminist influences in curricular reform as well as provides the reader with a simple understanding of the development of feminism and its influence on educational reform.

First wave feminism is a term to describe the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century feminists united by their efforts to secure political and legal rights for women. Drawing on liberal political philosophy and its focus on equal rights under the law, it is characterised by a somewhat limited focus on the issue of equal access to legal rights for women (i.e., suffrage and property and capital rights) and draws on a central tenet of liberal political philosophy of equality under the law. Even though this first wave is generally described in terms of its focus on a basic belief in

equity and equality of opportunity, there were various branches that emerged at the time. Despite a united belief in the principles of equity, feminists drawing on Socialist Marxist ideological orientations for instance were particularly concerned with working class women and their involvement in class struggle and socialist revolution (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005). Although first wave feminism is generally limited to the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century women and their success in bringing about important reforms with respect to political and legal rights, this does not imply that first wave feminism is a relic of the past. The diverse interventions of those earliest modern feminists<sup>17</sup> from the 19<sup>th</sup> century continue to inspire contemporary feminist movements and ideas (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005).

Second wave feminism is generally characterized by its increasingly fragmented perspectives, with differences in viewpoints about the causes of inequality between men and women and what the best solutions to such inequities could be (Lorber, 2005). The term is usually employed in reference to the radical feminism of women's liberation movements that gained momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movements during this time worked to broaden the notion of equality in its re-examination of men's and women's social roles (Laughlin et.al, 2010). While some second wave feminist scholars and educators took a more structural and conflictual approach, emphasizing the fact that educational institutions and education as a field had contributed to the social reproduction of an exploitative education system and were therefore a difficult tool to employ in the pursuit of gender equity, others argued for a liberal, individualized account that focused on adjusting an out of balance, physically based, binary relationship (Leonard, 2006). Taking a slightly different approach still, second wave radical and cultural feminists focused on the development and inclusion of a 'different but equal' framework that acknowledges women's distinct but equally valid ways of knowing and being (Coulter, 1996). Despite the increasingly abstract and fragmented nature of these movements, second wave feminist theories and movements were united in their belief that women could collectively empower one another (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005). Sometimes criticized for its abstract and highly theoretical developments, second wave feminist ideas and approaches are strongly

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<sup>17</sup> Early evidence of feminist ideas can be traced back much earlier than the first wave feminist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Plato, in his *Republic* for instance speaks to the equal capacities of women to govern and defend Greece and 15<sup>th</sup> century female writer Christine de Pizan protested misogyny and the oppressive limitations imposed on women in Medieval Europe.



affiliated with academia. As such, it was the work of second wave feminists that generated an explosion of research and teaching of women's issues beginning in the 1970s (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005). Faced with increasing criticism that second wave feminist goals had been asserted by privileged white, heterosexual women, the period of second wave feminism is usually depicted as coming to an end in the 1980s (Laughlin et.al, 2010).

More contemporary developments in feminist theory and activism are sometimes termed third wave feminism. Motivated by the desire to develop theories and approaches that honour the diversity of experience for women and that work to deconstruct categorical ways of thinking, third wave feminists embrace ambiguity. Reflecting developments that recognize the fluidity and complexity of gender and sexuality at play in contemporary society, these third wave feminist approaches are united by their critique of orthodox conceptions of gender, sex, and sexuality arguing instead that there are many sexes, sexualities and genders and as such, many ways to express the constructions of masculinity and femininity (Lorber, 2005). Although feminism and feminist scholarship represents a diverse and complex collection of approaches and orientations on questions of gender, there are some common threads to unite the various approaches and theories. One is that as a political movement, all are united in their goal to make women and men more equal politically, socially, culturally, and economically. Another important unifying point is the recognition that even though we speak of gender equality, as opposed to women's equality, it is usually women who are disadvantaged when compared to similarly situated men; a point evidenced by the continued existence of the gender pay gap, the obstacles women face to employment advancement, and their disproportionate share of both housework and childcare (Lorber, 2005).

Although activism with respect to schooling lagged behind concerns over demands for equal rights to employment, contraception, abortion and the fight to get politicians to take women's issues seriously, by the mid 1970s, second wave feminist work on education had experienced steady progress (Leonard, 2006). Fuelled by feminist activism and societal concerns over equality of the sexes in Canada, the federal government launched an inquiry into the place of women in Canadian society in the late 1960s. Once the inquiry published its final report, education was included as one of nine public policy areas "particularly germane to the status of women" (Final Report: Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1970 as cited in Coulter, 1996). The Commission criticized curriculum across the country for its lack of inclusion of

women in both curriculum and curricular materials (Fine-Meyer, 2013). Sex-stereotyping, lack of role models, and inadequate career counseling were all cited in the report as contributing factors for inequality (Coulter, 1996). Traditional, androcentric history courses in particular had little room for women's voices and stories because of their narrow focus on major political and economic events. It wasn't until feminists started drawing attention to the absence of women in curriculum and curricular resources that women began to be included in any way whatsoever. Women had been very rarely included in histories that idolized the public successes of elite men a historical narrative that reflected an interpretation of events that served as a kind of self-reflection for the small group of intellectual male elites who had produced it (Fine-Meyer, 2013). The report recommended that both provincial and territorial educational programming adopt textbooks that portrayed women in diverse roles and occupations. As a result of these recommendations, both provincial and territorial governments allocated funds for the acquisition and development of curricular materials that included and reflected the lives of women (Fine-Meyer, 2013).

The Status of Women Commission (1970), and the conclusions that the commissioners offered were significant in developing the approach to gender equity that ultimately produced similar policy initiatives across the country. The type of analysis offered by the report focused on highlighting the absence of women and suggested the elimination of stereotypical, sexist language. Along with complimentary evidence that curriculum and resources were biased and/or sexist, the reports findings spurred the first phase of curricular reform described as non-sexist and best characterized by an add and stir approach (Coulter, 1996).

Stressing both the continuing state of inequities in education faced by girls as well as challenging so called "natural" interests of girls (Leonard, 2006), the rise and momentum of the second wave feminist movement resulted in an optimistic outlook concerning the future of women's history and issues of gender in the educational arena. Described by Leonard (2006) as an exciting time in both the United States and the United Kingdom, feminist activists in the 1970s and 1980s formed groups that served to support women, raise awareness, and foster the growth of research studies related to issues of gender. Between 1971 and 1991, women's studies proliferated at universities (Powers, 1995), in turn sparking the development of women's studies and women's history courses in public schools (Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018).

United by the overarching goal of equality between men and women, the second wave feminist movement shed particular light on the ways in which women had been disadvantaged in the educational arena (Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018). Beginning in the 1970s, a number of provinces and territories started to develop gender equity policies and curricular materials and lesson plans aimed at remedying issues of inclusion and stereotyping. Central to this work was the identification and elimination of stereotypical and sexist representations in favour of more inclusive gender content (Bernard-Powers, 2001). In a similar pattern to that which had unfolded with respect to representations of race and ethnicity, the first wave of feminist influence on curriculum forced curriculum makers to address the question of omission. Curriculum makers responded to the question of ‘where are the women?’ by adding women into the standard story (Noddings, 2001). The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation for instance developed a number of kits and curricular packages with titles like “Women in the Community” and “Famous Canadian Women” (Coulter, 1996).

This concern for gender equity in education proliferated during the 1980s as provinces and territories across Canada started paying significant attention to gender issues during that decade (Anderson, 2018). Curricular reform into the 1980s maintained the same focus on the elimination of discriminatory and exclusive language and the inclusion of women into curriculum and curricular materials. It was during this era that Saskatchewan developed its own direction with respect to gender equity in education. Included within the larger recommendations that came from the work of the Curriculum and Instruction Review Committee, the Ministry of Education released a guiding document titled *Gender Equity: Policy Guidelines for Implementation* in 1991. Reflective of the broad concerns over non-stereotypical representations and ensuring equitable opportunities for female students through the elimination of gender bias, the guiding principles of the document were condensed and included as part of the core curriculum in each guide produced throughout the 1990s. In Ontario, curriculum was revised to include women and get rid of discriminatory language, but the learning objectives and resources used remained androcentric (Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018). Despite the recognition of either a complete omission or harmful representations of women in curriculum and curricular materials and the rich development by feminist scholars of women’s studies and women’s history, the curricular reform that took place from the 1970s and 1980s continued to

marginalize women's voices in history courses because their primary approach was simply "adding" women to the existing historical narrative (Fine-Meyer, 2013).

The piecemeal, incremental changes undertaken in curriculum reform during the 1970s and early 1980s waned under the influence of political conservatism and neoliberal policies that took hold in wider society. By the mid 1980s, the socio-political climate had become quietly opposed and, at times, outright hostile to issues of gender equity and women's rights (Bernard-Powers, 2011). According to Guppy and Luongo (2015), the socio-political climate of the 1980s resulted in a number of reversals and setbacks in many broad equity policy dimensions where progress had already been made. During the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and into the first of the 21<sup>st</sup>, gender equity setbacks are part and parcel of an era where we have seen the income gap between the rich and poor increase immensely, anti-foreigner sentiments rise, and ethnic, racial and ancestral tensions intensified. Language shifts that emphasize choice and opportunity over equality have resulted in policy initiatives increasingly tied to market incomes as opposed to basic welfare needs. Such a shift in policy focus has particularly negative consequences for women in part because women already typically earn less than men and also because opportunity usually only benefits those who are already in positions of power (Guppy and Luongo, 2015).

In the wake of an educational paradigm shift influenced by the growing anti-feminist backlash, characterized by cuts to progressively oriented equity programming and a return in curriculum to the "basics", gender issues have become less evident in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bernard-Powers, 2001; Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018; Leonard, 2006). This contemporary climate is also where we find more narrow displays of activism in reaction to persistent concerns such as sexual violence and reproductive rights. Critical educational reform, including a focus on gender issues, has been undermined and subsequently overtaken by political conservatism in educational reform. In this context, there has been a move away from critically oriented curricular reform in favour of accountability and achievement. Teacher's daily lives and the lessons that they deliver have become increasingly controlled, curriculum and resources have become standardized and centralized, and the paramount aim is ensuring the employability of students (Leonard, 2006). Such a focus on accountability, 'improved standards' and effectiveness in education results in both a general homogenization of students and apathy towards issues of equity (Leonard, 2006). Furthermore, the intense focus on individual success and attainment characterized by the neoliberal climate that began to dominate in the late 1980s, has also meant that much attention to

women and women's issues has been dominated by attention to the successes of accomplished women. At the same time that women's stories of individual achievement and accomplishment proliferated, the focus on the political struggles of all people were pushed to the periphery. The broader socio-political climate of neoliberalism meant that the achievements of women were disconnected from the hard work of feminist activism and organizations and attributed to the hard work and merit of those individual women (Schmeichel, 2011) or presented as having "just happened" as society moved forward and progressed (Leonard, 2006).

In the context of social studies education in particular, increased focus on accountability and standards resulted in curricular reforms decisively influenced by increasing calls for a return to history and geography as the core focus of the discipline (Bernard-Powers, 2001; Powers, 1995). Heightened attention to a return to "the basics" resulted in the codification of the political approach to historical study that makes the systematic and meaningful inclusion of women and their experiences quite difficult (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Smith Crocco, and Woysner, 2007). Framed also by calls to rectify the seeming lack of knowledge students possessed about their own country and its development, history educators and the wider public demanded a return to broad sweeping national historical narratives characterized by a focus on political and economic policies and turning points (Osborne, 2011).

Reflective of the conservative social science campaign, curriculum revisers working in the 1980s and 1990s resisted multicultural, gender sensitive and feminist curricular transformation (Bernard-Powers, 2001) because such specialized, inclusive narratives had adverse consequences for the development of national unity (Bliss, 1991; Granatstein, 1998, 2007). Compounded, these concerns over accountability, efficiency, and the promotion of a unified national narrative, resulted in an approach that emphasized the growth of nation states from a largely public, political perspective. Such emphases ultimately result in a systematic neglect of women and their stories. Since women have been generally perceived as marginal players in official capacities of political authority in the development of the "nation", it is an approach that largely obscures the work of women and their experiences in history (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Smith Crocco, and Woysner, 2007). In short, the focus on political and economic history, as opposed to social and cultural history, has resulted in the marginalization of women in history curriculum in particular.

Where gender policy statements and policies exist in the 1990s, they reflect a shift in approach to gender issues often attributed to the larger backlash against feminist movements that had proliferated in the previous decades. Broadly speaking, gender policy documents created during the decade reflect a shift in attention from girls and women to boys and broader equity concerns. The shift to concerns around the academic performance of boys is usually attributed to a backlash response in the media where the public was exposed to widely spread claims that the increasing attention on girls in education had resulted in significant costs to the traditional success of boys. Gender issues also became increasingly focused on ethnicity and the impact of sexuality (Anderson, 2018). Combined with increasing efforts to cut equity programming and refocus education back to the basics, gender issues became sidetracked and gender issues understood as related to the experiences and representations of women and girls became increasingly marginalized.

The broadening and shifting lens in gender equity policies towards issues of intersections with ethnicity and sexual orientation have continued into the 2000s. The ultimate result has been the increasing tendency in gender equity policy documents to view gender issues through the lens of gender identity and minority sexual orientation. There has been a noticeable shift in recent policy publications towards Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) issues wherein issues of both gender identity and minority sexual orientations rights have become the focal point. Saskatchewan's most recent policy publication to outline gender equity it certainly reflective of this trend. *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexuality* (2015) is a document explicitly intended to help individuals and families discuss and act in meaningful ways in response to the experiences and needs of students and families who are gender and/or sexually diverse.

While trends in the rise of conservative politics and the influence of neoliberal policies in education began to take hold in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, these are trends that continue to exert considerable influence over current curricular reform in the Canadian context. Despite the fact that feminist scholarship has pushed beyond simplistic notions of gender to highlight and discuss the complexity of gendered experiences as those identifiers intersect with issues of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and more, school curriculum has not mirrored these trends (Bernard-Powers, 2001; Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018). Standards-based curriculum and accountability trends, along with the commonly held notion that gender equity has been achieved

– especially for middle class women - has resulted in a turn to the “boy problem” in education, including their lower graduate rates, declining testing scores, and waning enrolments in undergraduate programs (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Smith Crocco, and Woysner, 2007).

In their cursory analysis of revised curriculum in Ontario from 2013 and 2015, Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn (2018) concluded that women and their stories, while present, remain scattered throughout the documents. A treatment of women that continues to place women and their stories as superficial elements to the central, androcentric, historical narrative. In similar fashion, Noddings (2001) notes that while women’s faces and their stories continue to occupy some space in social studies curriculum and resources, the continued maintenance of male standards, for instance, the historical trivialization of peace and valorization of war, results in curriculum that continues to reflect the male experience and culture. Reflecting trends in wider society that saw a movement towards greater gender equity through broad social change (i.e. availability of birth control and less stringent divorce laws), quickly followed by equity and social programming cuts (Guppy and Luongo, 2015), gender issues in schools seemed to have stalled in recent years. Ultimately, curriculum standards in social studies continue to be silent about both women and gender related topics (Bernard-Powers, 2001; Fine-Meyer and Llewellyn, 2018).

### **Analysis and Interpretations**

Although later curriculum guides certainly reflect efforts to remove harmful or stereotypical language from curriculum guides, social studies guides from the 1970s reflect the overt and commonplace devaluing of female students and women’s experiences. The courses of study are overtly sexist in their constant reiteration of the male sex as the universal sex, both in terms of societal development as well as classroom students. Focused on the development of man [sic] in a variety of contexts (self study, the community, and the nation), the 1970s social studies guides all include titles as well as broad descriptor statements for the course that reflect the dominance of the male student and male perspective in relation to the development of societies. For instance, Social Studies 9 (1971) is “focused on the study of man in time and place” (p. 1), while Social Studies 10 is broken down into three sections that focus on the study of man in a variety of contexts (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 10, 1972). Although women are not completely absent from the guides in the study of societies,

both historical and contemporary, inclusion is limited both in terms of space and representation. The little space afforded to women in the 1971 Social Studies 9 guide for instance is limited to the brief discussion of the family unit. The discussion is not one that values the place of family or the important work that women do play in family, instead the focus is on exploring families as a primitive organizational unit that fell by the wayside as more complex, male dominated, societal organizational structures began to take shape (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 9, 1971). Not only do these guides reinscribe and promote males as the dominant sex in society, they also consistently refer to students using the male pronoun. In 1971, the study of man in time and place is intended to provide students with the opportunity to “explore *his* heritage” (Ministry of Education, 1971, p. 1; emphasis added).

Where issues of gender are included within the 1970s, there is either a focus on sex-based physical characteristics or a limited, taken-for-granted approach to the acquisition of gendered roles. Social Studies 20 (1976) includes the analysis of family structures but excluded any same sex parent families or blended families, opting instead to focus on nuclear, extended and polygamous families, which is a trend that continues well into the 1990s with these norms highlighted for examination in the grade eight Social Studies guide from 1999. At the 30 level, students explore contemporary Canadian issues. Within the suggested activity pages for the guide, there is the option to conduct a Canadian Studies quiz as a pre-learning activity to gauge students’ knowledge about topics covered in the course. Of the 54 questions in the quiz, only two pertain to women or women’s history (Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978). Social Studies 10 (1975) includes a suggested activity that explores the physical characteristics influencing man [sic], suggesting that students “state a hypothesis on the effect of being male or female and give evidence to defend their hypothesis” (p. 41). While it may be an opportunity to explore gender issues, including inequity, framed within the larger context of physical characteristics that affect individuals, the resulting focus would be unlikely to tackle the social construction of gender in society. The result is a naturalization of gender – a discourse that emphasizes gender categories as physical traits from which consequences arise and where gender is not constructed by the dominant (male) perspective, but just *is*.

The gender equity policy statement that appears in the opening pages of every renewed curriculum guide in the province, following widespread curricular renewals in the province during the 1980s, presumably steers the approach taken at that time within each subject



discipline. The gender equity statement crafted is one which certainly reflects the early, and continued, trend evident in education to focus on the liberal approach of the elimination of discriminatory language and the promotion of gender balanced outcomes, materials, and classroom practices. The statement explains that while some stereotypical attitudes have disappeared, others remain and so it is the “responsibility of schools to create an educational environment free of gender bias” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1991, p. 8). This process is facilitated by focusing on the reduction of gender bias in the materials and the implementation of “non-sexist teaching strategies.” In this way, the new curriculum is committed to providing “gender balanced content, activities and teaching strategies,” which will assist teachers in “providing an environment free of stereotyping” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1991, p. 8).

Apart from the inclusion of a statement of gender equity as part of the opening foundational framing for curriculum, attention to women and gender issues occupies little space throughout the guides produced in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. Where women’s experiences or gender issues are included, they are usually tacked on to the end of a unit as optional points of discussion for teachers to consider and at times work to reinscribe harmful gendered understandings of history and society. In Social Studies 8 (1987), women and their roles within the family are included within a topic focused on roles. The attention afforded to the role of women in the private sphere of the family pales in comparison to the space afforded to the public sphere roles in local, regional, national and global contexts. Content does consider the “investigation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1987, p. 26) of changing roles in society, with women and labour used as examples to explore, but without a feminist or critically oriented teacher the outcome would more than likely result in a historical narrative that does not make visible the struggle that women undertook to enter the public sphere.

Heavily influenced by liberal and liberal feminist orientations, references to women in guides from this era are frequently explored within the context of either exploring the “roles of women” or equality and women’s rights. Unit four of the Social Studies 30 (1997) guide includes a discussion of the historical exclusion of women from the political process, and the history of women gaining political rights in Canada but neglects to include any content on the power structures that resulted in such exclusion and marginalization. Social Studies 20 (1994) includes some content that focuses on the difficulties of achieving social justice. A suggested,

but not mandatory, exploration of the case of women is included within this section. The section details pretty standard, generic content concerning the rise of the women's rights movement and the changing nature of gender. Women make their only significant appearance in Social Studies 9 (1991) in the final pages of the guide. Here, the guide outlines the changing role of women in modern industrial society, but does so in the context of technological change, a framing that attributes change not to the agency of women and women's organizations, but to the broader march of progress. Content and discussion revolve around the evolution of women's rights as a simple progression as society becomes more tolerant, essentially minimizing the role of women in actively demanding change. Within the grade eight Social Studies (1999) course of study, the only explicit mention of women is a student handout that focuses on the Regina Women's Construction Co-op. Grade 9 Social Studies (1999) continues to reflect the common trend of including women's experiences in the broader discussion of "roles" in society as women's roles and choices are included as part of the larger examination of Indigenous pre-contact cultures of Saskatchewan, Medieval, and Roman society.

Despite the fact that the gender equity statement addresses the importance of removing sexist and stereotypical content and materials from education, there remain a couple of striking examples of the persistence of harmful and overtly sexist discourse well into the 1990s. At one point a values-oriented question asks students to contemplate whether "technology in the form of dishwashers and clothes dryers has done more for liberating women than the entire feminist movement?" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1994). Even more disturbing is the question posed at the grade 11 level in both History and Social Studies curriculum in the context of a unit focused on human rights in Social Studies (1994) and global issues in History (1994). Here, a suggested value oriented question asks students to explore whether "a husband has the right to abuse or rape his wife or to abandon his wife and children?" (p. 151, 519). Apart from the alarming normalization of violence against women even if the answer is 'no', the question is also informed by an attitude that orients women in the passive state and assumes female dependence on men.

History (1992, 1994, 1997) curriculum at the secondary level in Saskatchewan pays very little attention to women's voice or experiences. Although these guides follow a similar pattern in terms of piecemeal inclusion as did the social studies guides, the type of history that characterizes each of the courses provides very little opportunity to consider the lives and

experiences of women. The overt focus on a particular set of political and economic events within the historical development of the nation relegates women's experiences to the margins. Women are only included as part of the male dominated arena of public life. For instance, despite the fact that the basic goal of History 10 (1992) is to "help students understand the basic organization of industrialized, democratic society" (p. 26) women's history and experiences are marginalized by the units of study for the course: political decision making, economic decision making, ideology and the decision making process, international economic relations, and international political relations. This focus results in a historical narrative focused on the development of political and economic organizations and women's limited roles within those structures, especially so since the course deals with 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In terms of content, this approach is one that aims to include women as part of a larger narrative that values and promotes a historical understanding of influential public figures – figures, who because of their role in political and economic organizations, were seldom women. In History 10 (1992) women are included in the larger context of the French Revolution. History 20 (1994) spends some time on the changing roles of women during and immediately following WWII, and History 30 covers contributions of women to the emerging economy of New France and the political decision making role of women in traditional Iroquois society. In addition to the relatively marginalized space that women can occupy in such a historical narrative, changes in women's roles and rights are often depicted as swept up in the broader context of progressive social change – women do not make history, they are simply a very small part of it.

Even in instances where inequality is included within content, it is addressed in a way that normalizes and trivializes the issues. The 10, 20 and 30 guides all point to historical and contemporary gender inequities, but the only guide to attempt to address the reasons for such inequities and give women any agency in the changing status of women in society is the History 30 (1997) guide. Within content aimed at exploring the division of labour in the Industrial Age in History 10 (1992), students are encouraged to learn that "patriarchal values of society prevented the treatment of women on an equitable basis" (p. 254). There is an inclusion of patriarchy and the limiting consequences of such a paradigm for women, but there is no attempt to address its construction or how men benefitted from the maintenance of such structures of power. There is also some attention to the topic of gender inequity as the guide stipulates that there has been "a long tradition of inequitable treatment of people based on and justified by

gender” and also that full equality has not been achieved, but again there is no attempt to tackle the reasons for such inequity.

History 20 (1994) also includes an implication that the inequality faced by women is not tangible but rather a perceived experience – “Some women feel that they have been denied equality of opportunity or rights by existing political and social structures” (p. 508). The implication is that these sentiments may be a result of perception rather than reality. There is some development beyond the simple recognition of gender inequity at the 30 level (1997) as students are asked to “note that within a society, there are groups that support the continuance of the political, economic and social status quo,” followed by the encouragement to identify and investigate reasons for this.

This guide is also unique in that it provides some agency to women in relation to the changing roles and status of women in Canadian society. Within the context of a unit focused on contemporary challenges and opportunities facing Canada, the guide explores the fact that it was pressure from women’s organizations that resulted in the federal government appointing a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967 and also recognizes the discontent expressed by women following the 1982 repatriation of the constitution as it failed to meet the demands of women on matters of reproduction, marital status, and sexual orientation. This line of inquiry is mitigated though as it reiterates the same line of argument regarding inequities in society as did the 20 level guide – that there are particular segments of the populations which *feel* [emphasis added] that they have not been “allowed to enjoy the equality in terms of rights and opportunities” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 511). The agency afforded to women and the attempt to address who is best served by the maintenance of gender inequities is also mitigated by the fact that women remain an add on or add in within the larger context of male dominated historical developments. Suffragists get tacked on at the tail end of a unit titled “The Road to Democracy” and women are completely absent from the unit that focuses on the forces of nationalism.

By the early 2000s, gender equity and gender issues have almost all but disappeared from the social studies curriculum. Indicative of the larger trend in society and education, these decades speak to the stalling and regression of equity policies in the neoliberal era. Curricular renewals occurred in social studies at the middle years level during the early 2000s. Released in 2008, these guides include the ministry’s updated approach to and overhaul of the Core

Curriculum. Gone are the Common Essential Learnings in favour of Broad Areas of Learning and Cross-Curricular Competencies. Intended to connect the specifics of day to day lessons and assessment with the overarching and philosophical Goals of Saskatchewan Education, these categories provide a brief reference to gender. In addressing the larger goal of “Developing Identity and Interdependence”, gender is included within a long list of factors that affect or shape identity. Outside of this brief mention of gender, the grade seven course of study includes no explicit mention of gender or women. Even though students investigate the processes and structures of power, including the sources of power individuals draw on to attain power, there is no mention of gender.

Grade eight and nine courses are marginally better, including a few references each to gender and women. The grade eight course of study includes gender as one of the obstacles that Canadians may face in gaining access to political participation and also suggests that the right of women to sit in the House of Commons may be used to explore the implications of Canadian citizenship on the life of Canadians (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008). In grade nine, students may explore gender as a potential factor that shapes worldview, or within the context of exploring roles and responsibilities of the societies studied and contemporary Canada (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008). It is essential to note that each of these references to either women and gender do not form part of the mandatory outcomes for the courses. Each of these references are included as indicators for the broader outcome. This means that while the guides do include references to gender and women, the content is directed to achieve the broad outcome. Though the guides are designed in such a way as to allow for considerable flexibility in terms of content and approach to meeting the broad outcomes for the courses, a teacher would have to be personally inclined to include any discussion or exploration of gender issues. The current structuring is problematic in that the likely result is the omission of gender issues unless teachers experienced gender studies as a significant part of their preservice education or graduate studies work.

Some of the most recent research into gender equity in the province reflects how policy documents and directions can be at once progressive, but simultaneously stagnant or regressive. Two recent government publications suggest that current, and future, gender equity policies represent both a progression in terms of recognizing the influence of third wave feminism, but also regression due to a focus on the current “boy crisis” in education. A policy document

released by the Ministry of Education in 2015 highlights some of the work characterized as third wave feminism (Lorber, 2005) as it works to recognize and bring attention to the issue of fluidity in relation to both gender and sexuality. The document seeks to explore the importance of addressing and understanding issues of gender fluidity and sexual diversity as part of the education system's responsibility to provide "safe and respectful learning environments for all" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexuality*, 2015, p. 3). Framed within the context of human rights, the document defines gender as a term that is "regularly understood to refer to gender identity, meaning one's internal sense of self as female, male or other, regardless of biology" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexuality*, 2015, p. 8). Despite this focus on individual and personal identity, there is also promising recognition of the social construction of gender, and the challenges this presents. In addressing the challenges of encouraging acceptance of gender fluidity and sexual diversity, the document recognizes that the "real challenge lies in the fact that our society imagines that male and female designations are 'real' categories, rather than socially constructed ideas and as fluid identities" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexuality*, 2015, p. 9).

The document also reflects some critical treatment of issues of gender and sexuality in at least attempting to address the issue of privilege as it relates to these two areas of identity. The document includes both a discussion and several self-reflection questionnaires aimed at uncovering and identifying heteronormative, cisgender privilege. The document includes sections that identify curricular areas for addressing issues of gender and sexuality. While inclusion within English Language Arts and Health curriculum contain detailed links, suggestions for social studies are weak. While curricular links for the 1990s social studies guides offer some possibilities for topic alignment, recommendations for the newest renewals at the 7-9 levels simply suggest that gender and sexuality be explored as part of the four broad goals of social studies education (Ministry of Education, 2015). Though these points are promising in terms of tackling issues of identity within the education system as they relate to gender and sexuality, the policy document is lacking in terms of identifying gendered inequities and outlining avenues through which to address gendered inequities that continue to exist in society – the gender pay gap or violence against women for instance.

Reflecting recent trends in addressing the ‘boy crisis’ in education, a policy document released in 2010 by the Status of Women Office<sup>18</sup> summarizes the gender gaps in regard to education in the province. Intended to bring attention to the impact of sex and gender on experiences and outcomes for women, the report is divided into the following sections: education, income and wealth, living arrangements, and paid and unpaid work. In *Sex and Gender Equality in Saskatchewan: Education* (2010), the section of the report to deal exclusively with educational opportunity and outcomes provides conclusions regarding high school graduation rates, achievement levels in secondary subject areas by sex, as well as postsecondary enrolment and graduation data. Data from the report confirm findings in the wider Canadian education context (Conference Board of Canada, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2008), concluding that females are graduating high school at higher rates than males, despite the fact that male students outnumber female students, and that female students continue to represent a higher proportion of undergraduate students - a gap that has widened from 2001 to 2006 (Status of Women Office, *Sex and Gender Equality in Saskatchewan: Education*, 2010). Although it is stated that the report is intended to “contribute to and advance the work to increase women’s security and independence” (Status of Women, 2010) the report offers no conclusions or recommendations. While there is merit to such research and data, especially as it has resulted in some critical research into masculinities and masculinity in education (Leonard, 2006), there is potential for this type of research and conclusions to influence educators and the broader public to conclude that gender equity as it relates to girls has been resolved. Furthermore, these types of studies and conclusions often promulgate essentialized notions of girls and boys that fail to take into account other critical differentiators like class and race (Leonard, 2006).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Discourse around women and gender in social studies curriculum in the province of Saskatchewan closely mirrors developments in the wider Canadian educational and socio-political context. Where women and gender issues have been included at the middle and secondary levels, they have been stunted and piecemeal at best. The inclusion of women and gender, especially in secondary history courses, is also characteristically reduced to the

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<sup>18</sup> This is the sole branch in the Saskatchewan government that reports on the status of women in the province. The branch aims to garner awareness about issues affecting to women to ensure that issues related to gender are integrated into all aspects of government policy, legislation, and program development, including education.

contributions of women and their roles in the larger, dominant, androcentric historical narratives. As such, current curricular reform reflects little of the work of feminist scholars in bringing to light the complexities of gender, its material effects, and its intersection with additional social categories like race and class.

In our current climate of toxic misogyny, pervasive violence against women, and the stagnation of the gender equity movement in general, there is an intensified need to stress the analysis and deconstruction of gender and its stratified nature. In the pursuit of securing safe spaces and equitable opportunities for all students, it will be imperative to explore issues of gender identity, critically examine the taken-for-granted nature of the performance of gender in our societies, and question how these constructions work to present very real challenges to equity in society.

The goals of non-sexism<sup>19</sup> that have dominated educational approaches to gender equity since the 1970s need to evolve to reveal structural inequality. Although the removal of harmful representations and the inclusion of positive images of women is important, non-sexism falls short in terms of thinking about challenging and shifting dominant narratives. The current focus on non-sexism reflects the notion embedded in liberalism that discrimination is simply somehow incidental to the system – if everyone could simply rid themselves of their personal prejudices, then discriminatory practices would disappear and classifications like race, class and gender would no longer be relevant (Coulter, 1996). However, students should be encouraged to see the world the way it is while developing the critical consciousness required to enable them to challenge current inequities and engage in the struggle for social change (Coulter, 1996). Challenging such notions of gender in society will also need to move beyond only thinking about men in relation to women. Men also need to reflect on their position in order to understand the implications of their privilege because “emancipatory practices are only truly emancipatory when they challenge our own privilege” (Lewis and Simon, 1991).

The broad goals of social studies education often come back to the central idea of preparing students for meaningful and active membership in the multiplicity of communities and relationships they encounter. This study demonstrates that historically and presently, such goals

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<sup>19</sup> Non-sexism is an approach that aims to eliminate stereotypical, discriminatory, and/or sexist language. Taken in the context of curriculum, the aim is to remove all examples of these types of representations from curricular outcomes and content.



often focus on the public domains of human experience, while “private concerns” like childcare, domestic work, emotional labour, reproductive issues, and community organization occupy little to no space in the formal curriculum. Social studies curricula need to include these “private lives” because they too are an integral dimension of membership in communities and families. Feeding, educating, housing and nurturing humans in families and communities is a key component to the sustenance and reproduction of communities and as such needs to become an integral component within social studies education. If we were to go beyond simply “adding” women into the larger narrative, we may focus more on topics like family membership, homemaking and women’s culture alongside of the stories of women’s achievements in the public sphere, so that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they will need to become competent and caring parents, neighbours, and responsible users of the natural and non-natural world.

With such a focus, feminism may be able to contribute to real transformational change in social studies education to encourage discussion and treatment of public life as deeply informed and influenced by the articulation of private life (Noddings, 2001). The current marginalization of women’s experiences and gender issues in current social studies curriculum does a disservice to not only female students but *all* students. On one level, it is a process that devalues women’s knowledge and ways of being in the world and on another it leaves students ill equipped to engage critically with the world they live in. If one of the primary aims of social studies education is to “demonstrate a critical understanding of the role of social, political, economic, and legal institutions as they relate to individual and collective well-being” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, p. 7) in both historical and contemporary contexts then gender and women’s history need to move from the periphery to occupy spaces that have traditionally valued only male, public life. Without such curricular transformation, students will be unable to understand and critically examine one of the central components that constructs social difference and structures both public and private life.

**Chapter 7:**  
**Historical Discourses of Nation**  
**Saskatchewan History Curriculum Narratives of the Nation: Discourses of**  
**Accommodation, Negotiation, Tolerance, and Diversity**

The creation and promotion of a common national identity relies heavily on the teaching of a nation's past. As Mackey (1999) notes, belief in a common history based on a record of a common past is essential to nationalism and the nation building project. What becomes especially problematic in the Canadian context is the extent to which Canada has grappled, and continues to grapple with<sup>20</sup>, with the formulation of a unified national historical narrative that simultaneously manages difference and diversity as part of that larger nation building project. This means that the shaping of the complexities of the formation and development of a nation, especially one as geographically, culturally and linguistically diverse as Canada, ultimately requires certain omissions and points of emphasis in the crafting of a unified narrative in service of particular aims and goals.

Unlike the previous chapters, this one takes a broad look at national historical narratives as they are developed in history courses offered at the secondary level. Although history courses in general have long been employed in the goals of nationalism and nation building, Saskatchewan, much like its Prairie neighbour Alberta, has given priority to the development of the interdisciplinary and citizenship-oriented subject of social studies in the province. This prioritization resulted in the ultimate abandonment of history within the province from the 1940s to 1992. These two factors combine to create a situation where historical analysis of history curriculum over time is impossible in the contemporary context of the 1970s to the present. It also creates a unique situation where the analysis and interpretation of the guides is at once contemporary, in the sense that these guides are currently used in the province, and historical, in the sense that they were developed over 20 years ago. Analysis, interpretations and conclusions are oriented around shedding light on the prevalent discourses of the Canadian nation and how those discourses work to reinscribe or challenge more traditional and exclusionary notions of

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<sup>20</sup> Quebec has yet to endorse and sign on to the constitution. From time to time, the issue reappears in federal politics. The issue of Quebec's relationship with the constitution made headlines in June of 2017 when then Premier Philippe Couillard kicked off a renewed discussion about Quebec signing on to the 1982 Constitution Act by releasing a 177-page document of his government's views on Quebec's role within Canada along with arguments for reopening negotiations (McGregor, 2017).

nationhood. The primary aim is to examine the construction of historical narratives of the nation in curriculum, how those narratives produce and maintain a particular image of Canada, and how those representations relate to particular systems of power in society. As historical Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), these discourses of nation are placed within their historical context to reveal the ways in which those discourses are shaped and influenced by prevalent ideas of that time – both within education and the wider societal climate. Using secondary sources as a basis for the examination of the promulgation of common Canadian myths and meta-narratives while also incorporating the broader societal and educational context of the period, I argue that secondary history curriculum in Saskatchewan produces a representation of the Canadian nation largely shaped by external events and whose existence is precariously grounded in the management of domestic challenges posed by its diversity. While largely responsible for the elusive and precarious grounding upon which the Canadian identity rests, it is also these same issues of diversity that play a significant role in the measure of importance placed on the principles of tolerance, accommodation, and negotiation as central to the Canadian experience and identity.

### **Canadian History and History Education in the 1990s**

Anyone familiar with trends in history education in Canada will know that concerns about how much Canadian students know about their country's past have a tendency to boil over into public media and educational discourse every ten to twenty years. During these peak periods of national anxiety, educators, politicians and the media declare that Canadian students are ill informed and public schools are in need of some kind of ideological shift to repair such deficits (Morton, 2000). Much of the discourse and targeted criticism is often aimed at incompetent teachers, as well as curriculum, and their inability to teach Canadian history in meaningful and engaging ways. Just as Hodgetts' (1968) scathing criticism of the state of Canadian studies in classrooms across the country during the 1960s had a significant impact on a resurgence of Canadian studies across Canada into the 1970s, arguments brought forth by historians Michael Bliss and Jack Granatstein during the 1990s represented a climax in debates surrounding the state of history education in Canada that had been circulating since the late 1980s (Osborne, 2011).

Concerns in the 1990s around the state of history education in Canada were influenced by both educational as well as larger societal concerns about the current state of Canadian identity and Canadian nationalism during the period. In the realm of education, history had all but disappeared from Canadian classrooms across the country in favour of interdisciplinary and contemporary social studies programming. Growing concern over contemporary issues during the 1970s, along with Hodgetts' 1968 report on Canadian studies courses and classroom practices across the country effectively pushed history education to the margins (Osborne, 2000). This trend continued into the 1980s as education became increasingly influenced by skills development. Focused on skills-based disciplines that promoted literacy and science along with generic skills like problem-solving and decision-making, history continued to occupy limited space in Canadian schools (Osborne, 2011). By the late 1980s, this trend was beginning to fade as renewed concerns over the state of Canadian identity began to circulate.

For Seixas (2002) the emergence of renewed debate over the place of history in Canadian society hinged on the convergence of several factors: the resurgence of memory and heritage practices, rapid migration and mixture of cultures, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of nation states, empowerment and disempowerment of groups, and globalization and its technologies (as cited in Levesque, 2011). These debates, commonly referred to as the 'history wars', concerning the standing of history education in Canadian curriculum and classrooms essentially revolved around two fundamentally different perspectives on the teaching and learning of history. On one side of the aisle one had the "heritage fashioners", represented by historians such as the University of Toronto's Michael Bliss and York University's Jack Granatstein, who were adamant that the future of the country was at stake (Levesque, 2011). From their perspective, history and history education had been 'privatized' and coopted by social and feminist historians to focus on narrow narratives at the expense of broad sweeping, national histories based on shared experiences (Osborne, 2011) that promoted a unified and cohesive national narrative. The ultimate result of the promotion of such narrow and critical histories, historians like Granatstein (1997) argued, was that students lacked much of the political thinking necessary to understand the formation and development of the nation (Levesque, 2011).

Granatstein (1997), the most vocal of the "heritage fashioners" and a traditionalist at heart, discusses the state of Canadian history in the education system at length in his book *Who*

*Killed Canadian History?* Offering an analysis and critique that spans across various levels of education in Canada, including elementary, secondary, and university contexts, his main argument is that Canadian national history had all but disappeared from the educational system at all of these levels. He argues that national and political histories had been completely neglected at the expense of local, regional and social histories. In this way, it is an approach aligned with the older, nation building narrative that had been widely adopted and promoted in the teaching of Canadian history up until the 1960s. In this approach, Canadian history is represented as a march of progress towards the current unified nation defined by key political and military moments and themes of European exploration, settlement, and Confederation (Osborne, 2011). Reflecting some neoconservative tendencies in his visions of a romanticized past used to prop up a sense of patriotism and downplaying the importance of histories that focus on the grievances and experiences of minorities and their marginalization, Granatstein (1997) argues that political and national history is of utmost importance.

On the other side of the aisle were historians who believed that history should be viewed as a way of thinking about the past that involves disciplinary critical thinking skills. Fuelled in part by these debates, this new style of history was less concerned with the role that history had to play in encouraging the development of a unified identity, but rather the influence of history and historical thinking on the cultivation of democratic citizenship (Osborne, 2011). This current conceptualization of historical thinking stems from developments in the 1960s and 1970s in the fields of cognitive psychology, curriculum theory as well as the discipline of history. During this period, history educators in both the UK and North American started to challenge the “content-only” traditionalist approaches to history education because it provided students little opportunity to understand the nature of the discipline of history (Gibson and Case, 2019). Perhaps most influential in the development of such a view of the teaching of history is Peter Seixas<sup>21</sup> (2008, 2012, 2013), who argued for a focus on the development of historical thinking skills to enable students to think critically about the past. Unlike the broad sweep offered by proponents of the nation building narrative, historical consciousness does not provide a simple,

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Seixas served as the director of the pan-Canadian Historical Thinking Project that aimed to promote and integrate the six big historical thinking concepts into Canadian curriculum and practice.

uncontested road to nation building. Instead, history and historical thinking offer a critical link between past, present, and future (Levesque, 2011).

In the Canadian context, Peter Seixas developed a framework for the pan-Canadian Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project. Revised several times since its initial conceptualization, the framework describes six second-order concepts: historical significance, analysis and interpretation of primary source evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimension. Each of the ‘big six’ are focused on building the capacities in students that foster interaction, analysis, and evaluation of historical actors, events, and processes. Determining historical significance involves students distinguishing between historical significant and trivial events and processes. Students are encouraged to judge historical significance not simply based on the events and people that have the greatest impact for the longest period of time, but also the extent to which this particular site of historical analysis can show historians something important about our place in the present world (Seixas & Clark, 2004). The skills associated with the next of the six, continuity and change and cause and effect, are oriented around encouraging students to understand the complexities and nuance apparent in the study of historical events and processes. Continuity and change aim to encourage an understanding of change over time that highlights the ways in which the two concepts interact in the examination of historical events and processes. In engaging in the work of examining cause and consequence, students begin to understand that historical processes are spurred by multiple causes that result in an intricate web of interconnected short and long term effects (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Historical perspective taking and the ethical dimension focus on the role and views of the historian in the work of historical investigation. Historical perspective warns against the dangers of “presentism” and encourages students to see things from the perspective of those involved in the historical events and processes under investigation (Seixas & Peck, 2004). Also focused on the bias that the historian brings to an investigation, the ethical dimension requires exhibiting empathy for the historical actors of a period so as to avoid imposing the morals of today on the decisions and actions of those in the past. Although it requires empathy, the ethical dimension does not mean it should deny the condemnation of violent, brutal, and unjust acts of the past (Seixas & Peck, 2004). At its core, historical thinking is about interpreting and assessing evidence and facts from the past as well as the narratives that people have constructed (Gibson & Case, 2019).

These ‘history wars’ were significantly connected to increasing interest in wider society over questions of Canadian identity and unity that dominated Canadian political discourse and media during the 1980s into the 1990s. Under attack since the 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s saw the continual unravelling of the Liberal party dominance in federal politics. By the 1990s, the broad level of liberal consensus that had dominated the national political scene had ultimately disappeared. Triggered by the debates and events surrounding constitutional reform events like the eventual successful repatriation of the constitution, as well as the subsequent proposed constitutional reforms that played out in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, the socio-political climate translated into anxiety over the place of history in public education and the consequences of its neglect became evident in public discourse (Osborne, 2011).

Touted as a period of crisis across mass media during the period, the 1990s is often described as a period of uncertainty and turmoil in Canadian society. Signalling the broad dissatisfaction with the federal Liberals, the 1984 federal election of the Conservatives under the leadership of Brian Mulroney was the most decisive election result since 1945, rivalling even John Diefenbaker’s 1958 victory in both popular vote and number of seats (Bumsted, 2003). The favour that the federal Liberals lost during the 1980s would be regained again in the 1990s though. The 1993 federal victory of the Liberals marked a new dynamic in the House of Commons with regards to the emergence of regional political parties. The 1993 federal election also saw the virtual collapse of the federal Progressive Conservative Party and the emergence of two regionally based, and openly antagonistic, opposition parties in the House: The Parti Quebecois and the Reform Party (Bumsted, 2003). Regional political difference continued to play a role in the next federal election as well, where, as Bumsted (2003) contends, the relative ease of the federal Liberal victory had less to do with a successful campaign on their part and more to do with the failure of the opposition. Still regionally divided, the conservative forces lacked a coherent and unified base from which to draw support from across provincial boundaries.

The unfolding of constitutional debates during the 1990s reminded many Canadians of the diverse and shifting terrain on which Canadian solidarity rested. By the time the constitution was repatriated in 1982, it had brought to light the delicate, and continued, process of accommodation and negotiation that have long been part of Canada’s political history. Issues of

both national unity and constitutional change had been at the fore of Canadian society, politics, and media coverage since the victory of the Parti Quebecois in the provincial election of 1976. Although the extent to which the PQ had actually received a mandate for its highly publicized sovereignty association is unclear, the assumption in English-speaking Canada was that separatism had been widely supported (Bumsted, 2003). In the context of western Canada, what had become clear by the end of the Task Force on Canadian Unity<sup>22</sup> was that Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, along with strong support from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, had their own agenda for constitutional reform. These provinces viewed Canadian federalism as problematic and unfair due to its exclusive concern with representing and acting in the interests of Central Canada (Bumsted, 2003). Appeased by Trudeau and the Liberal government's concessions<sup>23</sup>, the revised constitutional package was passed in the Canadian Parliament in December of 1981 and British Parliament early in 1982. Purchased at considerable expense to the federal government, the new constitution gave new powers to the provinces, eliminated recourse to the British Parliament for amendment, and entrenched a number of rights and protections, including both collective rights, like Aboriginal and treaty rights as well as minority cultural and language rights, and individual rights.

Although the successful repatriation of the constitution in 1982 was in many respects a point of achievement, the uncertainty and unease felt about the constitution would continue, and in some ways continues, to underpin issues of Canadian political unity. The Conservative government of Brian Mulroney fixated on one of the unresolved issues of the 1982 constitutional process: the fact that Quebec had yet to accept the 1982 version. In April of 1987, at Meech Lake, Quebec, Mulroney called together the premiers of the 10 provinces into closed door discussions to formulate a package that Quebec could agree to. A package was put together and a deadline set for early June 1990. If all provinces could not reach a consensus on the package by that deadline, the arrangement was dead. As the deadline loomed, Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador held out over concerns that new federal programs would be few given the option provided to provinces to receive federal funds in place of opting into federal

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<sup>22</sup> The National Unity Task Force was established in 1977 by the federal government in response to the election of the Parti Quebecois in 1976. The purpose of the task force was to gather opinions about problems of national unity and advise the government on how to tackle those issues (Hudon, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Provinces were given the power to opt-out of the Charter on critical issues and the power to stay outside of the new constitution's revisions until they chose to opt-in.



programs. Premiers from these provinces also expressed concern over the package's neglect for Aboriginal peoples, apprehensions that were voiced strongly by Cree leader and NDP MLA Elijah Harper. To in order to come into effect, the accord required unanimous ratification by parliament as well as all 10 provincial legislatures. Between June 12 and 21 1990, Elijah Harper stood up eight times in the Manitoba legislature to oppose the accord. Soon, Newfoundland and Labrador expressed their opposition and the accord ultimately failed to reach the unanimous support it required. In the aftermath of the failed Meech Lake Accord it became apparent that the Canadians, through the public consultations, did not so much object to the issue of constitutionally entrenching Quebec's status as a "distinct society" but instead, were concerned about the additional powers the proposed reforms would grant to the provinces. It became apparent that fears over providing provinces the power to veto any further amendments to the constitution and the ability to opt out of federal programming could potentially balkanize the nation (Bumsted, 2003). A new package was put together again in 1992 at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, but it too failed. This new package, put to a vote in national referendum, was rejected, a reflection of public perception that labelled the plan as generally ill conceived (Bumsted, 2003).

The processes of constitutional reform and the debates that surrounded those reforms were not the only sticking point of Canadian unity and solidarity to arise during the period. By the 1990s, the Canadian political scene was also dominated by discussions concerning Aboriginal rights and the question of Quebec sovereignty. Initially largely ignored by Trudeau in constitutional reform discussions, Aboriginal leaders fought hard for Aboriginal and treaty rights to be included in the repatriation of the constitution. This hard work paid off when in 1982, although left largely undefined, both Aboriginal rights and treaty rights were included in the constitution. Questions of Aboriginal title<sup>24</sup> as well as rights to traditional economic activities like hunting and fishing gained widespread attention during the period where events

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<sup>24</sup> Aboriginal title refers to the inherent Aboriginal right to traditional territories. In the Canadian legal context, Aboriginal title is recognized as *sui generis*, meaning that it is a unique collective right to both the use of and jurisdiction over a group's ancestral territories. Although Aboriginal title has been and continues to be violated and ignored by settler governments, it has long been recognized within the borders of what is now Canada. The Royal Proclamation 1763, the Calder Case 1973, and the Canadian Constitution are just a few of the documents that lay the foundation for its recognition and protection within Canada from a Western legal perspective.

like the Oka Crisis<sup>25</sup> garnered extensive national media coverage. Spurred to a great extent by the events that had unfolded during the Kanesatake resistance over the summer of 1990 in the Kanesatake community, the federal government commissioned an in depth investigation into Aboriginal issues in the country (Marshall, 2019). Organized into social, economic, and political issues, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report offered a number of conclusions that pointed to the ongoing effects of colonialism. For instance, *Gathering Strength*, the section of the report that dealt with social conditions, concluded that while conditions for Aboriginal peoples in general had improved in the last 50 years, Aboriginal peoples continued to experience lower life expectancy rates, higher instances of particular illnesses, lower graduation rates, higher unemployment, lower income, decreased access to health services, adequate housing, and safe drinking water to name a few (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 1996).

Popular support for sovereigntist parties rapidly increased during the 1960s and 1970s with the creation and rise of the Parti Quebecois. This support and popularity resurfaced in the 1990s under the new political party the Bloc Quebecois and its leader Lucien Bouchard. While the first referendum to put the question of sovereignty-association<sup>26</sup> to the people of Quebec had been decisively voted down (approximately 60 percent voted no), the October 1995 referendum reflected a much different situation. Two trends from the second referendum, that moved away from framing the separatist movement in terms of sovereignty-association and defined the emerging sovereignty-partnership as more of a political partnership, are interesting to note. The first was the electorate buy-in on the issue. With a voter turnout rate of 94 percent, the province had certainly shown their desire to voice their opinion on the matter. The second was the extent to which the vote did little to provide a decisive outcome on the issue. Although it was ultimately a “no” majority, the results reflected the extent to which the province was divided on the issue: 50.6 percent to 49.4 percent (Stein, 2019). Despite the fact that the issue had been

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<sup>25</sup> Refers to the 78-day stand-off between Mohawk protestors, police, and eventually the army. The proposed expansion of a golf course onto traditional Mohawk territories, without their consultation or permission, was at the heart of the crisis. The protest ended with the cancellation of the golf course expansion and the federal government purchasing the land in question so that it could be turned over to the Kanesatake community, a formal transfer which has still not occurred (Marshall, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> This was the central goal of the PQ in their initial election in the 1976 campaign. The term was used by the PQ to refer to the relationship that would exist between an independent Quebec and the rest of Canada; it involved the idea of a state of independence supported by international law and limited to the economic domain. It was essentially abandoned following the 1980 referendum and increasingly replaced with simpler term sovereignty during the PQ’s 1985 election campaign (Archibald, 2015).

voted down, there was a clear indication that Quebecers were dissatisfied with the current situation and wanted a new constitutional relationship with Canada.

The unease felt in the arena of national politics and solidarity in the country was mirrored in widespread societal trends of the period as well. In terms of social trends, the 1980s and 1990s were characterized by consistent increases in indicators of social “instability.” In the period that spanned 1987 to 1991 violent crimes increased 29.8 percent across the nation and by the late 1980s it was estimated that well over half of all Canadian children born after 1980 would experience life in a “broken home”<sup>27</sup> at some point in their lives. Divorce, violent crime, suicide and STIs were all on the rise during the period, all societal trends that could only contribute to a nation increasingly characterized by sullen cynicism (Bumsted, 2003). The rise of these social indicators for “instability” along with the political turmoil of the period caused by constitutional reform, Quebec separatist sentiments, and the increasing force of Aboriginal peoples and communities to assert and defend their, now constitutionally entrenched and protected rights, coalesced to produce substantial uncertainty and unease about the future of a unified nation for a good deal of Canadians.

In this wider context of concerns about the unity and solidarity of the nation, disputes about the presence and nature of history education in Canadian schools continued throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s. Writing in 2011, Levesque argues that history education has never been so hotly debated and contested as it is now. Though the old style nation building narrative of the pre 1960s era occupies little space in the current era, it still commands a following. The 2007 re-release of Granatstein’s *Who Killed Canadian* history and the rise of the far-right’s reformulation of the Canadian state as what McKay and Swift (2013) term the warrior nation both indicate the continued presence of a style of history focused on political and military achievements as the foundation of the Canadian nation.

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<sup>27</sup> This is a term used by Bumsted (2003). The continued use of this kind of language is problematic in that it reinforces a sense of damage for those children who do not grow up in traditional nuclear families. Canadian children grow up in a diverse range of familial arrangements outside of traditional nuclear families, and these familial arrangements should not be branded “broken” simply because they fall outside of the norms of the nuclear family.

Despite the pitfalls of promoting a unified, national narrative there is continued merit in its cautious promotion in history education. Regardless of the debates that surround nationalism, it is an important element to democratic communities. The challenge of course is to find ways that we can cultivate a sense of belonging (Osborne, 1997; Richardson, 2003; Sears, 1997) while simultaneously valuing the diverse perspectives and narratives that bring a more nuanced, fluid, and contested understanding of the development of Canada. The reality is that while we do share a common territory and institutions, our regional and cultural diversity means that we inhabit many different historical realities (Levesque, 2011). The continued prevalence of the debate, both within and outside of education, around history education and its role in the nation building project have clear implications for thinking about how history curriculum in Saskatchewan has been conceived and how it will be reformulated and renewed in the coming years.

### **Prevalent Discourses of the Canadian Nation**

In order to discern prevalent discourses of nation found within Saskatchewan secondary history curriculum, I began with a survey of secondary sources focused on exploring some dominant discourses of nation-building. While some of these discourses deal specifically with history education, others deal more generally with the development of Canadian historical narratives. Traditionally, the goal of unity cultivated in a common past has been largely a project controlled by the elites in society who use the resulting narratives to maintain the status quo (Francis, 1997).

The character of nation building narratives in the Canadian context shifted significantly during and following the 1960s. Up until this point, the bulk of historical narratives that sought to deal with the birth and development of the Canadian nation reflected and promoted the dominance of Anglo-conformity, Canada's close ties to Britain, as well as a traditional storyline that includes the French as Canada's second founding culture. National histories from 1937-1969 form the canon of the type of single national narrative that became less theoretically as well as politically justifiable in the growing climate of growing recognition for diversity (Kalant, 2004). In the aftermath of the Royal Commission on Biculturalism and Bilingualism (1963 - 1969) as well as Trudeau's now famous proclamation that Canada indeed had no one official culture, the old core myths of the Canadian nation were no longer tenable. The old narratives that promoted the narrative of Canada as the product of two founding nations, the English and

the French, was beginning to lose sway in the midst of calls for recognition from Canadians of diverse backgrounds<sup>28</sup>. It is the recognition of this diversity and uncertainty that provides Canada with a unique articulation of a unified historical narrative that builds a sense of shared belonging. Canada's diversity is built into the very fabric of the nation, even before it was a nation. At the point of European contact, Indigenous populations that inhabited what is now Canada belonged to almost a dozen different linguistic families, making up scores of different languages and dialects. The settlers and immigrants would later increase that diversity so much so that Canadians now identify with more than 200 languages and cultures (Raptis, 2018). In many ways it is Canada's lack of a uniform heritage, as well as focus on what Canada is *not*, that defines and dominates much discourse about the Canadian nation-building project.

Since we lack a common religion, language, and ethnicity, and because we are so spread out across geographically diverse regions, in many ways Canadians depend on a habit of "consensual hallucination"<sup>29</sup> more than any other nation (Francis, 1997). Where countries like the United States rely on decisive metanarratives<sup>30</sup>, Canada's national identity centres on this idea of a "lack" as a central unifying force, a lack of collective, shared and definitive identity. Our shared vision relies heavily on a metanarrative that makes uncertainty crucial to the imagining of the Canadian nation (Kalant, 2004). Not only does Canada face the challenge of diverse peoples and geographies, in many respects, Canada also lacks a defining, and emotionally satisfying, moment of "birth" that can be used to build a coherent timeline moving forward. Although Confederation is often cited as the beginning of Canada as a nation, it is still somewhat incomplete when we take into consideration the fact that Canada had yet to gain full constitutional independence from Britain until 1982. Canada, unlike other nations which have historical narratives of defiant proclamations of independence, accepted its independence gradually and arguably tentatively (Francis, 1997). The absence of a clear unifying moment of "birth" and the recognition of diversity has meant that a significant underlying theme in the discourse of the Canadian nation and the subsequent development of historical narratives that concentrate on what Eva Mackey (1999) terms the management of difference is closely

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<sup>28</sup> This point is particularly salient in the context of Saskatchewan with its history of diverse (largely European in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) immigrants that were neither French nor English.

<sup>29</sup> The belonging to an imagined community

<sup>30</sup> For instance, Americans have long rallied around iconic narratives of the American Frontier and the American Dream.

associated with what many Canadians would be recognize as the cultural mosaic or multiculturalism.

As the dominant discourse of the Canadian nation rooted in Anglo-conformity was increasingly challenged by subaltern social forces, the insistence on Britishness and Frenchness as the core of the Canadian identity was no longer defensible and the marginalization of non-British and non-French Canadians was unsustainable (Galabuzi, 2011). In its place, a new story of the Canadian nation began to take shape – one that not only recognized diversity but used the notion of diversity as a unifying force (Egan, 2011). The proliferation of the discourse of multiculturalism spread quickly during the 1970s and has become a hallmark of the way in which Canadians see themselves and the image that Canada projects to the world. While not entirely uncontested, this narrative of a nation as inclusive, respectful of all cultures (Joshee & Johnson, 2007) and united by its differences, has gained significant authority in the Canadian and international context without much attention paid to the ways in which the myth was formulated. Long before official policies of multiculturalism multiplied during the 1970s, the idea of cultural diversity was transformed by Canadian Pacific Railway publicist John Murray Gibbon into an idealized, positive metaphor for the way that Canadians should live together (Francis, 1997). Reflecting a benign and oversimplified view of cultural difference and ethnic relations in the country, early ideas of the cultural mosaic were created and used by the white, Euro-Canadian mainstream to promote Canada's cultural diversity as a tourist attraction (Francis, 1997).

Nearly a century later, policies of official multiculturalism, devised to fill the void previously occupied by the founding nations narrative of the English and French, provided a framing of the Canadian nation that accommodated and brought “problematic others” into the nation-building project (Egan, 2011). The narrative also served another important function to set Canada apart from its southern neighbour. As opposed to the cultural “melting pot” approach in the United States, Canada's multicultural character respected and even celebrated the maintenance of those differences (Mackey, 1999). In formulating the narrative of the emergence of multicultural discourse during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Galabuzi (2011) notes two contradictory approaches to explaining how this narrative gained prominence in Canada. The first iteration is one that weaves a narrative of the emergence of multiculturalism as a top down process initiated by the good work of a few enlightened politicians like John Diefenbaker and

Pierre Trudeau who responded to the changing social climate of their times by enacting progressive legislation and policies. An important contextual aspect of this top down narrative is the extent to which these types of modern policies worked to aid the project of Canada's involvement in the UN and its role in advocating peaceful mediation of ethnic conflicts in the global arena. Canada's involvement with the UN as global middle power and its advocacy of peaceful mediation needed to be reconciled with the place of non-British and French populations in the Canadian state (Galabuzi, 2011). Contrary to the top-down narrative that highlighted the work of politicians, the bottom up narrative of multiculturalism highlights the role that popular opinion and pressure played in forcing the hands of the political elite into recognising the diverse ethnic make-up of the Canadian population (Galabuzi, 2011).

Central to either iteration of multiculturalism are the politics of recognition. Since the 1970s, the Canadian state has moved away from explicit assimilation or amalgamation policies in favour of recognition processes that aim to reconcile both Indigenous claims for sovereignty and demands from minorities for recognition in the political sphere. The problem with this reframing, in favour of recognition, is that processes of recognition are often asymmetrical and non-reciprocal. Ultimately, marginalized groups are not so much recognized for their equal value as much as they are tolerated within the overarching project – Indigenous groups and other marginalized groups are required to operate within the rules set by the state (Egan, 2011). While these narratives recognize the diversity of the Canadian population, multicultural discourses are also often criticized for ignoring Indigenous realities and the histories of conquest and dispossession that are an integral part of the foundation of Canada (Galabuzi, 2011). In instances where white Europeans are re-identified as immigrants in the multicultural mosaic, the violence and injustice of colonialism is framed as simply another wave of earlier migration and the violence of the colonial project just a by-product of cultural contact (Sharma, 2011).

In her discussion of the proliferation of the discourse of Canadian multiculturalism, Mackey (1999) frames the discourse in relation to its potential for supporting the myth of Canada's tolerant, benevolent nationhood. For Mackey (1999) a central problem with this framing is that any notion of multiculturalism situates the Anglo-Canadian as the core culture against which all others become multicultural and diverse, a formulation that maintains Anglo-Canadian as the unmarked, dominant culture. Equally problematic to the framing of discourses of multiculturalism is the notion that the celebration of this diversity is rooted in British Christian

values of openness and tolerance (Joshee & Johnson, 2007). Taken in the wider context of the Canadian nation-building project, Mackey (1999) argues that the promotion of multiculturalism as a national myth is a project primarily founded on the controlling and management, as opposed to erasure, of difference. Although the strategies have been flexible over time, the two essential and constant features that permeate over time in the management of difference is the shared assumption that in order to be a strong and sovereign nation, that nation must have a bounded identity that sets it apart from other nations, and that to create such a bounded identity, cultural diversity must be managed and controlled in service of cementing the core culture. Essentially, diversity is permitted so long as Canada and Canadians come first (Mackey, 1999). Rather than thinking about cultural homogeneity versus cultural diversity, Mackey (1999) contends, this type of nation-building project focuses on the question of who has the authority to define the project. While cultural diversity and pluralism are permitted, it is only in instances where the entire overarching cultural project is Western (Mackey, 1999).

Although liberal values of equality, reflected in the discourses of both tolerance and multiculturalism, have dominated the Canadian socio-political discourse of identity politics, Canadian historical narratives have also promoted a conservatively tempered discourse of compromise and gradualism. In terms of the political development of the nation, Canadian historical narratives often offer a narrative of a gradual movement towards independence where the dominant image of political change does not consist of “heroic figures storming the bastions of privilege, or raising a flag of liberty, but instead, a group of men in suits haggling around a conference table” (Francis, 1997, p. 87). Instead, Canada was founded through processes of stable and gradual negotiation and compromise, not violent upheaval and revolution as had occurred south of the border (Francis, 1997). Set distinctly against the sensationalism and indulgence of US society and politics, Canadian democracy has embodied, in large part due to its connection to the British monarchy and parliamentary system, a more reserved air of deference (Francis, 1997).

This gradual transition from dependent colony to self-governing dominion can be best understood within the larger context of traditional approaches to historical narratives and studies that focus primarily on political, military and economic processes. Although it is a master narrative that dominated earlier educational contexts, the emphasis on Canada’s ties to Britain and its gradual emergence as a self-governing dominion still hold in the specific context of a



particularly traditional approach to historical study that gained currency beginning in the 1980s. Focused on the promotion of the superiority of British forms of government and Canada's gradual transition from colony to equal partner in the imperial enterprise (Francis, 1997), Canadian history from this perspective takes a chronological approach to traditional topics such as European exploration, settlement and Confederation (Osborne, 2011). Resembling a process of gradual maturation from child to adulthood, this imperialist narrative of Canadian history, promotes a conventional storyline that begins the story of the Canadian nation with the conquest of the French by the British on the Plains of Abraham, moves onto the extension of representative political institutions, and concludes with the Confederation and the expansion and consolidation of the Dominion (Francis, 1997).

Struggling to formulate a new basis for identity as Canada's ties to Britain weakened in the aftermath of WWI, political elites began concentrating on Canada's role in international affairs as the basis for Canadianness. In the midst of this doubled colonial relationship and out of this kind of third space, Canadian political elites carved out Canada's role, and subsequently its identity, outside of its own borders in the arena of international affairs as mediator and negotiator. Since Canada had strong ties with Britain and was also economically and geographically linked with the United States, Canada would be able to act as a kind of diplomatic middleman in the international arena. This notion of diplomatic middleman, termed the lynchpin theory (Richardson, 2002), served a dual function that effectively made Canada's strong lack of a unique identity a point of virtue while at the same time increasing its international status (Richardson, 2002). This lynchpin theory would evolve so much that by the 1960s Canada's image as a peacekeeping nation had become cemented into popular consciousness both domestically and internationally. In the twenty years that followed the Second World War Canada emerged in the international arena as a peacekeeping leader. McKay and Swift (2013) contend that while Canada's role in the development of peacekeeping in the international arena, the reasons for Canada's participation in peacekeeping missions, and the extent to which peacekeeping is a core element of Canadian identity can be debated, what is empirically proven is the extent to which Canada came to be synonymous with peacekeeping.

Closely tied to the re-articulation of Canada's identity as based outside of its traditional political borders are attempts to reformulate Canadian identity primarily in relation to military achievements. Although the articulation of traditional narratives of Canadian imperialism often

go hand in hand with liberal discourses of tolerance, multiculturalism, reasoned and rational negotiation, and accommodation, McKay and Swift (2013) argue that there is a movement in Canadian identity politics to rebrand the Canadian nation primarily in terms of its military history and achievements – a reformulation of the central myths of the peaceable kingdom into what these two authors term the ‘warrior nation.’ Aligned with more conservative approaches to history and reflective of the rise of neoconservative values<sup>31</sup>, and the particular kind of history that Jack Granatstein would like to see promoted in Canadian popular consciousness and education, the warrior nation message revives strong currents of Victorian imperialism which frame Canada as a “crusading kingdom founded upon specific British and Christian traditions...” (McKay & Swift, 2013, p. 270). It is a narrative hinged on the notion that the military is intertwined with democracy (McKay & Swift, 2013). New warriors target the old myth-symbol complex that emerged during the 1960s, namely the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, bilingualism, multiculturalism, gender equality and peacekeeping, and replace them with religious fundamentalism, the military, manly sports, and the special (external) relationships with the United States and Britain as core attributes of the Canadian identity (McKay & Swift, 2013). The warrior nation narrative of Canadian history is one that seeks to omit the kinds of traits and values that many liberally minded Canadians grew up with, including multiculturalism, a strong welfare state, peacekeeping, regionalism, and a strong sense of collaborative and consensual approaches to problem solving in favour of building an understanding of Canada based on war (McKay & Swift, 2013). From this perspective, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was punctuated by minor events like the Great Depression, the emergence of the welfare state, and even the achievement of independence from the British Empire and shaped most significantly by war (McKay & Swift, 2013). For warrior historians, Canada “is not a country offering any significant public provision to its most vulnerable ...it is a virtuous nation of warriors...based on blood and soil, sanctified by battle deaths” (McKay & Swift, 2013, p. 12).

The formulation and articulation of the narrative of Canadian history and Canadian identity has shifted somewhat as societal implications of the growing recognition of diversity

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<sup>31</sup> Neoconservatives are guided by a vision of a strong state that exercises considerable control over knowledge and culture. In the sphere of education, history becomes the most important subject because of its strong influence on the formation of identity as well as its ideas about the past and the future (Tabrizi, 2014). History, and history education, are essential in the promotion of the strong unified identity demanded for the cultivation of a strong sense of patriotism.

came to dominate the definition of what it means to be Canadian. Old, traditional myths and meta-narratives of explicit Anglo-conformity have largely fallen by the wayside in favour of promoting Canada in relation to its history of diverse populations and the challenges presented by such regional, cultural and linguistic diversity. Processes of nation building are largely framed in terms of the efforts of a number of diverse populations working inside and outside of traditional political borders to secure the broad, largely Anglo-Canadian, goal of a unified nation.

### **Analysis and Interpretations**

Both the wider historical climate of the period as well as secondary sources that have detailed the evolution of historic discourses of the Canadian nation serve as the foundation for the analysis and interpretations of secondary history curriculum released during the 1990s in Saskatchewan. Despite their publication dates, 1992, 1994, and 1997 respectively, these secondary history curriculum guides are currently in use. In this way, while my analysis is a study of current curriculum, it is historically contextualized within the socio-political and education climate of the 1990s as well as dominant discourses that reflect long held beliefs about the Canadian nation. Although history curriculum at both the grade 10 and 11 levels were included within the document analysis, the History 30 curriculum guide, with its specific and detailed focus on Canadian history, takes particular precedence in my analysis, interpretations and conclusions. Grounded in both mainstream historical analysis and historical discourse analysis, my aim is to critically examine the ideas that inform national narratives in light of the power they have to shape the contours of our collective identity.

Produced as a result of the 1981 Social Studies Task Force, curriculum renewals released throughout the 1990s in Saskatchewan focused on providing students with opportunities to “know the past, understand the present, and shape the future” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 1992, 1994, 1997). In the context of historical study this has resulted in a pragmatic and utilitarian approach where students see the links between Canada’s past and contemporary issues and conflicts. A long-standing aim within the broader context of social studies in the province has been to cultivate in students a sense of historical consciousness that accentuates the links between past, present, and future. All three curriculum guides under examination in this chapter adhere to the same structure and organization. Foundational objectives, subdivided into knowledge, skills, and values, outline the mandatory aims for each of the three courses. Unlike

more recent curricular renewals in the province, these guides are intensely prescriptive in nature. In addition to foundational objectives for each of the courses, each guide includes more specific learning objectives as well as detailed content overviews organized into sequential full unit plans accompanied by suggestions for learning activities as well as assessments. Although not an explicit requirement, as teachers do have the power to develop their own content and unit/lesson sequencing, the curriculum guides are so prescriptive (each running well over 200 pages each) that a teacher could potentially use the curriculum guide and accompanying student reading resource packet as the sole resources for course planning and delivery.

History 10 aims to help students understand and think critically about the basic organization of industrialized, democratic societies. Students explore political decision-making, the historical development of political ideologies, the development of the social contract as the foundation for the formation of organized societies, economic decision making, imperialism, and finally international political relations.<sup>32</sup> History 20 picks up where History 10 leaves off and begins with an examination of international (European, Russia, and the United States) relations as these nations emerged from the aftermath of WWI, the rise of nationalism and totalitarian states, the Second World War, and the emergence of the United States and Soviet Union as superpowers. The final unit of the course deals with contemporary global issues like environmental change, population growth, human rights, and world governance. History 30, as stated above, is the course that deals explicitly with Canadian history. The course is chronological in nature and focuses primarily, in much the same fashion as the history courses offered at the grade 10 and 11 levels, on political, economic and military history. The course begins with a history of the relationship that developed in early Canada between European and Indigenous peoples, moves into what is assumed to be defining moments of political and economic development (Confederation, BNA, the National Policy, Western settlement, the rise of the welfare state in the aftermath of WWII), and concludes with two units focused on a number of domestic and external forces that have impacted Canada in the period from 1945 to the contemporary era (1990s). Since there have been no curricular renewals for History since their reintroduction in the 1990s, analysis and interpretations are presented thematically

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<sup>32</sup> This unit deals explicitly with the political climate that led to the outbreak of the First World War.

following from the dominant discourses of nation found within secondary literature on the subject.

### **Diversity and Tolerance**

Taken up in the context of both the teaching of controversial issues as well as content and values objectives within each of the courses of study, two prevalent discourses emerge to inform thinking about values core to representations of the Canadian identity: the respect of and tolerance for diversity and the balance between individual rights and responsibilities (freedom versus order). In laying the foundation for the approach to social studies taken up within each of the guides released in the 1990s, each guide from the period includes an overview of the prescribed approach to the teaching of controversial issues within the discipline of social studies. Along with an endorsement to tackle such issues, as well as their debate in the classroom, the discussion outlines an approach that places the values of tolerance and diversity as foundational. While a number of perspectives and values may exist in relation to any given controversial issue, the fundamental rights that should inform the teaching of controversial issues in social studies are the “fundamental” values of our society: human dignity, the basic rights and responsibilities defined by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and respect for and tolerance of diversity (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10: Social Organizations, 1992, p. 17).

The concept of pluralism is included as core content within the first unit of study for History 10 students. Defined as the belief that unique cultural differences should be recognized and protected and framed within the larger context the role that cultural traditions play in the “problems of ordered social life” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, p. 112), students are exposed to the notion of Canada’s pluralism. These unique cultural differences have resulted in disagreements about both social organization and gender roles (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992). History 20 continues to build on this representation of diversity and pluralism as problematic by extending the framing into the arena of national unity and contemporary global issues. In the fourth unit of study, focused on self determination, the superpowers (United States and Soviet Union) and the growth of independence movements as British colonies increasingly demanded independence, knowledge objectives accentuate the difficulties presented by diversity and the demands of diverse populations for recognition in the political sphere. Students are expected to “know that the desire of ethnic groups for political

legitimization, as distinct groups, places pressure on the host nation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 408) and to “discuss the difficulties that can arise when diverse groups live in the same locality” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 418) with particular emphasis on the relationships between English and French communities in Canada. The fifth unit of study, global issues, reiterates the potential for instability again noting that the desire for greater power in decision making within society “has the potential to contribute to both political and social instability” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 503). Far from the celebration of diversity often part and parcel to discourses of pluralism, representations like these weave a story of diversity as largely problematic and potentially disruptive.

Although not an obvious point of “celebration” of Canadian tolerance, Canada’s adoption and implementation of multiculturalism is represented in a manner that accentuates this as a point of differentiation from other intolerant nations. The suggested teaching section that deals with the concept of multiculturalism in History 20 encourages a discussion with students that highlights both the benefits that Canadian society has experienced because of the acceptance of diverse cultures and also how this sets Canada apart since some “societies do not promote or even condone the presence of minority cultures within the mainstream society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 521). History 30 addresses the notion of multiculturalism in the Canadian context within the final unit of study focused on contemporary domestic challenges facing the Canadian nation, specifically as part of the following foundational objective for the course: “know that Canadian society and its institutions are seeking to meet the challenges that arise within an increasingly diverse society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 507). Here, students are encouraged to know that Canada has not implemented assimilationist immigration policies since the 1960s and that the principles that informed official multicultural policies flowed from a desire to enable minority participation in mainstream society and secure national unity (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997).

While diversity and tolerance are generally represented as a given in Canadian society, the History 30 guide also problematizes and disrupts the notion that Canada has always been accepting of diversity. There are a number of instances throughout the 30 level survey of Canadian history where students are exposed to the idea that Canada has a history of excluding

the voices of particular segments of the population. Explored in the context of decision-making and political voice, students are encouraged to learn that diversity can be at the root of inequity. While considering the formation of Canada's early political institutions, teachers are encouraged to ask students to consider the impact of "poverty, gender, age, region, education and ethnicity in the ability of an individual or group to influence decision making" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 135). In another instance tied to political decision-making powers, students are exposed to the historic limitations of the voting process in Canada. The validity of calling the new nation a "democracy" is even called into question because "electoral practices and assumptions continued to distort the electoral process" (Sask. Education, History 30, 1997, p. 230). In addition to these inequities with regards to political decision-making powers, History 30 also highlights the discrimination that rises during times of crises. Included within the larger context of WWII and its challenges to "the democratic values of the nation" (Sask. Education, History 30, 1997, p. 322), there is content that points to government action aimed at quelling fears over enemy aliens. The content outlines the point that the Canadian government developed policies aimed at minorities and pacifists that included the closing of German language schools and papers and individuals being "fired from their [enemy aliens] jobs and placed under police surveillance" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 322).

Arguably the most significant of such examples is the fact that the event this guide chooses as Canada's moment of birth, Confederation, is represented as an exclusionary process. Within the second unit of study, "The Road to Democracy", Confederation is described as a "political process that ... was largely a dialogue between the English and French speaking communities of central Canada... [where] significant segments of the population of the new nation were neither consulted nor involved in the decision making..." (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 203). Study of 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration and immigration policies also challenge the notion of Canada's long history of tolerance by highlighting societal opposition to non-British immigrants as well as exclusionary immigration policies like the Immigration Act of 1952 that excused immigrants based on nationality, geographic origin, peculiarity of custom, unsuitability of climate, and probable inability to be "readily assimilated" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 507).

Despite these critiques, the notion of plurality, tolerance and benevolence extends into the treatment of Canada's colonial past clearly at all three grade levels. The concept of colonization is first introduced in History 10 as a natural economic imperative: "Britain needed new markets and turned to the Atlantic economy as an alternative" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, p. 232). Slavery is presented in similar economic terms as students are encouraged to "know that if a factor of production is extremely scarce and therefore expensive, individuals will search for cheaper alternatives" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 232). Building on the economic imperatives involved in the formation of colonial relationships, suggested teaching activities encourage teachers to ask students to weigh the pros and cons of North America as a hinterland. Listed among the costs for this activity is the seizing of Indian lands (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992). The emphasis on such economic imperatives conceals the human costs involved in such processes and mitigates the injustices experienced by individuals, communities, and cultures that inevitably result from colonial policies and practices.

In addition to downplaying the impact of colonial practices, these guides also have a tendency to distance Canada from such practices. Whether through mitigating personal responsibility or through examinations of colonial practices outside of the Canadian context, there are examples from both content and learning objectives throughout the guides that support a narrative of innocence. In History 30, responsibility for colonial practices are removed from the people inhabiting what is now Canada and experiences of settlers and Indigenous peoples are actually even conflated - "Colonial decision making was the prerogative of the governing European power rather than either the residents of the colonies or First Nations... most of New France's residents had little input" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 122). Such a statement absolves residents of the colonies (settlers) from any role or responsibility in the events that unfolded. Ultimately, it is not the settlers who are responsible, but only the government officials.

Forceful and coercive eviction of Indigenous peoples from traditional territories is often treated with the same kind of innocence. In History 20, for instance, students learn that "Indigenous peoples *lost* control over the land and as such lost the means of economic survival" (Sask. Education, History 20, 1994, p. 120; emphasis added). A point reiterated later in the same course with the statement that "Indigenous peoples have had to face cultural collapse that



accompanies the *loss* of their land, language, their social and political systems and their knowledge” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 520). This kind of passive framing, where the repercussions of colonial practices are acknowledged but not examined critically to any real degree, reappears in History 20 in addressing the challenges of achieving social justice for Indigenous peoples. Just as Indigenous peoples continue to feel the impacts of the “loss” of their lands, they were “faced with” the realities of the declining buffalo and the threat of violence in the American context, and so “reluctantly concluded treaties with the Canadian government” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 244). Such simplistic representations fail to recognize the agency and forward looking intent of many First Nations leaders in their efforts to secure continued ways of life for their communities in spite of colonial violence. The danger in presenting such broad sweeping statements neglects the nuance and complexity involved in the treaty making process.

In History 30, students are required to explore the National Policy in the context of westward expansion and unification imperatives. Although it is noted that the government failed to consult with Aboriginal communities and that many communities were significantly impacted by the policy, there is no content or suggested activities to determine the extent to which that policy was connected to the mass starvation that afflicted many communities at the deliberate hands of government officials including then Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald (Daschuk, 2014). Later on, content does acknowledge the extent to which agricultural aid was often slow to come and insufficient even when it was provided, but the hardships faced by communities are framed again without the assignment of any real responsibility to the Canadian government – “Without a means to secure their economic well-being, the First Nations of the Prairies were to continue to endure frequent starvation, disease, inadequate housing and the other ills that accompany poverty” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 252). Without a means to secure is language that implies First Nations peoples were inadequate and incapable of securing their economic wellbeing. In this way, it is language that works to frame Indigenous peoples as incapable of modern life as well as absolve the government from the failure to fulfill its obligations to those communities.

The fourth unit of study in History 10, focused explicitly on the concept of imperialism in the context of international economic relations, deals with the impacts of imperialism through the use of primarily non-Canadian examples. The only explicit example of “forcible eviction” (p.

403) of Indigenous peoples from traditional territories is presented in the context of the eviction of the Cherokee Nation from their territories through American federal government policy and even then, deals primarily with the application of the political concept of sovereignty in the examination of such political actions. This trend continues into the next unit where Egypt is used as a site of analysis for the examination of assimilationist policies and Japan for exploration of policies of accommodation (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992).

Further along in the unit, students explore the potential effects of colonization. Here, there is an alarming framing that could result in developing an understanding of colonization that neglects the human costs of such activities. A suggested activity encourages students to consider the repercussions of their high school being taken over by another “larger, more successful collegiate that has a reputation for being a winner in everything they do” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, p. 415). Students consider the potential merits of the “merger” within the context of four cultural contact relationships (accommodation, assimilation, segregation, and annihilation) in order to decide whether it would be desirable to them. In a subsequent suggested activity, the analogy is extended to the national context and students are asked to consider “how they would decide whether Canada was better off being a colony” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, p. 417). The result is consistent with the economic framing of colonialism earlier in the course, that is, the mitigation of the injustice of colonial policies. This activity has the potential to leave students with the impression that colonialism is a desirable imperative for Indigenous populations, a narrative that certainly supports the promotion of assimilation as beneficial.

Even in some examples where Canada, or Britain in the pre-Confederation period, does appear, there is an effort to emphasize Canada’s unique history of tolerance as compared to other more aggressive nations like the United States. In framing early contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada, the concept of assimilation, one of the four relationships that can emerge from cultural contact, is described in highly non-violent and passive ways. Students are encouraged to understand that assimilation occurs when “a less powerful culture is merged with another dominant culture so that the identity of the assimilated culture is lost” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 119). While annihilation is described in more destructive terms, the overarching result is a representation of assimilation as non-violent.

In one instance, the Royal Proclamation is used as a point to distinguish British tolerance against the intolerance of Americans. This explanation of the document includes an overview of the American anger that it incurred as it provided a potential legal blockade to American western expansion. Connected to the same discussion of early conflict between American and British officials, students are also encouraged to explore the implementation of US Federal government policy that created the right for itself to quarantine Indian people so that they could “civilize” them as well as the “human costs of the Trail of Tears on the Cherokee Nation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 422). In another instance, at the 30 level this time, students are encouraged to view Canada’s unique role in the international sphere as a leader within the Commonwealth. Canada is promoted as a leader of sorts and role model in the transition of other nations within the commonwealth from colony to independent state. The appeal of Canada to new nations in Africa and Asia is explained through the fact that Canada never possessed a colonial empire. In this way, “Canadian leadership in the Commonwealth was to facilitate good relations with many newly independent Commonwealth nations” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 424). This is a blatant strategy that attempts to not only distance Canada from processes of colonialism, but actually erase that history altogether. This is an example of omission as a hegemonic strategy.

All of these examples clearly illustrate the way discourses of colonialism without any colonizers helps to support an understanding of a colonial past that supports a narrative of innocence. While there are certainly instances where colonial practices are linked with Canadian policies and even that imperial pursuits are often justified through rationalizations grounded in racism and ethnocentrism, there are also ample examples to illustrate the promotion of a narrative that seeks to ameliorate culpability for the ongoing consequences of those policies and promote a narrative of Canada as a nation void of colonialism or colonizers.

### **Freedom versus Order**

Individual rights and freedoms are regularly scrutinized in the wider context of society at large in History 10 and 20. Students are prompted on multiple occasions to weigh the importance of individual rights against the responsibilities of the wider community. Since the guide favours the clarification approach to questions of values, there is considerable focus on students weighing the merits of particular values. Of all of the values that students are asked to

consider, there is considerable attention paid to the question of weighing individual and collective rights and freedoms. Included within content that focuses on the development of French society as it transitioned to a society based on the values of “equality and liberty” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 27) students are prompted to understand that “freedom is a significant value in Canadian society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 11). However, some pages later that “...in order to have security, stability, and predictability, humans tacitly agree to conform...” and that “social organizations provide them [Canadians] with meaning and purpose, and give them direction and discipline” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 104, 111). History 20 offers the same kind of contradictory suggestions in the framing of freedoms versus order. In the examination of the aftermath of WWII, students are encouraged to “know that the freedom to live life according to the dictates of conscience is a significant value in Canadian society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 428). Within the same unit of study though, students are also encouraged to consider the appropriate balance between order and freedom in society by preparing a short paper that addresses that issue directly (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994). The definition of politics itself within the History guide is clearly linked to the value of an ordered society: “know that politics is the process of conciliating individuals and groups by giving them a share of valued scarce commodities according to the amount of power they wield within society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 310). Viewed in this way, politics is a concept primarily concerned with controlling or quelling the masses based on the amount of power possessed by that group or individual. What is lost in the exploration of politics from this perspective is any attention to the means by which groups and individuals ascertain power. Despite such a focus on politics and political ideologies and apart from an understanding that meritocracy is a legitimate source of power in the development of hierarchies (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992), there is very little exploration of the concept of power in politics.

Taken up in the context of government intervention into the lives of everyday citizens at the 30 level, this question of the balance between freedom and order is presented historically through the exploration of shifts in Canadian government policies that resulted in the formation of the welfare state post WWII and the later shift in the 1980s that ushered in an era of decreased government intervention in society. Perhaps indicative of the influence of regional political

culture, the shift towards neoliberal policies that began in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s is criticized to some degree. Core content as well as knowledge objectives connected to the examination of the political climate of the 1980s indicate an effort to analyze and challenge the taken for granted notion that economic globalization should be promoted at all costs and that the government should have a limited role in people's lives. Students are required to understand that "the Canadian political scene did not remain impervious to the political rise of neo-conservatism" and also "know that there was the opinion that government could play a significant and positive force in guiding economic activity and formulating the national economic agenda" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 542). Although students are presented with three paradigms for exploring varying viewpoints concerning the relationship between the government and the people, the content presented in the guide does make an effort to highlight the negative consequences (i.e. reductions of federal funding to social programming; increased costs to provincial governments that may result from such reductions) of what is referred to as the neoconservative approach. Students are even encouraged to understand that "certain services or responsibilities should be controlled by the public and not left to the workings of the marketplace" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 543). It is objectives such as this that emphasize a more progressive political outlook and encourage criticism of the often taken for granted narratives of the demonization of government intervention and regulation of private enterprise.

### **A Precarious Unity: Accommodation, Negotiation and External Forces**

Partnered with these notions the balance between order and freedom is the promotion of Canada's gradual emergence as a nation based on the principles of negotiation and accommodation. In the treatment of both historical and contemporary processes and events, the overarching narrative in the History 30 guide is the construction of a nation based on the principles of accommodation and negotiation. Beginning at Canada's moment of birth, this narrative of accommodation and negotiation highlights the influence that French speaking communities and regions outside of central Canada have had on the goals of unification in the country. Described as a process of negotiation between English and French speaking communities in central Canada, the British North America Act is viewed as the culmination of long negotiations centred on the goal of unification (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). Over several pages, the processes of negotiation and accommodation focus

on exploring the demands from French speaking communities and the issues presented by Canadian regional diversity. The decision to structure Canadian government as a federal state is explained through reference to the concerns from both French and Maritime communities about a concentration of power within a centralized government (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997).

The strain between English and French speaking populations persists into the third unit of study that deals with Canada in the midst of World War I and the Great Depression. Early twentieth century challenges to national unity are framed in terms of concerns over British influence over Canadian foreign affairs. Core content that explores these tensions between Canadian nationalists and imperialists encourages students to understand that “repeated expectations of Canada to actively support Britain’s international wellbeing, tested Canadian national unity” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 316). The tensions caused by French opposition to Canadian involvement in World War I, conscription in particular, are a point of emphasis, and World War I is described as being increasingly associated with Britain and English speaking Canada. Students are required to “know that conscriptions seriously divided English and French Canada and imperilled the unity of the nation” and that “French Canadians were opposed to conscription” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 320). In the early years of Canada’s formation and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, students learn that Canada has consistently carried out the work of accommodation and negotiation in federal-provincial relations.

Reflecting perhaps a glimmer of formulations of Canada as the warrior nation, WWI is also framed as a turning point in Canadian independence. In line with articulations of the warrior nation discourse of great achievements of valour and the sacrifice those achievements rest on, Canada is described as emerging from the Great War as a more independent nation, “Canadian military achievements and the human price of those achievements contributed to a growing belief that Canada was not fighting as a British colony, but as an independent nation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 324). Canada’s participation in WWI is used as a turning point in solidifying an identity distinct from its British colonial ties.

The particular challenges brought about by western discontent on the Prairies is also a point of emphasis within the larger narrative of the negotiation and accommodation in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The challenges brought about by larger socio-political and economic

events and processes of the Great Depression are used to frame calls from farmers and organized labour on the Prairies for the government to take a more active role to ameliorate regional inequities that became especially pronounced during the period. As wheat production slowed, prices dropped, and drought conditions extended, both bankruptcy and migration out of the province increased exponentially (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). Core knowledge objectives for the exploration of the changing socio-political climate of the Depression years require that students “Know that the social and economic dislocations caused by the Depression gave rise to new political movements that articulated a role for government in securing the wellbeing of the citizenry, and that these movements challenged existing assumptions and practices” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 342). As the chronological narrative builds, it is the seeds of regional discontent sown during the Depression years that contribute to the formulation of a unique political culture, namely the formation of “movements [CCF, Social Credit, Union Nationale] that were not extremist...[that] were able to attract sizable followings” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 344), in the province of Saskatchewan which then leads to content focused on the development of reform liberalism and the role that this ideological frame had in the development of the Canadian welfare state.

The focus on defence from foreign influence shifts as the historical narrative moves into post World War II period. Just as concern over British influence in Canadian policy, voiced primarily by French speaking communities and politicians, in the context of WWI and its aftermath is highlighted, History 30 content accentuates Canada’s fight to assert sovereignty in the post WWII period – this time against the growing influence of the United States (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). In providing an overview for the fourth unit of study (The Forces of Nationalism) the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian history is characterized by the extent to which external forces, like WWII and the Great Depression, have influenced the wellbeing of the nation. As Canada entered into the post WWII period, “Canadians have had to face new external realities such as the growing influence of the US” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 403). Nationalism itself is defined within the unit as protection of the nation from external forces and Canada’s cultivation of closer ties with the United States following WWII are even framed in terms of protecting Canada from

the perceived threat of communist expansion (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997).

While many were accepting of the new centrality of Canada's relationship with the United States in the period immediately following WWII, content in the History 30 guide depicts a shift in the views of this relationship as Canada moved into the 1970s. Explored through the opposing viewpoints of continentalists and nationalists, there seems to be increasing attention paid to Canada's growing dependence on the United States, especially with respect to economic policy. Students are required to "know that both continentalist and nationalist sentiments have influenced foreign policies and actions of successive Canadian governments" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 414). The core content narrative of the guide points to the development of Trudeau's "Third Option" as a significant response aimed to alleviate nationalists' fears over Canada's growing dependence on the United States in terms of economic policy. Included within the core content for the unit, students are required to understand that "as Canadian economic dependence on the United States increased, the Trudeau government announced its "Third Option" ... [which aimed to] increase trade with other nations and thereby reduce dependence on the US" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 422).

In addition to these forces, the narrative of the challenges presented by linguistic, cultural and regional diversity that had figured prominently in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continue to occupy significant space in the 1945-1975 period. Just as students were presented with questions that would require them to consider how regional forces presented unique difficulties in the historical context of Confederation and post WWII Canada, English-French relations and regional discontent are prevalent in the exploration forces that have shaped recent (1990s) events and will continue to shape the Canada's future. Significant pieces of content focus on the rise of Quebec nationalism in the 1960s as well as western discontent/alienation stemming from political decision making that was perceived as primarily concerned with servicing the needs of central Canada (i.e., The National Energy Plan) (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997).

Stemming from concerns over the existing political, social, and economic status quo, both francophone and regional concerns have resulted in the development of deep divides in the country. Ethnic nationalism is explored in the context of the rise of francophone nationalism in Quebec and regional disparities, which stem from the economic, geographic and political



realities produced by the hinterland, heartland dynamic, are viewed as creating “two Canadas” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 438). While many westerners felt that “the resource rich prairie provinces had been exploited by national governments that reflected the interests of central Canadians” (Sask. Education, History 30, 1997, p. 440), events such as the passing of the Charter of the French Language (that ensures the prominence of French within the province of Quebec) “angered both the English speaking minority within Quebec and many in other English speaking regions of the nation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 436).

Canada’s repatriation of the Constitution Act is framed in much the same way that the process of Confederation is treated. While it is not explicitly defined as an elite affair, content focused on the Constitution Act works to highlight the discontent voiced by women about the failure of the act to address issues of “control over reproduction, preventing discrimination based on marital status, sexual orientation and political beliefs” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 511). Aboriginal discontent is provided some space in the guide through the exploration of the inclusion of Aboriginal rights into the constitution as well as the proposal and subsequent backlash over the Trudeau government’s White Paper (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997).

Moving into the 1990s, the Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords provide evidence for the continuing challenges of regional and political diversity in the country and the debate over separation of powers between federal and provincial authorities (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). Students are required to “know that the failed attempts to reach a constitutional agreement with Quebec produced political consequences at both the federal and provincial levels” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, p. 556). The narrative of threats to unity and the challenges presented by efforts of accommodation and negotiation follow through to the final pages of the History 30 guide. As the course wraps up, the final message, in looking towards the future of the state of the Canadian nation and its precarious existence, is that this future rests on the country’s responses to the growing challenges to diversity, namely Quebec nationalism and regional discontent. Content and objectives aimed at exploring the “crises” in national unity and identity in the 1990s culminate with an articulation that “the future of the Canadian nation is uncertain,” but also that “...the Canadian nation has many attributes that can enable it to respond to both domestic and global challenges” (Saskatchewan Ministry of

Education, History 30, p. 556). Suggested activities to end the course encourage students to examine and share their findings concerning some of the challenges and opportunities facing Canada at the close of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The clear message is that Canada faces more uncertainty and challenges presented by its diverse character as it moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

History curriculum in Saskatchewan in the 1990s is largely reflective of both the socio-political and educational climate of the era in which it was created. Taken up in the context of renewed emphasis on history education in the wider climate of concerns in society at large over the future of a unified Canadian state, the History 30 curriculum in particular is a direct product of those dominant historical and contemporary discourses that circulated in both the educational scene as well as the mass media during the era. Canada's identity, both in historical and contemporary contexts, frequently revolves around building a narrative that embraces and embodies the principles of diversity, tolerance, accommodation and negotiation. Often set against the more patriotic expressions of national unity in the United States, Canada has also often been depicted as a nation that holds the idea of a "lack" as a central unifying force. As such, the discourses of multiculturalism and pluralism have been able to gain dominant status in framing that "lack" in positive, and sometimes misleading, ways. In this way, Canada's discourses of nation are informed by the desire to create a central unifying force out of the fact that Canada lacks a central, unifying cultural heritage.

Since Canada is often viewed in terms of what it is *not*, it also seems fitting that dominant discourses of the Canadian nation often locate the Canadian identity, and the events that shaped that identity, outside of its own borders. Often characterized as an important middleman in international affairs, narratives of the Canadian identity frequently stress the importance of Canada's international relationships, especially those with the United States and Great Britain. Canada's history of accommodation and negotiation are points of emphasis throughout the narrative woven in History 30. These issues are used as central points in thinking about the challenges that Canadians are facing. Content from the History 10 and 20 guides work together to support a strong narrative in popular representations of Canada, which is that the Canadian state is largely defined by events and processes that occur outside of its traditional political boundaries in both ideological and practical terms. In History 10 students explore the Western ideological roots of our political values and social organization and History 20 builds on this

notion of Canada's identity as transfixed by and outside of its own borders through the study of international issues like WWII, the Cold War, human rights, and environmental issues. It is not until grade 12 that students begin to explore and study events and processes that focus explicitly on events and processes that occurred within what are now Canada's traditional political boundaries.

Another major theme in history education at the secondary level in terms of both the nature of historical study and the historical narrative of the Canadian nation is the attention paid to political, economic, and military matters. Although each guide does pay some mind to the development of social issues, primarily issues of exclusion and calls from marginalized groups for greater representation in the body politic, history as presented in Saskatchewan at the secondary level is primarily traditional due to its heavy neglect of social histories that seek to highlight the everyday stories of everyday people. Generally speaking, the guides do little to highlight the work of ordinary individuals and, as a result, downplay the significance of human agency in understanding the complexities at work in historical events and processes. Instead, these guides represent history as a series of events and processes largely disconnected from the actions of the people that lived during those times in favour of focusing primarily on the development of ideas and their repercussions for societal change and development.

The discursive formations regarding the Canadian nation and identity work together to depict a nation built on the long-held values of diversity, negotiation and accommodation – including the appropriate balance between freedom and order. Canada is certainly represented as a nation with a history of exclusionary practices, but those exclusionary practices are generally limited to the political sphere of decision-making powers. There is a dominant thread in the narrative of the Canadian nation that seeks to represent Canadian history as frequently punctuated by calls from various groups, including women, workers, and Aboriginal peoples, for recognition in the Canadian body politic while simultaneously distancing the nation from its difficult, violent colonial past. From the moment Canada becomes a nation, it embodies the goals of negotiation and accommodation. Confederation, largely the result of English and French speaking negotiations, according to the guides, sets the stage for narratives in the guides that periodically highlight the effects that French speaking populations, Indigenous peoples, women, and minority immigrants had on political processes, events, and policy in Canada. Although the fact that Canada's exclusion of particular groups from the political process

throughout its history occupies a consistent space throughout the secondary guides, there is also a concerted effort to minimize and neglect the extent to which Canada's history is shaped by its colonial legacy. Despite these historic exclusions of marginalized groups, Canada is consistently described as a pluralistic society where there is "no [one] set of values" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 17). The conflicting forces that work against unity in Canada are framed in terms of challenges to the status quo from women, French Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. Canada is a nation that is built on the legacy of Western European political ideologies and negotiating space for the competing voices of minorities. Taken in sum the discourses used in the guides to imagine Canadian history and the modern issues facing the Canadian nation are those that work to recognize but at the same time diminish Canada's colonial past by highlighting Canada's commitments to pluralism and tolerance.

History, especially when taken up in the context of public education, is intended to provide a foundation from which Canadians can build a sense of shared identity, but the regional and cultural diversity that is integral to Canadian society is undermined by oversimplified, unitary narratives. The history of Canada can weave contradictory narratives depending on the perspective that is taken up and the socio-political context of the historical narrative itself. The predicament is seated in weaving a set of narratives that provide some sense of what it means to belong to a community outside our immediate neighbourhoods and provincial borders while acknowledging the varied lived experiences of the many different groups and individuals that have called Canada home.

While the curriculum documents recognize the significance of context and chronology, themes, issues, and concepts (particularly, political, economic and military) prevail. The guides contain some indications of the implications for historical thinking in developing a critically oriented historical study of Canadian history, but future curricular renewals would do well to incorporate such principles more heavily. The variety of perspectives and the extent to which the guides challenge the taken for granted notions of Canadian tolerance and acceptance of diversity needs to be integrated with more weight than the current simple acknowledgments of Canada's exclusion and mistreatment of particular groups in society. There is a need to go beyond initial problematization of the myths of Canadian inclusivity in favour of pushing to recognize the difficult parts of our past that have real and continuing implications for Indigenous communities and other marginalized populations. Learning about these historical processes has the potential

to allow students to see themselves in the historical narratives of Canada while also realizing the implications for the present and future, which is a long held goal for social studies in the province.

## Chapter 8

### **Constructions of Land, Geography, and Regionalism in Saskatchewan Social Studies: Discourses of Development, Utility, Cooperation, and Alienation**

When people weigh the nature of national identity there is a tendency to dwell on aspects of history, culture or race, but in Canada a sense of geography and space has never been very far afield from expressions of national identity. As Northrop Frye (1976) articulated in his concluding remarks on the literary history of Canada, Canadians have not so much been perplexed by the question of who am I as much as “by some such riddle as where is here?” (p. 826). Echoing these sentiments, Chambers’ (1999, 2006) argues that an exploration into *who* we are cannot be separated from *where* we are. To try and separate notions of identity from the places in which those identities are constructed is impossible because of the link between collective memory and place – a point that is particularly conspicuous in the context of Western Canada and its construction as “The Promised Land.”<sup>33</sup> Geography and the vastness of Canadian landscapes are also tied to prevalent themes of the unknown, unrealized, and elusive nature of Canadian identity. Frye (1965) argues that to feel Canadian is to feel a part of a no-man’s land with vast rivers, lakes, and islands that many Canadians have never seen. It is this feeling of vastness combined with the isolation of Canadian landscapes that brings to mind, for Frye (1965), the question of whether there is any other national consciousness with so “large an amount of the unknown, the unrealized, the humanly undigested, so built into it” (p.826). Across several disciplines, including literature, history, geography, sociology, and cultural studies, what remains constant within discussions of the intersection between place and identity is the centrality of the landscape and the myths inspired by those landscapes to the construction of Canadian national identity. Canadian novelists, literary critics, and historians often turn to Canada’s geographic characteristics in constructing narratives and explanations of Canadian character (Harris, 2017). In the transformation of the Canadian nation from Confederation to World War I, from frontier nation to Western industrial nation, Canada’s geography, and representations of northernness and wilderness as represented in the iconic paintings of the Group of Seven in particular, would come to represent Canada (Mackey, 1999). In this way,

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<sup>33</sup> Formative years of agricultural settlement in the Prairie West are replete with the discourse, more imagined than real, of agrarian utopia (Francis & Kitzan, 2007).

understanding the development and continual unfolding of images and ideals of Canada's relationships to place is essential to gaining insight into the national vision of Canada.

In addition to the deep-rooted connection between identity and place in the Canadian context, thinking about our connections to place and how we represent those places is particularly salient in our increasingly globalized and technological landscapes. The development of such modern landscapes create conditions where many find themselves disconnected or displaced from the places that they inhabit. The transition to a thoroughgoing modernity has resulted in both forcible displacement and feelings of disconnect caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding of place and why it matters (Hutchinson, 2004). Within this modern world, landscapes are increasingly homogenized and we become provisioned by vast global networks that we have little ability to control or fully understand. The end result of which can be felt in the frequent cluelessness about what we have lost and why (Hutchinson, 2004).

As our environmental concerns grow, and human created climate change threatens to become the defining struggle of our times, for many environmentally conscious observers, an essential element in the modern project of self-definition in the Canadian context becomes the reconciliation, both politically and theoretically, of the seemingly contradictory notions about our relationships with the natural world and the places we inhabit: nature as wilderness, as hinterland, Indigenous homelands, as cottage country refuge, and also nature as something to be commercialized, exploited, ravaged, but at the same time conserved and revered (Wright, 2004).

This increasing disconnect between people, communities, and place has been largely mirrored in the broad sphere of schooling. In his examination of the evolution and nature of the relationship between fisheries, the community and the ways that school was understood and experienced within that rural community, Corbett (2009) argues that formal education has been and continues to be a major institution for "disembedding", or loosening ties between peoples and their particular locales, in favour of promoting a migration out of rural communities in particular. There is an idea promoted within the education system that success, especially for those inhabiting small and/or rural communities, means migration out from their home communities in favour of transitioning to big, city centres (Corbett, 2009).

This chapter seeks to examine and situate narratives of land, geography, and place as they relate to notions of Canadian identity and nation-building as presented in Saskatchewan 7-12 social studies and history curriculum. I also seek to contextualize those representations through

an examination of how these narratives reflect prevailing discourses of place and identity in the Canadian context. The desired outcome is the construction of an analysis that offers some practical insight and critique of the conception(s) of land, geography, and place that we see in today's social studies curriculum in Saskatchewan.

### **Defining Place**

Despite the fact that notions of place originate within and are often most closely associated with the discipline of geography, place is often taken up in multi and interdisciplinary ways. Literature that deals with landscape in the Canadian context also crosses academic disciplines, including heavy contributions from art, anthropology, cultural studies, geography, sociology, architecture and education (Pente, 2009). Taken up in the educational context, place based approaches and projects often involve science and social studies and also aim to encourage active citizenship targeted at solving community issues (Williams Resor, 2010). Current educational trends that have favoured the development of outcomes based, standardized accountability-oriented curricula have meant that there is limited "place" to explore connections between people, communities and the places we inhabit. The whole intent of standardized curricula is to create and provide *accontextual*, standardized content and learning objectives that can be applied and measured independent of the places where learning takes place (Corbett, 2009). Gruenewald (2003) makes a similar argument about the problematic nature of accountability oriented discourses in education and their implications for place based education. From the perspective of place, Gruenewald (2003) contends, accountability discourse is problematic because it fails to recognize schools as mediators of the production of space (social context) through place makers (students, citizens). Such generic educational aims and objectives create educational experiences that result in the promotion of an education for "anywhere", the repercussions of which are the deterioration of schooling into an education for "nowhere" (Noddings, 2002 as cited in Greunewald, 2003).

Modern identities, at least partially formulated in schooling experiences, are detached from place. As Corbett (2009) argues, educated people today do not ask 'where are you from' but rather 'where are you going?' Conceptions of place and the narratives that we build about particular places depend on the construction of the idea of place. For Williams Resor (2010) there are three fundamental aspects of place: location, locale, and a sense of place. Location, the most objective and rarely contested of the three, simply refers to a fixed coordinate on the



surface of the planet. Locale begins to delve into the weighty meaning places hold in our lives and refers to the actual settings in which people live out their lives. Locales consist of the actual objects that make up the places that we inhabit: roads, buildings, walls, furniture, doors etc. While these two aspects of place rely primarily on an objective inventory to describe the physical setting of our lives, the final aspect focuses on the subjective realm of the attachments we have with these places. A sense of place is a phrase that geographers use to characterize the very subjective emotional attachments people cultivate with the places they inhabit. As such it is also the most contested of the three elements (Williams Resor, 2010). Place is imbued with emotion, defined by the boundaries that we create and also informed by the utility that we assign to the spaces in our lives. Perhaps the most succinct of definitions to capture the emotive and semiotic connections people construct with the places we inhabit comes from Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980 as cited in Hutchinson, 2004) who defines place as space plus character.

Gruenewald (2003) works to define place using five dimensions: the perceptual, sociological, ideological, ecological and local histories. Beginning with the personal experiences that shape our understanding of place, the perceptual dimension deals with the fact that places are grounded in human experience. That is, when we are open to those experiences with the places we inhabit, people are capable of perceiving and learning directly from the environments we inhabit. Expanding out from those personal perceptions, the sociological and ideological dimension take into account the connections between place and identity, cultural experience, and the power relationships in society. Places themselves are products of culture where power is spatially organized and reproduced within the context of both resource extraction and private property rights (Gruenewald, 2003). The ecological focus on principles of the natural world and the connections we have with those natural processes and systems, highlights the need within education to challenge relationships based on the exploitation of people and their environments (Gruenewald, 2003). Local histories, the final dimension of place, refers to the consideration and examination of the processes and events of our local communities, which in turn can provide opportunities to build relationships of deeper understanding and care with our home communities (Gruenewald, 2003).

When taken up in this subjective and contested context that refers to our sense of place, our understanding and interpretations of the places that we inhabit are both individually and socially constructed. The emotional and subjective connections to place are conjured by our

visions of locality and the spatial representations of the places that we are familiar with. Places represent the physical location on this planet but places become central to our lives because they are spaces where we reside, work, create, and recreate; we travel to places, come from places and often travel through places as well. Those interactions with the various places of our everyday lives sometimes meaningful to us and at other times are often ignored and taken for granted (Hutchinson, 2004). At a more personal, individual level, a sense of place is influenced by our unique experiences, history, motives, and goals. Place is imbued with the personal connections, histories, and memories that we attach to those places of our everyday lives (Hutchinson, 2004). Our understanding of place and our connections with place are also largely influenced by those around us and the culture that we live in (Williams Resor, 2010). Collective concepts of place only exist because a group of people agree that it is true. For instance, our concept of an ideal home is heavily influenced by the media that defines it (Williams Resor, 2010). Our emotional connections to many of what Williams Resor (2009) considers locales have communal origins as well. Our connections to places like church, home, and school for instance originate in the communal sense of belonging and attachment that we cultivate with others in those spaces.

While these subjective and highly emotive conceptions of place have been renewed in recent years as a way of expressing the emotive relationship between peoples and the environment across a variety of disciplines, place has deep philosophical roots that date back to Greek and Roman society (Hutchinson, 2004). Aristotle for instance used the term *topos* to refer to feelings of belonging that stemmed from the “where” dimension of a person’s relationship to their physical environment. Roman philosophers employed the phrase *genius loci* “spirit of the place” to help frame their discussions of the academic discussion of place (Hutchinson, 2004).

It is these philosophical, emotive, socially constructed, and collectively held notions of our sense of place, along with the fact that collective memory itself involves the place of memory (Pente, 2009), which provides clear implication for the ways in which place and narratives of national identity intersect, especially in Canada, where landscapes and our representations of them have played such a prominent role in defining a unique Canadian identity. My analysis of social studies curriculum documents from 1970 to 2008 in the disciplines of social studies and history is most interested in examining these subjective, collective, and socially constructed notions of place in relation to their role in articulations of national identity. In looking towards developing new curriculum in social studies and history in

the province, it is imperative to think about the role that place and the stories we tell about place can play in nurturing a sense of belonging essential to fostering community and a desire to work for the common good. If we ignore the role of belonging in nations, states, borders and citizenships or neglect to perceive these constructs as “naturalized relations of subjects to places”, then all of those articulations are in danger of becoming active sites of *un*belonging, as sites of disconnect (Phelan & Rogoff, 2001, as cited in Pente, 2009, p. 115).

### **A Place to Survive and Thrive: Narratives of Place in Canada and Canada’s West**

For this chapter, analysis focused on social studies and history curriculum from grades 7-12 from 1970 to 2008. Analysis and conclusions offer historical contextual analysis and interpretations of developments over time with respect to curricular representations of land and place. In this way, while it is a study that includes analysis of current curriculum, it is grounded in thinking about the ways ideas of land, geography, and place have shifted over time. The nature and development of these narratives are also examined in terms of their intersections with dominant discourses of land, geography, and place that have circulated in Canada. Critical discourse analysis focused on the presence, absence or modification of some of the prevalent myths and meta-narratives concerning notions of land, geography, and place in the development of the Canadian nation and Canadian identity. Although literature concerning the historical development of conceptions of land in Canadian curriculum and the role that this plays in the formation of national narratives and notions of national identity are sparse, there is an abundance of literature that deals with the importance of place and geography in the formation of a unique Canadian identity. It is this literature that provide the foundation for an analysis of the representations of land and place in the Saskatchewan social studies curriculum. Based on my examination of literature on the topic of place in the formation of a unique Canadian national identity, I have compile summaries of four prevalent narratives that inform my subsequent analysis of the representations of place found within past and current curriculum.

### **Survival**

Themes of survival, alienation and victimization in the context of a harsh and physically demanding natural environment are prevalent in Canadian literature (Chambers, 1999). Frye (1965) claimed that while Americans have been more decided and certain about their relationship with the wilderness, the frontier and the conquering of it, Canadians have had a

much more ambivalent outlook. For Canada, as Frye (1965) argued, the dominant motif in literature has been survival; survival in the face of an often hostile environment as well as political survival from British imperialism and cultural survival in the shadow of American cultural and economic imperialism. When characters battle the natural world and the Canadian wilderness, they inevitably lose. This narrative is one that gives credence to the deeply held belief that Canadians and their character is in large part shaped by the climate and geographies of where we live, making Canadians perpetually subordinate to nature (Chambers, 1999).

One of the most well-known expressions of the theme of survival in Canadian literature is one presented by prominent Canadian author Margaret Atwood in her 1972 survey of Canadian literature: *Survival: A Guide to Canadian Literature*. In it, Atwood (1972) argues for two central preoccupations in Canadian literature and fiction: victimization and survival. A recurring theme is the ‘hanging on’ or ‘staying alive’ in the face of environmental adversity. Here, the survivor is no hero, but instead barely alive, fully aware of the power of nature, and at last subordinate to it (Atwood, 1972). Representations of nature within the theme of survival are characterized by the wild, untamed, and monstrous qualities of nature (Mackey, 1999). Such formidable and dangerous physical settings work to inspire what Frye (1965) calls a garrison mentality wherein settlers of the frontier landscapes were compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that held them together while confronted by the menacing surroundings. Small, isolated communities surrounded by the huge, unthinking vastness of Canadian landscapes developed into communities where the moral and social values of resilient individualism and cooperation became unquestionable. In such perilous circumstances, motives and causes were not discussed, “one is either fighter or deserter.” (Frye, 1965, p. 838).

### **Northern Wilderness**

Themes of survival, alienation and victimization are framed by the portrayal of Canada’s landscapes and geography as northern<sup>34</sup> wilderness. The myth of the wilderness, and the belief that our link to that vast wilderness is a defining national characteristic is a long held and often unchallenged element in the Canadian national identity project (Francis, 1997; Rabonovitch,

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<sup>34</sup> The true North is the North of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel. Generally, the term ‘the North’ is understood in the more general sense of northern landscapes in Canada that would be geographically positioned in the northern parts of the Western provinces as well. Additionally, in narratives where ‘the North’ is used to distinguish Canada from its southern neighbours, this North refers to the divide of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.

2011). For Canadians, the North is more than a geographic location, it is a “myth, a promise, a destiny” (Francis, 1997, p. 153). As a major theme in both Canadian literature and art, it is a near mythical wilderness of rivers, forests, tundra and ice fields that defines our sense of place and visual identity (Rabinovitch, 2011). Despite the fact that many of us will never actually travel to the North, it is the North of mind that exists independently of the geographic north which provides an identifiable marker for Canadianness and imparts an element of freedom to Canadian life for many (Francis, 1997). Locating the essence of Canadian nationality in our northern landscapes frequently recurs across Canadian art, literature, and popular culture. While our cities and towns belong to the globalized, homogenized, post-industrial world of traffic, commuters, and high rise towers, it is our northern wilderness that distinguishes us from those indistinguishable urban landscapes. The North is a unique landscape that we recognize as our own, one sure thing that sets us apart from our neighbours to the south (Francis, 1997). The myth of the North is also a unifying force in a country divided by such diversity of language, region, class, and race. Many Canadians look to the myth of the North as a unifying force that provides a promise to dissolve those differences and unite us “in a great white hope for the future” (Francis, 1997, p. 172) On the shaky and uneven ground of the landscape of Canadian identity rests a mainstay conviction, as our national anthem contends, of Canada as the “True North” (Harris, 2017, p. 240).

From a historical perspective, narratives of the canoe journey into the wilderness have been central to the story of the nation since the first European traders and colonists arrived in what is now Canada. To early European colonists, Canada was pitched as a northern haven of treasures waiting to be exploited. Like the Spanish had found in the south, Canada was to be born from the quest of these mythical northern treasures (Francis, 1997). As the evolution of the nation moved from colonial resource exploitation to settlement and efforts to define the Canadian nation building project began to take shape around the time of Confederation, Canadian writers, politicians, and intellectuals commonly reiterated that it was its northerness that made Canada unique (Francis, 1997). The ‘cult of the North’ became a coherent expression for the first time shortly after Confederation as a small group of nationalists who called themselves Canada First began to disseminate the assertion that Canada’s northern climate was one of the most important characteristics of the new Dominion (Francis, 1997). In the discourse of the Canada First Movement, the north and northerness were used to link Canada with

Britain, and other northern races, in order to differentiate and separate Canada from the United States and other southern races (Mackey, 1999).

These notions of Canada and its vast, northern wilderness underpin a strong corollary to the intersection of Canadian national identity formation and the role of place in that development: geographic determinism. From its earliest inception in the writings of the Canada First movement, Canada's position as a community of the North cultivated a sense that this northern climate resulted in the development of a set of particularly desirable qualities in its people. With clear racial implications, the "cult of the North" promoted the development of a strong and pure northern race and gained mainstream momentum in the country, attracting more than a small group of nationalist intellectuals. It was believed that to struggle to survive in the North resulted in the creation of a particular set of national characteristics like self-reliance, physical strength, stamina, and virility that set Canadians apart from their southern counterparts. The northern air bred intelligence, encouraged initiative, and discouraged "southern races" from settling by virtue of its innate, racialized character (Francis, 1997).

The proliferation and cementing of such representations of Canada as the vast, northern wilderness have much to do with the iconic landscape paintings of the Group of Seven. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the search for images that would at once combat the powerful European influence and reflect a unique Canadian identity fueled the success and popularity of the work of the Group of Seven (Pente, 2009). As harbingers of both social and cultural change, the group became the vanguards of a modern nationalist movement that would achieve critical mass in the 1920s and work to redefine Canadian's sense of themselves in new ways influenced by un-imperial and anti-American sentiments (Wright, 2004). Influenced by the highly romantic Norwegian notion of the North, the Group of Seven and their supporters professed a distinctly northern Canadian identity that incorporated Canadians' own experience in the wilderness through the reinterpretation of Canadian landscapes not just as a source of creative inspiration but "as the well spring of Canadian youthfulness, strength, and virtue" (Wright, 2004, p. 37). Over the years, paintings by the Group of Seven have come to epitomize representations of Canadian landscapes (Francis, 1997) and become central to the iconography of the Canadian landscape (Harris, 2017). At the time that the paintings were created they represented a new way of seeing the land; a distinctly Canadian view of the land that mirrored the experiences of

traveling through the vast wilderness. In this sense, the Group of Seven created and invented a predominant characteristic raw, wild, and empty Canadian landscape.

Not only do their landscape paintings have much to do with the development of a distinct view of the Canadian North, these paintings have a revered place in the construction of symbolic nationhood today (Mackey, 1999). Mackey (1999) argues that above all others, it was the Group of Seven and their landscape paintings of Canada that “contributed most to the development of a national identification with a distinctive sense of place” (Mackey, 1999, p. 40). Like the Canada First Movement, the rugged landscapes of the Canadian North were both necessary and essential elements in the construction of a unique Canadian national identity (Mackey, 1999).

Representations of those northern rugged and wild landscapes are mobilized in order to create a distinctly Canadian North; a North that is decidedly not American, and also un-European in its rugged, unpeopled<sup>35</sup> harshness. The paintings worked to turn the picturesque and inviting landscape traditions of European painting on its head and created instead a vision of a distinct, impenetrable, and uninviting Canadian wilderness (Mackey, 1999). It was a wilderness that was at once able to transcend both European corrupt decadence as well as crass American materialism (Wright, 2004).

As contact between the true North and Canada’s southern regions increases and works to reveal a different understanding of what it means to be a “northern people” (Francis, 1997), articulations of the North have lost some currency over time. Despite these shifts in our understanding of the North, intersections of the North and its role in national consciousness and identity formation have remained a keystone to the Canadian identity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The North again assumed an aura of mystical power during the 1958 federal election when John Diefenbaker promised to open up a Canada of the North, just as John A. MacDonald had used the West to define a vision of an expanding and prosperous Canada. Diefenbaker’s Vision of the North sought to transform the region from what was perceived as an undeveloped, remote area to the foundation of Canada’s national destiny. His vision was also concretely tied to his desire to cultivate a sense of national purpose in Canadians at the time. “I want to see Canadians,” Diefenbaker proclaimed in a speech he gave in Winnipeg in 1958,

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<sup>35</sup> Mackey notes as well that representations of Canadian landscapes as unpeopled and empty also represented a serious rupture with 19<sup>th</sup> century European wilderness ethos where wilderness was often identified with Native presence.

“given a transcending sense of national purpose, such as Macdonald gave in his day” (Diefenbaker, 1958 as cited in Isard, 2010, p.60). While Diefenbaker’s plans for opening up Canada’s North were not realized to the extent of his grandiose vision, the almost religious reverence he had spouted about Canada’s North was imprinted on popular consciousness (Alcorn, 2013). This rosy vision of the Canadian North began to lose salience in the context of increasing challenges from Indigenous peoples in the 1970s that resource extraction under the control of the south should always come first. Today, Indigenous voices continue to disrupt constructions that revolve around the rosy, mystical allure of the North and in their place we now find increasing recognition of Canada’s contested claims of sovereignty in this area and its place as a site of some of the most serious and obvious impacts of climate change (Alcorn, 2013). For a modern nation in constant flux and increasingly defined by its diversity and plurality, the North has been used and continues to be used as a point of unity. As a metaphor, it is a reminder for Canadians that in most parts of the nation we spend half of the year enduring climate and weather conditions that would bring many European nations to a halt. It is a region that reminds many of our relationships with Indigenous peoples through both treaty and social arrangements are still very much a part of our modern reality (Alcorn, 2013).

### **Man’s Dominion over Nature**

While narratives and representations of the places that make up the Canadian landscape often reiterate an untamed wilderness either absent of people, as in the case of Group of Seven paintings, or of people subordinate to nature, there is also a somewhat contrary narrative which highlights the dominion of man over nature, especially as these link with notions of land as resource. From an intellectual perspective, there are strong trends in Western thinking that work to oppose the deep, spiritual connections of people to place that cannot be explained in Western Enlightenment terms. In Western epistemological thinking there exists a strict divide between the knower and known, most evident in the conceptual split between the human and the non-human. Framing the world in this way not only sets the human world at the centre and on top of everything, it also creates a fundamental divide between people and the places they inhabit. In direct opposition to the innate agency of the world around us, the natural environment becomes something that humans know about and control. Narratives that centre on the taming of wild lands into developed, resource havens hinge on the underlying belief that progress entails the transformation and subordination of nature by humans in the process of turning wilderness into



civilization. These notions rest on the binary opposition in Western thinking between human and non-human worlds and the belief that progress is achieved through and means human mastery over nature (Mackey, 1999).

In post-Confederation Canada views of nature commonly took on two contradictory forms, one of which stems from scientific and political thinking around the belief that nature is the dominion of mankind. When viewed through these Western Enlightenment political and scientific lenses, land exists to be catalogued, analyzed and inevitably exploited to satisfy human demands and needs. These articulations of the land as a material source of wealth and fortune were tempered by a second, more romantic ideal of Canadian landscapes as a refuge and tourist attraction where people could appreciate the natural world in order to find personal fulfillment. What seemed to have reconciled the tension between the utilitarian resource bank and the romantic natural beauty visions was the foundation of the natural world as a consumable product (Wangler, 2007). Binding these ideas together into a modern consumptive package meant that Canadian landscapes, especially in post-Confederation Western Canada, were envisioned as both immense sources of national and corporate wealth but also as reservoirs of personal consumption through the tourism industry.

The natural link to the land that is required to weave such a narrative of Canadian progress from wild and virginal land into a developed, forward-looking and tolerant nation is often provided by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are an instrumental link to the land in the crafting of a narrative that gives Canada a new and compelling vision (Mackey, 1999). Expressions of the land as idle unless implicated in agricultural and industrial activities of humans has important implications for the displacement of Indigenous peoples, both in the Canadian as well as international context. Such thinking has provided the basis for untold numbers of colonial pursuits into Indigenous territories. Often the encounters between natives and newcomers have been premised on the distinction between those who settle and those who roam (Chamberlain, 2003). What this ultimately means is that the history of settlement in Canada, as well as in many other countries around the world, is a history of the displacement of other peoples from their territories and a discounting of those peoples, their livelihoods, their languages, their ways of life and their connections to their lands. It is a point that is often neglected, ignored, or lost on settlers. When what we call “land” was taken from Indigenous peoples, what was taken was hearth, home, and the source of life and livelihood, without which

many were left without a stable base of livelihood (Chamberlain, 2003). Romantic, Western interpretations of the land as idle and empty are based on a lack of acknowledgement of the Indigenous peoples who inhabited those landscapes and produce a “discourse of disappearance” (Pente, 2009, p. 124) required to placate settler apprehension and discomfort concerning the history of the lands we now call home.

### **The West as Promised Land**

This belief in humanity’s dominion over nature would come to serve as an important intellectual and spiritual current in both the claiming and remaking of the Canadian West (Wangler, 2007). The scientific and political response to the wilderness was often framed in terms of the utility of the land, focused on its quantification and accumulation of facts in order to locate the sources of material wealth to be found in the West (Wangler, 2007). Articulations of the West as “Promised Land” relied heavily on notions of cultivation and taming of the land but also in the practice of life encouraged by such regional landscapes. American historian Walter Prescott Webb views the 98<sup>th</sup> meridian as the beginning of the Great Plains on the North American continent and argues that a move out of the eastern timberlands into those Great Plains produces a change in lifestyle (Alcorn, 2013). Canadian writers too joined together the notions of Canadian survival and individual courage into their narratives of the historic North-West. Even as farms and settlements began to displace the older ways, Canadian writers continued to find inspiration in the challenging social and natural conditions of the North-West (Rabinovitch, 2013).

As historians, writers, and politicians worked to build a narrative of the west as the “Promised Land” strong ties to environmental determinism and visions of the Prairies as almost magical or mystical took shape. In his analysis of J.S Woodsworth’s vision of the Prairie West as Promised Land, Francis (2007) argues that for Woodsworth there was the physical west and the social west. The physical west, represented by the wide open spaces of earth and sky, was “a veritable land of milk and honey” (Francis, 2007, p. 252) ideal for the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth. The image of the West as outopia, or “nowhere”, began to shift quickly after the completion of the railway. In the new context of nation linked by an extensive rail network, the West rapidly became eutopia, “somewhere”, or the “good place.” The West was no longer viewed as a far-off frontier land, instead it became a bastion of unlimited progress, enterprise and development (Rasporich, 1985, p. 339).

Woodsworth's vision also upheld a belief in environmental determinism – that the Prairie land had the “magic quality to transform people into perfect moral beings” (Francis, 2007, p. 252). Not only was the land a source of economic sustenance and source of wealth, it was also seen as the root of happiness and virtue where the ideal of the honest, hardworking, contented yeoman who tilled an Edenic paradise became the moral fabric of the nation (Rennie, 2007). The pastoral myth, cultivated in the context of pioneer and small-town life, was rooted in the connection to pastoral landscapes, spontaneous reactions to those landscapes, and a nostalgia for a world of peace and protection (Frye, 1965). These idyllic representations of the kind, gentle, and life giving visions of Prairie lands were starkly contrasted against the harshness, parasitic landscapes of urban centres. The peace, freedom, and clean living of the Prairie farm contrasted with the stress, frustration, and vice common to city life (Rennie, 2007). Pastoral visions were complimented by the common desire to create a social condition which combined work and leisure rooted in the pursuit of self-fulfillment as well as the survival of communitarian values (Francis and Palmer, 1985). This romanticized idea of the West as “garden of the world” became tangible in the physical location of Western Canada (Francis, 1985, p.632). Western Canada became both a physical location of endless bounty as well as a mode of belief, an idyllic region in the minds of many post-Confederation politicians and writers. Even after the scathing effects of the post-World War II recession and drought had taken their toll on Prairie farmers, most Westerners maintained their utopic visions of the region. In the face of tangible, economic suffering that brought about the physical, environment within which Prairie farmers lived their lives, the inherent goodness of the land was never questioned (Rennie, 2007).

Taken up in the historical context, Canadian historians and novelists often turn to geography to explain the character of Canada. The Laurentian thesis, purported primarily by Canadian historians Harold Innis and Donald Creighton, frames the development and progress of the Canadian nation in terms of the expansion of the fur trade and post Confederation economic activities enabled by the construction of the railway (Harris, 2017; Kilborun, 1965) This historical framing weighs the formation of early trade routes, running East-West across the Canadian landscape, as central to the formation of the nation. The formation of such routes encouraged an economic unity that was recaptured in post Confederation Canada through the construction of the railway (Kilbourn, 1965) The underlying foundation of the Laurentian thesis is the geographic context of the great Canadian shield. In this national narrative, the shield

becomes as central to Canadian history as it is to Canadian geography and all understandings of Canada (Harris, 2017).

Just as a number of historians argue for the framing of Canadian history in relation to the landscapes which directed the unfolding of events that would shape the nation, some geographers argue that a region must be understood in terms of the utility or practical purpose assigned to it by people; that regions must be understood in relation to their function rather than their form (Francis, 2007). In this sense, the Prairies are viewed in relation to their function as an economic hinterland of wheat production for the distant metropolitan centres of the East, a view that falls in line with the metropolitan-hinterland view of Canadian history (Francis, 2007).

Despite increased industrialization and urbanization since World War II as well as the rise in new primary industries based on fossil fuels in the West, a number of historical geographers argue that the social changes brought about by such shifts in industrial production have had little impact on the vision of the Western image of itself as an economic hinterland. Prairie urban centres continue to view themselves in contrast to eastern metropolitan centres and opposed to identification as national focal points in themselves. The strong current in the framing of the West as an agricultural hinterland has provided, and continues to provide, the region with a unity and uniqueness even as it has become increasingly urbanized and industrial (Francis, 2007). The persistence of such narratives of the West as agricultural hinterland rest on the fact that these representations are as much perceived and socially constructed as they are based in the real landscapes of our lives. As Francis (2007) asserts, to be Western is a way of perceiving that is grounded in but independent of the physical Prairie landscapes; the search for the idea of the west is as much shaped by an understanding of ourselves in time and place as it is grounded in the physical, tangible places we inhabit.

### **Analysis and Interpretations**

An important first point of analysis is that the intersection of identity and place emerges as a clear theme across social studies curriculum guides throughout the years in question. Analysis points to the prevalence of two major discourses that have direct implications for identity formation: geographic determinism and regionalism. Throughout all of the years in question there is a clear effort to encourage students to see the tangible and important influence that geography has played and continues to play on the development of societies, cultures, and

the Canadian identity. Analysis and interpretations are presented chronologically and aim to highlight the prevalent discourses of land and how these discourses intersect with formulations of national identity and nation building.

The overt anthropocentric and individualistic nature of social studies curriculum guides from the 1970s provide an important underlying framework for the prevalence of discourses which work together to encourage thinking about nature and geography almost exclusively in relation to the role that these play in man's [sic] development. In the overview of curricular aims in social studies in the province for Kindergarten through to grade eight, the first topic to be explored is geography. Included as one of topical area of emphasis, geography is framed at the grade seven level as something to be overcome. Easily reflective of the prevalent discourse in Canadian history and literature of the challenges of survival in the face of geographic obstacles, the document supports an understanding of nature and place as a challenge for individuals and societies. Students "explore the ways in which Canada and Eastern hemisphere countries have attempted to overcome the problems of geography" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, *I am Canadian An Emphasis Curriculum for Kindergarten to grade 8*, 1978, p. 35).

In their "study of man in time and place" at the nine level, geography is dealt with in relation to the role that it has played in the settlement and development of societies. Nature and the geographic environment are viewed as important and influential factors that man [sic] has to overcome and control in order to thrive. In specific reference to the ability and need of humans to adapt, students are encouraged to understand that "man has increased his capacity to adapt to variations in the environment" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, *Social Studies 9*, 1971, p. 10) and, furthermore, that nature is a source of change as man in early societies were required to "attempt to come to terms with the forces of nature" (p. 11). The use of the phrasing "forces of nature" imbues the natural world with powers that present challenges to those who face it. Representations of the natural world in relation to societal development continues in grade 10 with a number of sample activities included in the guide that help to illustrate the point that place is understood in terms of its role in aiding or hindering societal development. The updated guide produced one year later, as well as an additional update two years later again, for *Social Studies 10* (1973, 1975) continues along in the same vein and dedicates an entire section, one of five total, to the influence of the physical environment – an influence that continues to be framed in

terms of an obstacle to be overcome or a resource to be exploited in the name of development or progress.

At the 20 level, one of five sections is again dedicated to the impact of the physical environment on both settlement and development of societies. Taken from a broad perspective, Social Studies 20 is "...designed to provide the student with an awareness of how societies develop a multiplicity of cultures in a variety of environments in order to meet their needs" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 2). Added at the 20 level is an effort to link these ideas of the impact of geographic factors not just to settlement patterns but to resource development and culture. In the context of western Canada strong ties are drawn between the settlement, culture, economic development and the physical environment, namely the development of agriculture. In explaining the relationship between culture and the physical environment, "cultures are influenced by the environment...may change the physical environment [and] may react in different ways to the physical environment" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 27). In dealing with the relationship between settlement patterns and geography, it is suggested that "students explain the influence of geography and culture on settlement patterns" (p. 27). Both objectives point to the recognition of the important and essential role of geography in the development of societies.

Social studies at the 30 level deals explicitly with the study of man [sic] in the context of Canadian society, a thematic focus that is consistent across 30 level courses in History too. Dedicated to the exploration of Canada and Canadian society, it is a focus that has remained unchanged into the 1990s curricular renewals that are still in use in the province today. At the 30 level in 1973, Canadian's relationship with the natural environment is addressed in section one of the course: relationship to the physical environment. Here, the natural environment is explicitly tied to economics and resources, where it cultivates a relationship to fulfill economic needs and propel economic imperatives at the individual and societal level. The ultimate message is that resource development has led to progress, namely that the environment and its potential to supply raw economic materials has resulted in the progress of urbanization, industrialization, and specialization but also has contributed to regional disparities (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1973). The narrative of the forever illusive Canadian identity is attributed, at least partially, to the geography of the nation. Students are encouraged to understand the notion that the Canadian identity is "influenced by a number of

external factors: historical, geographical, social, economic” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1973, p. 4).

The physical environment is dealt with again in the following two sections of the guide which deal with Canadian social relationships and institutions and the Canadian identity. In the context of social relationships, the curriculum guide contends that Canadians are influenced not only by things like customs, values, and beliefs but also by “their perception of their environment” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1973, p. 2). The development of a Canadian identity or culture is attributed not only to the development of particular social relationships, decision-making processes and institutions, but also, and perhaps primarily as it is the first to be listed among the various factors leading to the development of the Canadian identity, by the “interaction of Canadians with their physical environment” (p. 3). This theme continues into the 1978 renewal with the physical environment listed first again, along with economic systems, political structures, cultural diversity and foreign affairs, within the list of factors that have influenced the Canadian identity (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978).

The 1978 renewal includes an entire section dedicated to the exploration of Canadians’ relationship with the physical environment. Within the section, students are exposed to the idea that Canadian lifestyle is influenced by the physical environment through the exploration of the connection between a particular (chosen) physiographic environment and the resulting lifestyle in that area. Combining again the forces of geographic determinism and the diversity of Canada’s physical landscapes, the 1978 guide also includes, for the first time, the exploration of regionalism as well as regional disparity. Within this framing, geographic features result in regionalism and this regionalism “is characterized by economic, political and cultural differences” and, it is suggested, students should speculate reasons for the existence of regional disparity (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978, p. 8). Section four of the Social Studies 30 1978 guide, titled *The Canadian Identity*, remains consistent with the 1973 guide in its inclusion of geography as one of the various factors that has contributed to the Canadian identity but also, reflecting the increasing proliferation of multiculturalism and diversity politics of the 1970s, adds regionalism, cultural diversity, mosaic versus melting pot, and immigration policy to the list (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978). Geography is included within the myriad of factors that students are expected to draw

upon to articulate their thinking around Canadian identity. Underpinning these explorations is the fact that students may arrive at various conclusions concerning the character of the Canadian identity. While it is clear that both geography and the regionalism that results from the diversity of landscapes, Social Studies 30 consistently upholds a dominant discourse, as did the previous 1973 guide, in the Canadian identity question: that it is not defined by unity, but instead by its diversity.

As curricular renewals that reflected the work of the Social Studies Task Force were released throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, treatment of geography and the natural environment in terms of its influence individual and societal development and Canadian identity remained constant. The grade seven curriculum guide, titled *Canada and the World Community*, was the second guide to emerge from the comprehensive curriculum development process undertaken by the task force. Of the 20 core concepts intended to provide the conceptual framework for social studies in the province, there are five which have particular relevance for thinking about land and place: the resources, environment, interaction, interdependence, and location (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988). At the grade seven level, emphasis is placed on the development of students' understanding of location, resources, power, change and interaction. In addition to the exploration of these core concepts, place and geography appear as core components to the course itself. The focus of the course is on "the geography of the Pacific Rim and human interaction within this environment" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, p. 1). As such, it is the geographic context of Canada and its relationships with Pacific Rim countries that provides the foundation for the course in 1988, 1990 and the most recent renewal from 2008.

In both 1988 and 1999, the first unit of study (location) remains consistent with earlier guides in emphasizing the role that geography and the natural environment play in the development of societies, beliefs, and values. Students are expected to "appreciate the influence of location on people's needs" and also appreciate that "people who have adapted to life in different locations may have developed different viewpoints" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 15). The aim is to emphasize geography and regional distinctiveness as central to the development of diverse viewpoints. In the 1999 guide, a suggested activity recommends that students create a combination of thematic and political maps of Canada and one Pacific Rim country of their choice. Through the activity, students explore



the connection between geographic features and settlement and students are led to see that patterns in resource availability and abundance are directly related to the resources available in the geographic area (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999). Largely reflective of Western notions of the commodification of lands, students are encouraged to evaluate land and place in relation to development and resource use.

Ideas of geographic determinism begin to shift somewhat throughout 1990s in that some of the outcomes begin to reflect more explicit attempts to cultivate environmentally conscious values in students. Although the environment continues to be framed almost entirely in its relation to human activity, there is a slight challenge to the centrality and dominance of humans as students are exposed to the idea that “the physical environment precedes, surrounds, conditions, and supports human existence and activities” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 17). These discourses of dependence on nature continue as students are also encouraged to “appreciate that changes in one part of the environment will result in changes in some other part of the environment” and also “appreciate that humans...are dependent on the natural environment for survival” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 17). Students are also expected to “appreciate that the environment is vulnerable”, “understand the potential humans have to change the environment” and “appreciate the consequences of actions” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 17). There is a clear indication that issues of human impact on our natural environments can have negative and harmful consequences. In the context of the broader exploration of the concept of location in the 1999 renewal, the focus on the dependence of humans on the natural world remains a focus and students are expected to “learn about the ways that humans affect or alter the physical environment, and the ways that humans and the environment are interdependent” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 47).

History 10, given it is within the unit which focuses on economic decision making, includes some content that focuses on Indigenous views and treatment of the land. Descriptive content for the topic includes a brief overview of the benefits of Indigenous views and treatment of the land, highlighting the values of interrelatedness and sharing that benefits all and provides “opportunity to be self-sufficient and contribute to the group’s well-being” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 208). Additionally, content specifically focused on the economic practices of the Iroquois articulate the important connections to the land, noting

that Iroquois “acted as spiritual guardians of the physical environment” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 212). The same unit of study also encourages students to think about both the use of North America as hinterland and the question of land title. Decidedly reflective of colonial notions of the economic value of land and the devaluing of Indigenous connections to traditional territories, the curriculum minimizes the impact of dispossession of lands in an effort to cement economic discourses of the land. While it is articulated as a cost in the process of transforming North America into a hinterland, dispossession of ‘Indian’ lands is simply listed alongside the benefits of cheap land for settlement and a source of raw materials. The question of land title asks students to weigh the issue by thinking about whether it is “the Indian whose ancestors have lived there for generations or the settler who comes to “virgin” land and turns it into a farm” who should hold property rights (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 237). Although the question may provide critically-oriented educators opportunity to dig into the false notions of “empty” and “virgin” lands, the entire framing of the question of land title, as presented from a Western perspective, remains problematic, especially when taken up in the current context of efforts to recognize in law inherent rights to traditional territories.

Perhaps the most revealing exploration of environmental issues in the 1990s comes from the Social Studies 20 course of study. Focused on exploring world issues, the guide dedicates an entire unit to the study of environmental issues. The aims of the unit are to put environmental issues into historical perspective so that students may begin to see that these types of concerns are not new and to encourage creative problem solving in relation to such environmental issues; environmental issues are not framed as a “disaster but as another of the many challenges humanity has faced throughout history” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1994, p. 304). The discourse of man’s dominion over nature<sup>36</sup>, which is so essential to the construction of the natural world primarily as a resource for human development, provides a foundation for students to consider whether it is better to view the natural world in a mechanical or organic sense. “Students question how modern societies have created a very high standard of living by learning to control and use nature for their purposes” and also consider the work of early Canadian settlers in overcoming nature in order to survive in the harsh Canadian

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<sup>36</sup> This discourse comes from the Bible, the Book of Genesis. It drove western expansion and rationalized the theft of Indigenous lands.

environments: “Nature was seen as a threat which stood in the way of the aspirations of people. It cut short the promise of life with starvation, cold, and disease” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1994, p. 314). Reminiscent of the narratives of victimization and survival so common to stories of Canadian settlement and development, these outcomes underscore the harsh and unforgiving landscapes of the Canadian North.

Thematic focus for History 20 mirrors that of the social studies curriculum in the sense that it also targets international issues and the major challenges facing humanity at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this guide, it is unit 5 that deals with global issues, specifically: the environment, population growth, human rights, and conflict (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994). The framing for environmental issues, both in terms of cause and consequence, continues to reiterate economic imperatives. Technological advancement and population growth are viewed as the underlying causes for increased pressure on the natural environment. The immediacy of increasing pressures on the natural world are there to some extent as students are exposed to the argument that “the nature of the relationship between humans and their environment could well define the nature and quality of human life in the future” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 504). Current levels of consumption are also highlighted and noted as problematic but framed in terms of the demands on natural resources, as opposed to the problematic nature of trends in excessive consumption (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994). Taken up in the context of consumption and its role in environmental issues, curricular content also highlights the huge discrepancy between consumption rates in developing versus developed countries. Despite including some critical notions of development and the role of developed countries in creating environmental crises, the content narrative for the course also suggests that students understand the role of developing nations: “Both the developed nations and developing nations are responsible for the degradation of the world’s environment” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 550). Although it is certainly important for students to understand the role that developed nations play in environmental policies that exacerbate current environmental concerns, framed in this way, many would be left with the impression that the share of guilt in the current environmental climate is equal.

History 30 (1997) also includes some content that aims to highlight environmental issues facing contemporary Canadians. Specifically, the course suggests that “the depletion of specific

resources, acid rain, and global warming are all signs of the need for Canadians to redefine their relationship with the land” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 116). The course also offers a comparison of European views of the land with traditional First Nations views suggesting that while European views of the land reflect an attitude based on economic potential, First Nations views look to “accommodate to, rather than attempt to alter or trade from the land” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 118). Despite these iterations of environmentally conscious ways of thinking about the natural world, it is imperative to note the way the term “land” is defined within that same content. Land, as the History 30 (1997) guide defines it, refers to “all aspects of the environment including fauna, flora, land formations/composition, resources and climactic conditions” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 114). Although decidedly comprehensive with regards to traditional geographic and scientific articulations of the land, it is a definition that fails to consider the humane and potentially spiritual relationships nurtured over time in the places we call home. Tied to limiting representations of Indigenous peoples as ‘ecological’, it is a view that implies Indigenous peoples did not use the land – a view that is often used to support the dispossession of lands experienced by so many Indigenous peoples.

Both Social Studies and History 20 (1994) present students with opportunities to explore various economic paradigms as they relate to the environment. Students are presented with the marketplace, ecological engineering, deep ecology, social ecology, and arrogance of humanism<sup>37</sup> perspectives. This section presents the most promising spaces to explore and critique current attitudes about humans and their connections to the environment. It has the potential to aid students in understanding how anthropocentric attitudes cultivate a sense of treating the natural world as something to be dominated and used without much regard for the future of the planet. Students are presented with a spectrum of views of interacting with the natural world. Students then consider how these views relate to development in particular. Although these last pieces of contemplation for students revolving around various perspectives of our relationship with the natural world are included, those concerns are consistently framed within predominantly anthropocentric views. Framed as it is in these guides, nature is explored and considered only to

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<sup>37</sup> The curriculum guide describes this perspective as one that values humans and human development above the needs of the natural world. In other words, it is an attitude that neglects to recognize or show concern for the impact that humans and human development have on the natural world.

the extent to which it impacts humans, especially our economic development. The natural world exists only within the context of the extent to which it services or fails to service humans, not in relation to itself or outside of a relationship with human societies.

It will come as no surprise that these social constructions of humans and human societies as central and dominant continue into unit two at the grade seven level where the focus is on resources. Here, the commodification of nature is heavy as students are expected to “appreciate the value of the planet as a source of resources”, “value Saskatchewan as a storehouse of resources”, and “understand the impact that the resources industry has on the country and on the individual” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 23). Reflecting again those growing concerns about the impact of human activities on the natural world, resources are also framed in terms of management and conservation principles. Just as the approach with reference to the impact of humans on the natural world was explored in unit one of the course, these efforts to illicit some awareness and appreciation of the natural world from students are mitigated by the framing of conservation and management in sole relation to humans and their continued survival. Students are to “value the importance of resource conservation” in the context of resource scarcity as they “study how human beings may be a cause of resource scarcity” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1988, p. 27). Resource management remains a part of the guide in the 1999 renewal, where the focus on conservation remains consistent. In 1999, conservation and resource management continue to be framed in relation to the notion of resource scarcity. Excessive consumption and the intensification of resource extraction are omitted in favour of an approach to resource scarcity that focuses on personal choice and where students are encouraged to “appreciate the need for every individual to use resources wisely” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 94). Reflective of the influence of neoliberal thinking with respect to both citizenship and environmental issues, it is a view that focuses on strategies of individual action and choice as opposed to policy and regulation.

The heavy-handed influence of the process of commodification in framing modern conceptions of the natural world are evident at the secondary level in the 1990s as well. Social Studies 10 (1992) frames discussions of the natural world within the context of economic decision-making. Land is represented as one of the four factors of production and students are expected to accept a definition of land absolutely aligned with notions of land as commodity.

Students are expected to “know that land is the raw materials in their natural states which are used in the production of goods and services” and furthermore that “the commercialization of land was seen as a method of making it more profitable and therefore more productive” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 10, 1992, p. 212, 216). At the grade nine level students explore the influence of the natural environment on development of ancient societies including the exploration of the shift in thinking about and viewing the environment as caused by the Scientific Revolution. This new view of the environment as “a machine operating according to laws which are reasonable” has resulted in “profound consequences for our society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1991, p. 321). The same guide also includes, within the larger context of exploring different worldviews, content focused on the competing technological and ecological paradigms. As students compare and contrast standards of living within each of the paradigms, the ecological view is undermined. While the technological solution to improved standards of living is “making more jobs through creating more industry”, the solution from the ecological paradigm is to “give people more leisure time and a cleaner environment to live in” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1991, p. 330). Framed in this way it would be difficult for students to see an ecological paradigm as a realistic option for modern society.

The attempt to build tangible connections between the formation of a unique Canadian identity and the natural landscapes of the country that had been a point of emphasis in social studies throughout the 1970s remains intact throughout renewals in the 1990s. In much the same way that students were to understand the influence of the natural environment in the cultivation of particular regional and national identities in the 1970s, Social Studies 8 (1999) encourages the exploration of such connections through explicit outcomes within the “identity and environment” topic of unit three. Here, with the focus primarily placed on the social environment as opposed to geographic environment, students are encouraged, through a suggested activity, to explore the connection between physical environments and the development of identity. Students consider the different physical environments in Saskatchewan and think about how these factors work to shape identity (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1999). At the 30 level, which again deals explicitly with Canada and Canadian history, economic development, Canadian landscapes and Canadian identity are linked together in an activity focused on the exploration of Canadian identity and unity. In it, the land figures as one of the possible

“nationalistic values” and students are asked to consider the question of whether “they feel a kinship with the land in some way” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 251). Combining both individual and broad national connections, these outcomes indicate efforts to emphasize the relationship between place, belonging, and identity.

The connection between societal settlement and the natural world that is so heavily ingrained in social studies guides throughout the 1970s at various levels continues into the 1990s with the expectation that students “know that communities are located in relation to resources in industrialized and non-industrialized societies” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1999, p.176). Social Studies 30 (1997) presents a point of convergence for Canadian beliefs that is tied explicitly with our relationships with the natural world. Reflective of the undisturbed, wide-open articulations of Canadian landscapes promulgated by the work of the Group of Seven, the suggestion is that students understand that Canadians believe that a high standard of living is based on the consumption and production of goods but also that “an unspoiled natural environment is important to human wellbeing from psychological, health, and economic points of view” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 114). The construction of the narrative of the untamed wilderness of Canadian landscapes continues into the exploration of early Canada. “The great difference,” the course encourages students to see, “between France and New France was the wilderness. A mile or two down any river, a life of adventure, wealth, and freedom as a courier de bois was possible” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 128). The construction of Canada as a wild, threatening obstacle standing in the way of development continues into the second unit which deals with economic development. In the context of dealing primarily with the connection and interrelation between standards of living and the natural environment, introductory commentary includes the remark that “much of Canadian history has been about the struggle to create a high standard of living out of a threatening and difficult geography” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 203).

History 30 content accentuates the connection between people and the land. The first unit of study explores peoples and paradigms through a relationship lens. Reflecting the dominant narrative which sees a close connection between Canadians and the nation’s landscapes but also the tendency to lean heavily towards an anthropocentric view of the land, History 30 highlights the connection of societies to the land and Canadians and the land, explaining that “every society

will evolve a relationship with the land that best accommodates the needs of that society” and that land has and “will likely continue to influence the well-being of Canadians” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 114). The environment is actually used as a factor that leads to the need and adoption of government intervention in the economy as “people faced the difficult task of developing in harsh environments [which] demanded that government play a supporting role in the economic development of Canada” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 236). In this sense it is the land that cultivated the political preference for government intervention in the West.

The notion of the West as “Promised Land” is explicitly articulated within the narrative of the settlement and development of Western Canada. The discourses of the almost mystical quality of the land and the qualities that such pristine and pure lands could instill in the people who chose to inhabit those lands becomes a focal point in Social Studies 30 (1997). Here, students are exposed to the notion that “the West with its golden prairies and invigorating climate would nurture a utopian community because it would transform ordinary people into superior beings who would create a new and better society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 144). Students learn that these beliefs were also connected with the dominance of Anglo-Saxon cultural norms that saw “western farmers as God’s chosen people and the family farm... [as] the ideal family unit” and also that these visions were quickly dashed when people discovered that the “West was a harsh land that could only be managed by those who were disciplined and hardworking” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 144). Agrarian mythology, explored in the regional context of Quebec, is described as a mythology that taught that these types of societies were more “religious, stable, disciplined, and family oriented” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, p. 146). Combined, these discourses certainly mirror a dominant regional discourse in the framing of Western development as intimately connected with the land. In the development of western Canada, students are led to the notion of the hardworking and virtuous farmer of the utopian west: “know that with experience, Western settlers came to believe that the west exacted a huge toll on those who attempted to conquer it” (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 144). The unique Western landscape not only cultivated important collectivist ideas but also bred particular values into those who took up residence in those lands.



In addition to constructing the narrative of the western identity as distinctly influenced by the lands of the West, regionalism and its obvious connection to geography and place becomes a foundational focal point of the exploration of the Canadian identity and the future of the nation at the secondary level throughout the years in question. Notions of regionalism and identity come together to construct a narrative of the Canadian West as influenced by and reflective of its unique geographic location; a region physically distanced from the industrial heartland of Central Canada. Reflective of the insights into regional identity articulated by Francis and Palmer (1985), social studies from this period speak to the continued emphasis on the Prairies as fundamentally defined by farming and agriculture. First articulated in the 1978 in Social Studies 30, regionalism and regional disparity is the primary focus of the content that explores Canadians and their connections with the physical environment. Students are exposed to the idea that “geographic features have resulted in regionalism...[and that] this regionalism is characterized by economic, political, and cultural differences” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1978, p. 8). By the 1990s, this connection between Canadian regionalism and identity is increasingly pronounced. Social Studies 20 (1994) lays a foundation that highlights regional geography, economic imperatives and social climate. Taken up in the context of economic decision-making, the course emphasizes the unique resources of Saskatchewan that enabled the development of an agricultural economy. Further cementing the connection between geography, region and economy, students learn that the market system was chosen because it suited the “geographic and social realities of the western Canadian frontier” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1992, p. 214). Students continue to explore Saskatchewan’s agricultural and cooperative roots through activities oriented around the exploration of large scale evolving agricultural policies as well as small scale agricultural management focused on farm accounts (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 20, 1992).

Dealt with in the context of resources, and the topic of land as a resource more specifically, the grade seven Social Studies (1999) course links Saskatchewan’s geography and resource use to the development of a cooperative ethic in the region. Topic five within the unit deals with the role of the view of the land as a valuable resource to the settlement of Saskatchewan including the suggestion that teachers “brainstorm with students some of the impressions pioneers might have had when they arrived in Saskatchewan” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 82). Notions of the views of the land as

resource then flow into an exploration of the link between cooperation and resources in the regional context of Saskatchewan where an aim is to cultivate in students an understanding and appreciation of “the importance and historical significance of cooperation to Saskatchewan people” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 84).

Experiences of Indigenous peoples and early settlers are conflated to construct a narrative of geographic hardships which required cooperation. The limited availability of resources and equally limited access to additional supplies are tied to the development of a cooperative ethic that culminates in the assertion that “cooperation is a fundamental component of prairie culture” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 86). History 30 (1997) also cements the connection between geography and political culture within the context of an activity which suggests students investigate the conditions which led to the development of cooperatives in the west, highlighting settlements patterns, sparse population, and a sense of isolation as key.

While the Social Studies 30 course guide from the 1970s alluded to regional discontent, both the Social Studies 30 and History 30 guides (1997) appear to make a concerted effort to draw attention to Western alienation and regionalism in general as serious threats to Canadian unity. Drawing an explicit link between geographic realities and western alienation, Social Studies 30 (1997) includes the explanation that hinterland regions “have felt a sense of grievance at what they perceive as chronic favouritism to Central Canada” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 234). Within History 30, regionalism is presented as both an area of concern and a primary impetus for the development of a federal system of government as students are exposed to the notion that regionalism has “presented Canada with numerous challenges” and also that the “forces of regionalism worked against a centralization of political and economic decision making controlled by one national government” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 218, 220).

In the treatment of Western regionalism in particular, it is suggested that students consider “how the interests of Western Canada have been in opposition to the interests of other regions of the nation” (Saskatchewan Education, History 30, 1997, p. 218). This emphasis on the challenges and obstacles created by regionalism continue over the subsequent of the guide. The guide includes considerable treatment not only of Western regional issues but also those presented by the regionally unique areas of both Quebec and the Maritimes as these two regions also worked to secure their interests against the threat of a centralized government

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). Similar points are reiterated further along in the course within a unit focused on the forces of nationalism. Here, the content builds a narrative that seeks to further explore issues of national discontent as rooted in regional disparity. Two Canadas were produced because of economic, geographic, and political realities of the hinterland-heartland relationship between Central Canada and the west resulting in feelings for many westerners that “resource rich prairie provinces have been exploited by national governments which reflected the interests of Central Canadians” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 440). In all instances, the geographic uniqueness of the West and expanse of the nation are employed in the narrative of Western discontent.

Narratives of geographic determinism continue to trend into the most recent curricular renewals in social studies in the province. Published and implemented in 2008, social studies curriculum renewals at the grades 7, 8, and 9 levels in the province reflect the growing struggle for a paradigm shift in the way that industrialized societies view the natural world. These newest guides begin with an overview of the core curriculum, repackaged as the Broad Areas of Learning and Cross Curricular Competencies. Within these foundational aims of education in Saskatchewan, an explicit link is made between identity and the natural world. Of the four cross curricular competencies outlined in each curriculum guide is the aim to cultivate the development of identity and interdependence. Identity, the curriculum states, is shaped by a number of factors, including place (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008). Foundational to the goal of building a sense of interdependence in students is the role of the natural world. The hope is that students develop an “appreciation of the dependence of human beings upon nature” develop “an attitude of stewardship [that] implies a willingness to adapt one’s lifestyle in order to contribute to the well-being of the environment” and encourage “an awareness of the impact of human societies and activities on the environment [which] enables students to make decisions that reflect concern for present and future quality of life” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 4-5).

Since it deals most specifically with the development of Canadian identity, grade eight Social Studies (2008) includes a number of examples that draw connections between Canadian identity and Canadian landscapes. The course, titled *The Individual in Canadian Society*, includes culture and identity as its two core concepts to be explored. Outcomes included under the broad dynamic relationships goal indicate, remaining consistent with earlier narratives from

social studies in the province, that land plays a significant role in the development of identity in Canada. While there is consistency in the sense that these newest guides continue to reiterate the connection between identity and geography in the construction of Canadian identity, there is a shift in the omission of the wilderness and survival myths that had been present in guides at the secondary level from the 1990s. Instead of framing the land as dangerous wilderness, students identify and investigate various land designations in Canada and explore the connections between Canadian landscapes and the production of Canadian literature, visual arts, song, recreation, and sports (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 8, 2008).

Included within the broad goal of dynamic relationships, both the grade 7 and 9 guides incorporate outcomes that focus heavily on the influence of the natural world on the development of societies. In grade seven for instance, students “analyze the relationship between current and historical events and the physical and social environments in Pacific and northern Canada and in a selection of Pacific Rim and circumpolar countries” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008, p. 21). Suggestions for the achievement of this outcome include the examination of current issues in relation to location “in order to understand the role of geography in shaping political events... and economic activity... in Canada, and a selection of Pacific Rim and circumpolar countries” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008, p. 21). Ancient societies, which remain the focus of the Social Studies 9 course of study, are viewed as heavily influenced by their natural environment and students are expected to “assess the relationship of the natural environment in the development of a society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 22). Whether in the context of Canada or other areas of the world, there is a clear effort to emphasize the influence of the environment on societies.

The most significant shift in the development of social studies curriculum over the time period in question here occurs in the addition of considerable focus on the impact of humans on the natural world in the newest curricular renewals. In line with the broad goals of cultivating the values of sustainability and stewardship in students as articulated within the cross curricular competencies, there are a number of instances throughout the 2008 social studies guides at the grade seven, 8 and 9 levels where students are expected to assess, explore, and critique the impact that people have on the natural world. In grade seven for instance, students are expected to explore the impact of humans on the natural environment as well as the influence of geographic factors on people (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008).

Furthermore, grade seven students are also expected to “assess the ecological stewardship of economies of Canada and the circumpolar and Pacific Rim countries” by researching and defining terms like stewardship and sustainability and also examining sustainability practices and policies in Canada and Pacific Rim countries as they relate to the economies of those nations (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 2008, p. 24).

The exploration of such environmentally conscious outcomes continues into grade eight as students are required to “critique approaches of Canada and Canadians to environmental stewardship and sustainability” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008, p. 25). Suggestions for the attainment of the particular outcome include the investigation into issues where resource extraction and environmental stewardship collide (i.e. tar sands development), the creation of a timeline of environmental policy in Canada, as well as the exploration of personal choices students can make to protect the environment (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008). At the grade nine level, students “assess the relationship of the natural environment in the development of a society” including the influence of natural geographic features like “major water systems, topography, and climate” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 25). Although chiefly indicative of anthropocentric views of the natural world and reflective of the neoliberal tendency to conflate stewardship with personal choice, it remains important to note attempts to incorporate learning goals that speak to more ethical ways of viewing and interacting with the natural world.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

While there is promise in terms of a clear effort to include geographic factors into learning objectives found throughout the years as well as various grade levels, the primary focus on place is framed in the larger context of anthropocentric notions of the role of the natural environment on the development of societies. When taken in the wider context of the ancient civilizations of grade nine social studies (1971, 1991, 1999, 2008), students learn that geographic features largely influenced the development and success of early societies. In grade eight, where culture is maintained as a major conceptual focal point through subsequent renewals, students learn that one of the major factors to influence the development of a culture, and also vice versa, is the geographic environment (Saskatchewan Education, 1987, 1999, 2008). Where Canadian

and regional identity are explored in the 1990s curriculum guides at the secondary level, geography is also included as a key factor.

It will come as little surprise that in a study focused on articulations of Canadian identity that regionalism and the obstacles this presents to a unified Canada emerge as another frequent discourse. The diversity, in this instance those created by geographic features and the particularities that such vast geographic differences create, becomes one of the dominant elements of our collective identity as a nation. Both History and Social Studies 30 in particular pay considerable attention to the intersection of geographic factors, regional identity, regional disparity and the impact of these realities on Canadian unity. In Social Studies 30 (1997) for instance, regional diversity becomes an underlying explanation for Canadians concerns over “identity, unity, and the influence of American culture” (p. 403). Despite their dated application in the context of exploring contemporary issues facing the Canadian nation state in 2020, these 30 level guides in particular point to a dominant trend in the framing of both regional identities and regional disparities as rooted, at least partially, in the landscapes of those various regions.

In addition to the heavy emphasis found at the 30 level, there are many instances over the years and specific grade levels where the discourse of geographic determinism intersects with articulations of the regional character of the Prairies and Saskatchewan in particular. Even though the importance of agriculture has long since disappeared as the primary industry in Saskatchewan, a number of historical geographers argue that the social changes brought about by such a shift have had little impact on the prevailing image of the West as an agricultural hinterland (Francis, 2007), a point well supported by social studies curriculum in the province both past and present. In instances where regional agricultural development is considered, there is a concerted effort to tie together the influence of the environment of the Western Prairies with the development of a unique political culture defined by its cultivation of a cooperative ethic.

It is these articulations of and connections with place and regional landscapes that could provide the potential to offer a foundation of commonality within the reality of our ever increasing and deepening notions of multiplicity and difference. Although curricular guides from the era pay mind to the connections between identity and place, there is a lost opportunity, especially in the guides at the 30 level, to use these regional particularities to build a notion of shared belonging rooted in a broader notion of Canada as a vast landscape that we all share. Although these guides, especially at the 30 level, do good in their concerted effort to highlight

the regional landscapes of the Prairies and the regional identities that have formed out of those geographic particularities, there is little opportunity presented within the guides to explore our landscapes as a point of sharing and unification at a broader national level. As Chambers (1999) contends, we may find a way to tackle the difficult task of reaching across the vast differences we encounter in one another through an understanding of the topography, especially the physical and imaginary landscapes and our histories within those landscapes.

Framed in the broad context of place-based education, the historical development of social studies curriculum highlights the fact that we still find ourselves in a curricular climate largely dominated by articulations of land and place rooted in Western notions of the utility and functionality of the land. This point is evident in both historical sense of the development of hinterland-heartland dynamics as well as more contemporary considerations of resources and resource development. Despite the fact that most recent curricular renewals include philosophical foundations that highlight principles of sustainability and respect for the land, these guides fail to implement such goals in meaningful ways. While more specific aims and goals found within the guides provide some opportunity for students to explore issues related to human impacts on the natural world, curriculum throughout the years in question fail to incorporate opportunities for students to explore deeper ties to the land outside of its utility. Curriculum developed in the future would benefit from exploring how place-based education can provide opportunities for students to consider land from various perspectives. Such perspectives could include recognition of the shifting nature of community and individual perceptions and how these shifts are informed by expectations that may be created by someone with something to sell or to gain (Williams Resor, 2010). If educators hope for students to even begin to understand the role that land and our connections to it plays in the development of particular values, beliefs, modes of being, and identity, then our current curriculum is lacking. There needs to be opportunities for students to explore the ways that land has been perceived and treated in the pursuit of particular goals. Students also need opportunities to see that meaningful sustainability is rooted in a different perception of the land based on a reciprocal, rather than extractive, relationship.

The current state of disconnect and fracturing that we see both within and outside of our national borders can be at least partially attributed to the mass feelings of homelessness experienced by many. Although many of us do not experience it on the scale of the descendants

of African slaves, wandering Jews, or Indigenous populations both within and outside of our national borders, we all know what it feels like to be homesick. Outside of the idea of a creator, there is perhaps no idea quite as bewildering as the idea of home and the role that it plays in our lives both as individuals and communities (Chamberlin, 2003). It is for this reason that figuring out the place that gives us a sense of meaning and of others within our communities turns out to be quite problematic for many of us. In a world where transiency within and between communities both large and small is the norm, and our political bounded national landscapes are defined by their very diversity and vastness, it can be daunting to think about beginning to incorporate stories of the places we inhabit and the meaning we attach to those places.

Place-based education aims to fight against such feelings of disconnect and homelessness through combatting discourses of isolation and standardized learning that actually aim for a kind of placeless approach (Gruenewald, 2003). Such a focus on highlighting the particularities of the places that we inhabit provides great potential in cultivating both a sense of belonging and agency for students. Democratic action research begins when students are provided with opportunities to investigate and interact with their local histories and then make some sort of plan of action to deal with the issues they and their communities are confronted with at home (Gruenewald, 2003). Such localized democratic action could then lead and branch out into wider regional, national and perhaps even global contexts so that students are provided with opportunities to see how their own communities, both large and small, are linked to places outside of their immediate experience. Although it is without question a challenging task that presents a number of obstacles, curriculum should provide opportunities for students to explore the complexities of identity and how our connections to, or disconnection from, place intersects with our broad understanding of what it means to call Canada home.



## Chapter 9

### **Representations of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous History in Saskatchewan Social Studies: Contributions Approaches and the Maintenance of Settler Innocence**

As much as questions about what it means to be Canadian cannot be separated from questions about what it means to call the *place* Canada home, any attempt to understand current articulations of Canadian nationalism and identity formation must include an examination of the ways in which Indigenous<sup>38</sup> peoples, knowledges, and perspectives have been taken up within the project of nation building. Histories and identities, both national and personal, are not only entwined with one another and the places in which they are cultivated but are also expressions of the cultures that created them (Dickason, 2005). These histories and identities shift and change over time to serve a variety of purposes within the larger nation state. Taken up in the context of nations like Canada with colonial roots, the histories and identities created, disseminated, and reinforced often serve the aims of the dominant in society. The role and space that Canada's Indigenous peoples have occupied and continue to occupy is central to the development of histories and narratives that work to honour the goals of equity, justice, and the cultivation of meaningful and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. To understand where and how representations of Indigenous peoples are formed is essential to the work of understanding how our national narratives have shaped and continue to shape both policy and the myths that non-Indigenous peoples tell about themselves (Francis, 2011).

As Canadian educators and students search for ways to meaningfully participate in the arduous work of reconciliation, it is imperative to engage with and critically examine how representations of Indigenous peoples are connected to historic and continued projects of exclusion and marginalization. In the context of education, social studies and history curricular reform more specifically, this involves examining the historical development of representations

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<sup>38</sup> I use several terms throughout this chapter in reference to the First Peoples of what is now known as Canada. In my own writing and explanations, I favour the term Indigenous throughout. Indigenous is commonly accepted as a general reference term which applies to the first inhabitants of an area eventually settled by colonizers. Indian is used only within the context of historical use of the term, for instance the Indian Act but also in the context of curricular use of the term. First Nations is the preferred term in Canada, and this term is used instead of Indian in most cases, as reflected in the use of the term in curriculum guides beginning in the late 1990s. Aboriginal is an inclusive term which represents First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the Canadian context. Aboriginal continues to a favoured term in the Canadian context most obviously because of its connection to rights as laid out in the Canadian Constitution Act 1982. In some instances, either Aboriginal or Indigenous could have been used as both have been and continue to be generally accepted terminology when making broad reference to the many distinct and diverse first peoples who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial.

of Indigenous peoples, the form and function of these representations in curriculum and the ways in which these historical analyses can aid the processes of curricular decolonization<sup>39</sup> and Indigenization<sup>40</sup>. Focused exclusively on the nature and function of discourses of Indigenous peoples, this chapter seeks to interrogate the form and function of those dominant discourses in social studies and history curriculum in Saskatchewan beginning in 1970 and ending with the most recent guides in 2008.

### **Historical and Enduring Discourses of Indigenous Peoples**

Ever since the earliest days of contact in the “New World”, discourses and representations of Indigenous peoples have occupied the interest of Europeans (Calderon & Roy, 2010). Driven by a number of motivations, including, anthropological and cultural curiosity, fervour over narratives featuring the exotic, or imperialist and colonist motives (Calderon & Roy, 2010), representations of Indigenous peoples have always, with varying degrees of inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization, been an integral component to overarching narratives of the formation of Canada and Canadian identity. A recurring theme across literary, historical, and social studies, the figure of the Indian has been represented using a number of various pan indigenizing and stereotypical discourses in order to produce Indigenous peoples as the perennial Other (Salee, 2010). Integral to the persistence of colonial negotiations and relations in the context of what is now Canada, cultural representations of Indigenous peoples have been a major preoccupation within both cultural history as well as cultural studies more generally speaking (Sangster, 2016). While there is no doubt that since contact Western societies have been interested in writing about and chronicling encounters with vibrant societies of Indigenous peoples, what is equally clear is that since these earliest days of contact, these societies have had little interest in Indigenous knowledge systems, concepts, and perspectives. Instead, Westerners have produced representations of Indigenous peoples where the rich diversity among peoples disappears in favour of homogenization and where the persistence of these diverse cultures was

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<sup>39</sup> Decolonization is a complex, complicated and emergent process (Mackey, 2014). For the purposes of this chapter, decolonization is understood as a process that involves the deconstruction of institutions and discourses that built on racism and colonial exploitation (Alfred, 2009 as cited in Mackey, 2014). As such, it is also a process that involves unsettling colonial articulations of indigenous peoples and their histories.

<sup>40</sup> *Indigenization* refers to the process of naturalizing indigenous knowledge systems and making them evident so as to effect transformation of spaces, places and hearts. In the educational context, this means bridging indigenous knowledges and approaches with Western knowledge systems (Antoine, et.al., 2018).

believed by the majority to be temporary and replaceable by dominant and superior Western society (Dockstar, 2005).

While representations of Indigenous peoples are both romanticized and reviled as required by the shifting colonial goals, the underlying mainstay has been the constant need for reinvention (Sangster, 2016). Fraught with the contradictions of being othered while simultaneously integrated into the folkloric myths of the nation (Sangster, 2016), these representations play an important role in both creating and legitimating national histories and identities for the dominant in society. The stories that we tell about the colonial past, whether in the context of early exploration and the fur trade, or the conquest and settlement of the “frontier”, function in North America as foundational narratives that underpin majority society (Peers, 2007). And while these historical myths about Indigenous peoples in North America are certainly historical in the sense that they reflect particular aims taken up within a particular historical context, an examination of such myths rests on an understanding that these representations remain prevalent today (Jentz, 2018).

Evidence of the integral role that Indigenous peoples played in the early European exploration are evident in the very earliest accounts of Canadian history. Primarily included in the context of the economic systems of the fur trade and as military allies in colonial wars, views about Indigenous peoples were ambivalent from the outset. Early Indigenous peoples and societies were represented as brutish, wild and stupid, while simultaneously noble and free (Dickason, 2005). The image of the noble savage is one that froze Indigenous peoples in time as primitive peoples incapable of change. Closely related to notions of the ‘good Indian’, the noble savage was presented as a cure to the social ills brought about by competitive materialism. Praised for the perceived simplicity and ease of lifestyle, the myth of the noble savage is one that still holds sway in contemporary society. Jentz (2018) notes that the 2009 film *Avatar*, that details the story of a white anthropologist coming to the rescue of the Na’vi people after he is overcome with their noble qualities, reflects the continuing appeal of such representations.

As Canadian historians and writers commenced the work of building the repertoire of national heroes and the federal government pursued national political, economic, and social agendas, Indigenous peoples were increasingly demonized and positioned as the enemy. Characterized as the ignoble savage by Jentz (2018) in his examination of seven myths of Native American history, these representations served to justify the removal of Indigenous peoples from

their lands. In this narrative, Indigenous peoples were represented as subhuman savages who wandered the wilderness aimlessly, were unsuited to the requirements of civilized life, and without a valid claim to their lands (Jentz, 2018). The enduring myth of the ignoble savage has important implication in our current social climate in that it is representations like these that breed the hatred and racism experienced by Indigenous peoples at the hands of the majority. “Indian hating”, as Jentz (2018) argues, depends on the myth of the ignoble savage. Homogenized and denigrated, Indigenous peoples are treated as the enemy and become the targets of scorn, exploitation and discrimination because of their mere existence (Jentz, 2018). Mountie fiction and historical narratives in particular rely on articulations of the imaginary Indian as wild and backwards. Here, Indigenous peoples are inserted into historical narratives to demonstrate white civilization’s triumph over the wilderness. With few exceptions, Indigenous peoples within these narratives are identified with the very wilderness that must be overcome in the pursuit Canadian settlement and development. Most often portrayed as savage, wild, and brutish, Indigenous peoples belonged to the wilderness and, as such, needed to be either transformed or cleared away in the name of progress (Francis, 2011; Peers, 2007).

By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans began to feel as though they had a handle on living in their new environments and as such, no longer felt the need to rely on the expertise and friendships with Indigenous peoples. As relationships shifted and Europeans began to assert a more permanent presence in North America, colonial thought increasingly represented Indigenous peoples “as static, unchanging, and confined to a permanent state of nature”, effectively placing Indigenous peoples either as outsiders in historical processes or they were completely ignored (Brownlie, 2009, p.22). This shift in thinking about the place of Indigenous peoples within the larger goals of settlement and development of Western Canadian farmlands were mirrored in government policy developed during the period like the Indian Act (1876). Aimed to assimilate Indigenous populations through complete control over just about every aspect of their lives, the Indian Act ushered in an era characterized by aggressive and harmful policies in pursuit of a solution to the “Indian Problem.”<sup>41</sup> The new shift towards marginalizing and largely omitting Indigenous peoples from historical accounts began in the wake of the War

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<sup>41</sup> Often attributed to deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947), government officials perceived Indigenous peoples as a hindrance to the development and progression of Euro-Canadian society, and as such sought solutions that would eliminate this problem, namely through efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian society.

of 1812. In the wake of their decreasing role as military allies, settler demand for land rose (Clark, 2007), fur trade economies declined, and alternate economic activities increased (Dickason, 2005), attitudes towards Indigenous populations turned primarily to marginalization and assimilation (Clark, 2007). The shift in relationship and rise in new economies was also accompanied by efforts to segregate Indigenous populations.

As these efforts to segregate and isolate Indigenous peoples onto remote reserves far away from the “progress” of Western civilization intensified, non-Indigenous peoples increasingly had little exposure to Indigenous peoples. Such narratives took on two forms. In one instance, Indigenous peoples were included within the larger narrative but in increasingly limited ways and roles. In the other, Indigenous peoples were completely omitted from the historical record and the history of North America begins with European “discovery” and exploration of the continent (Brownlie, 2009). The convergence of both these narratives rests on another narrative, that of the myth of the vanishing Indian. If there was any one single belief that dominated non-Indigenous thinking about Indigenous peoples during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was that Indigenous peoples would not be around to see much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Francis, 2011). Where any attention at all was paid to Indigenous peoples, the majority of white Canadians believed that Indigenous peoples were quickly disappearing due to the effects of disease, alcohol abuse, and economic hardships (Francis, 2011). Dependent on the construction of the earlier myths of the noble and ignoble savage and fuelled by populations declines, the gradual and inevitable disappearance of the Indian became an indication of their racial inferiority; a disappearance that was necessary so as to ensure the progress and domination of racially superior Europeans on the continent (Jentz, 2018). The belief in the inevitable disappearance of the Indian was genuinely held by a majority of Canadians and was predicated on a view that envisioned Indigenous peoples as incapable of and incompatible with modern life. Indigenous peoples, the majority of Canadians believed, would either disappear through the fatal effects of disease and hardship or assimilate into dominant society (Jentz, 2018). Such a noble race could not survive all of the complexities presented by modern life and those who did manage to survive the forward march towards progress “crawled over the land proving their ignoble, degraded state that Indians overcome by progress naturally withered to the level of vermin.” (Jentz, 2018, p. 85). In terms of writings and representations of Indigenous peoples this meant that Europeans worked hard to dismiss, infantilize and even completely eliminate Indigenous peoples in both symbolic and

literal ways (Salée, 2010). Perceived as an obstacle to the settlement and development of the West in particular, Euro-Canadians were led to believe that Indigenous peoples were a vanishing race.

An Indian, according to this view, was a reified relic of the past; the imaginary Indian could never become modern. The only Indians that existed, those who had assimilated into dominant society, were not Indian at all and any other Indian had disappeared (Francis, 2011). Deployed to prop up colonial goals, the myth of the vanishing Indian helps to frame racist and paternalistic policies developed by the Canadian government as benevolent acts (Jentz, 2018) that served to ensure the only kind of perceivable survival: assimilation. Ignoring the fact that it is settler colonialism<sup>42</sup> causing the attempted annihilation of Indigenous societies, the myth of the disappearing or vanishing Indian is mobilized so as to construct government policies and the adoption of Euro-Canadian life, including removal, control and segregation of Indigenous peoples, as the only path to survival for this dying race (Jentz, 2018).

Such articulations of the vanishing Indian, incapable of modern life inform historical narratives that focus on the inevitable progress of Euro-Canadian development. Indicating the prevalence of such historical narratives in the specific context of social studies education, Clark (2007) concluded that the narrative of the development of the nation state found within textbooks authorized for use in British Columbia (1991-present) was overwhelmingly one of progress. Such a narrative relies on a grand notion of the inevitable progress of the nation from taming the wilderness and the people who inhabited that wilderness, to the establishment of European orderly systems of law and government, to the eventual integration and development of vast and efficient networks of trade, communications and transportations (Clark, 2007). The problem with such narratives is that they are at the very least part of a process that others and marginalizes Indigenous peoples as minor players, while at most it completely ignores or glosses over their existence at all. Indigenous peoples, where they are present, are included in *relation to* Euro-Canadians and the settler story (Clark, 2007).

This widely held belief in the vanishing Indian spurred a spirited movement amongst non-Indigenous artists and writers to document and exhibit Indigenous peoples and their

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<sup>42</sup> Foundational theories and scholarly work in settler colonialism distinguish settler colonialism from other types of colonialism through work that demonstrates the goal in settler colonialism to eliminate Indigenous societies and cultures in order to replace them and establish settlers as the rightful inhabitants of the lands (Cox, 2017).

cultures. Desperate to chronicle this dying race, these non-Indigenous artists and authors became the eyes through which many Canadians viewed Indigenous peoples and cultures. For instance, for many Canadians, the image of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian is Paul Kane's Indian. Renowned for his extensive pictorial record of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Northwest, Paul Kane documented what he believed was the disappearance of the Indian. Even today, it is difficult to find a history textbook that doesn't include some of Kane's renderings of Indigenous life (Francis, 2011). Later artists like Emily Carr embarked on a mission of taking possession of the Indian in society. While these artists lamented the disappearance of Indigenous peoples, their success was actually predicated on it. While lost on the artists and authors themselves, the very culture that they were so interested in preserving and protecting had been partially destroyed by white settlers. Indigenous peoples became the object of efforts to preserve and document what was perceived as disappearance and, in a curious leap of logic, non-Indigenous artists became the saviours of the vanishing race (Francis, 2011). Even though shifts that saw Indigenous population begin to increase around 1921, the most important thing to know about Indians in the century leading up to WWII was that they were a disappearing people (Francis, 2011).

It would not be until well after the Second World War that Indigenous peoples were given any serious attention by Canadian historians (Dickason, 2005). The last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have brought about some challenges to such limiting and colonial views of Indigenous peoples and their roles in the development of Canada. As attitudes towards Indigenous peoples began to shift worldwide following World War II, Canada fell in line with the current, rather than occupying any kind of driving force behind the movement (Dickason, 2005). Efforts to remove the most discriminatory sections of the Indian Act, including amendments that eliminated bans on traditional ceremonies, began in 1951 and would continue over the next decades and well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The year 1973 would see the conclusion of an integral case in the narrative of land claims processes in Canada, followed not long after by the recognition of Aboriginal title and treaty rights into the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. The Calder decision (1973) paved the way for the development of land claims processes in Canada. The court case, focused on the claims of the Nisga'a that they had never surrendered their land rights through treaty, as the Royal Proclamation (1763) requires, and so still had jurisdiction over and title to those lands. The Supreme Court supported the argument put forth by the Nisga'a peoples, affirming the contemporary applicability of the

Royal Proclamation. As a result, the federal government announced a new policy for the settlement of land claims in August of 1973 (Crowe, 2015). In 1982, following the protest of Aboriginal peoples that would take them all the way to the United Nations in New York and then on to Europe to appeal to international audiences<sup>43</sup>, both Aboriginal title and treaty rights were written into the Canadian constitution under Section 35.

One of the more significant publications to promote recognition of Indigenous perspectives and content while avoiding the imposition of Eurocentric knowledge systems was the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Final Report. Released in 1996 following six years of committee work, the report called for a fundamental change in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The facilitation of this change would be partially fulfilled through the establishment of an appropriate historical framework for the understanding of the relationship of Aboriginal – Canadian relations. Signalling a shift in public policy in recognizing the importance of acknowledging and honouring Aboriginal concepts and perspectives, the RCAP report presented a number of novel approaches to the examination of the historical relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies. The report concluded that a complete understanding of the past has important implications for understanding the contemporary context. Furthermore, the historical context had important implications because many of the attitudes, institutions and practices that took shape in the past have real and often limiting effects on the present situation (Dockstar, 2005). Part of the basis for this interpretation of the past was an examination into the historical representations of Aboriginal peoples. The report concluded that Western perceptions of Aboriginal peoples as “imaginary Indians” was based on three core assumptions: that Aboriginal peoples were one homogenous group, that they were a disappearing race, and that these representations rested on a mixture of simultaneous contrasts where Aboriginal possessed honourable characteristics for revering, but also pitiable ones for reviling (Dockstar, 2005). The commission was the first to use a model of historical societal interaction based in Aboriginal concepts and teachings. In the context of the historical record, the commission developed a visual representation of historical interactions over time derived from the teachings, knowledge, and wisdom of Aboriginal

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<sup>43</sup> The Constitution Express, led by Aboriginal activist and scholar George Manuel, aimed to bring attention to and protest the lack of recognition of Aboriginal rights in the proposed partition of the Canadian constitution by then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.



peoples. Reflecting the circular and cyclical nature of time emphasized in Aboriginal historical consciousness, the result was a representation of the past that relied on the interpretation of ancient Aboriginal teachings to examine contemporary issues (Dockstar, 2005). Despite the fact that the conclusions and recommendations of the report did not meet a high level of implementation by the federal government (Dockstar, 2005), it stands as an indicator of the shift in seeking to incorporate diverse perspectives that results in richer and more inclusive interpretations of the past.

The most recent publication with important implications for reconciliation in broader society including direct references to the work to be done in the sphere of institutional change has been both the work and final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Although the RCAP had recommended as part of their findings in 1996 that the government conduct a full investigation into the legacy of residential schools, the creation of a body to conduct such an investigation would not occur until 2008. Created as a result of the terms set out in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, the TRC began the work of gathering stories from residential school survivors, their families, communities as well as residential school employees. Tasked with a mandate to reveal the “complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools” the TRC spent 7 years gathering stories before compiling all of their findings into a final report released in 2015. (TRC, Summary of the Final Report, 2015, p. 23).

Central to the findings is the role that education, both formal and informal, has in the work of reconciliation. Throughout their work, the TRC worked through their important mandate to educate the public about the legacy of residential schooling through over 900 public events and meetings with various institutions and organizations. In the realm of formal education, the TRC held several meetings with education ministers from across the country to advocate for the development of curriculum and resources that focus on the legacy of residential schooling and the mandatory adoption those curriculum across all jurisdictions (TRC, Summary of the Final Report, 2015). In addition to their final report, the TRC also drafted 94 Calls to Action that provide explicit recommendations for action across Canadian society, including actions to be taken by government and institutions as well as individual Canadians, that work to redress the legacy of residential schooling and pursue the goal of reconciliation. Partitioned into six thematic areas pertaining to specific sectors (child welfare, education, language, culture,

health, justice, and reconciliation) of Canadian society, calls to action 6-12 as well as 62-65 deal specifically with the education sector. While calls to action six through twelve target the role of the federal government in providing appropriate funding and consultation procedures for the implementation of Aboriginal education legislation, it is calls to action 62-65 that relate more specifically to the role of K-12 public education. With specific regards to curricular development, calls to action 62 and 63 urge governments to implement curriculum that focuses on the legacy of residential schooling, treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada. Furthermore, the commission also calls on the Council of Ministers of Education to maintain a commitment to the Aboriginal education issues including the development and implementation of "Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools" (TRC, Calls to Action, 2015, p. 7).

Another important indicator of the shift to challenge misleading and harmful narratives has been the growing field of Indigenous histories and number of Indigenous authors. Since the 1970s, several publications like Harold Cardinal's *Unjust Society* (1969), also known as the Red Paper because it was a direct response to the federal government's White Paper and Howard Adams *Prison of Grass* (1975) have had significant influence in the dissemination of Indigenous historical perspectives and helped to start the process of educating non-Indigenous Canadians about the injustices of the past and present for Indigenous peoples (Brownlie, 2009). The very first sentence of Cardinal's charged response to the White Paper (1969) emphasizes his historical focus.

Proposed by then Department of Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien and part of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's "Just Society" policies, the bill called for the elimination of the Department of Indian Affairs in favour of delivery of services to all citizens from the same branches of government. The proposed legislation would mean the ultimate dismantling and abandonment of the treaties as well Aboriginal rights secured through the recognition of Indian status. As such, the bill was met with widespread opposition from Indigenous peoples, including Cardinal. "The history of Canada's Indians," Cardinal wrote, "is a shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian rights, and his repeated betrayal of our trust" (Cardinal, 1969, p.1 as cited in Brownlie, 2009, p. 30). Following the failure of the assimilative policy, Indigenous rights gained steam in the Canadian political arena. Adams also

emphasized the historic relationship of deception and the inaccuracies that had prevailed in the telling of Canada's past. A revisionist account of the settlement of the West, *Prison of Grass* (1975) sought to bring Indigenous peoples and their perspectives of the past into the telling of Canadian history.

Increasingly, Indigenous peoples are viewed as subjects, agents with whom researchers must engage with in a co-construction of knowledge (Salée, 2010). In the broader context of revisionist histories and the broader climate of pluralism, Indigenous representations of the past and challenging long held national myths have signalled the beginning of a shift where “competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history” (Peers, 2007, p. 180). The most common phrases used to describe the historic relations between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians since the early 1990s, argues Peers (2007), are underpinned by notions of alliance and interdependence.

Additionally, government recognition and public awareness of rights to traditional territories, Aboriginal title and the fulfillment of treaty obligations and promises that began in the 1960s and 1970s continues through to today with ongoing land claims agreements across the country. Certainly, what has come to dominate mainstream political and public discussion and debate has been the focus on the rights to self-government and self-determination for Indigenous communities in Canada. As new evidence comes to light, Indigenous scholars develop new questions and methods (Jentz, 2018), and authors carve out space within mainstream academia and public discourse to tell their stories and their histories on their own terms, and the complexity, nuance, and ambiguity that challenge simplistic, myth based ideas about history fall by the wayside. It is through this important work that narratives and research aimed at unwrapping and dispelling harmful representations of Indigenous peoples can emerge. It is work that is equally important for the role that it can have in working towards developing positive, respectful, and honest relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Despite these important developments in the recognition of Aboriginal title and treaty rights and the work of Indigenous authors, there is still much work to do in working towards equitable and just representations. Efforts and policies aimed at reducing discrimination and efforts of assimilation are punctuated by historical incidents that testify to the power such historical attitudes and policies hold over time. The 1969 White Paper, for instance, would serve as an important reminder of the power of assimilative undertones and also serve as an

important catalyst to bring Aboriginal injustices into the public sphere (Clark, 2007). Owing to this widespread opposition and the response of one Indigenous activist in particular Harold Cardinal, the bill served as an important catalyst for Indigenous rights.

The utter disregard for Indigenous rights, and land rights in particular, would come to a head in 1990 with the eruption of the Oka Crisis<sup>44</sup> or Kanestatake resistance. It would take the eruption of Indigenous discontent in the wake of that crisis to jar the vast majority of Canadians into realizing that Canadian history had deeper and more diverse roots than had been generally acknowledged by popular accounts (Dickason, 2005). As Indigenous peoples and issues hit the mainstream in major ways, one of the most popular depictions of Indigenous peoples has been as protestor or problem. In her examination of British Columbia textbooks from 1911 to the most recent publications available, Clark (2007) contends that representations focused on the 1990s frequently involve Indigenous peoples engaged in some kind of protest or celebration of political victory. The prevalence of such representations leave readers with the impression that political unrest and protest is a core activity and that Indigenous peoples are disgruntled.

Mirroring the larger socio-political context of recognition but also the continued disregard of Indigenous rights, a number of problematic constructions of Indigenous peoples remain prevalent in more contemporary contexts. One such narrative is certainly the construction of Indigenous peoples as ecological characters. Reflecting the same values espoused by the construction of the noble savage, articulations that depict Indigenous peoples one dimensionally with respect to their ties with the natural world rely on notions of the primitive yet virtuous Indian. Idealized and romanticised for their connections to the natural world, such constructions offer up a grossly simplistic and stereotypical representation of Indigenous peoples; one that simplifies Indigenous peoples and their connection to the natural world (Jentz, 2018). To represent Indigenous peoples as societies that did not alter their natural environments neglects the abilities of Indigenous peoples to adapt to their environments. While it is true that a common element in Indigenous worldviews is a deep connection to and respect for the land and all things that are part of the natural world, Indigenous peoples have a variety of

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<sup>44</sup> The Oka Crisis was a 78-day standoff between the Mohawk of Kanestatake and the Quebec police and eventually the Canadian military. At the heart of the dispute was a proposed golf course expansion and condominium construction project on disputed land. As a result of the Quebec government's disregard of the Mohawk peoples rights to traditional territories, the Mohawk community of Kanestatake set up barricades, blocking access to the area referred to as the Pines.

environmental histories and altered their environments through irrigation, building, fires and deforestation. The Woodland Cree, for instance, domesticated forest lands for millennia, burning and clearing forest to clear the way for grasslands on which they could hunt (Jentz, 2018). In the contemporary context, such a myth promotes a view of Indigenous peoples and their views of development that neglects the complexities and tensions at play as Indigenous peoples navigate the role of their peoples and communities in contemporary resource development. Dispensing with this myth allows Indigenous environmental history to speak for itself (Jentz, 2018) and contemporary Indigenous views on resource extraction to be considered in the context of the complex and sometimes competing perspectives on resource development.

Another prevalent contemporary narrative attempts to use Indigenous peoples and perspectives to prop up Canada's image as a liberal, tolerant nation. Canada's increasing identification since the 1970s as a liberal nation state that holds equality, justice, and tolerance as core tenets, has meant in some ways that the mere existence of Indigenous peoples becomes disruptive. Thrown off balance during by the socio-political claims of Indigenous peoples that call into question the hegemonic position of the Anglo-white majority as well as the sub-standard socio-economic conditions in which many Indigenous peoples live, many white settlers have developed an anxiety that is partially remedied by writing about "what to make of the Indian" (Salée, 2010, p. 315). One way to remedy such anxieties about the existence of Indigenous peoples in the more contemporary context of the Canadian nation state is to coopt Indigenous peoples, perspectives, and values into the larger nation-building project. Employed as support for Canadian notions of equality and social justice principles, such narratives represent Indigenous values as Canadian values. Using the recent publication *A Fair Country* by John Ralston Saul as evidence of the continuation and popularity of this discourse, Salée (2010) explains that Saul argues Canadians' obsession with egalitarianism, the desire to maintain balance between individual and group rights, the prevalence of negotiation in society and politics, and the desire for consensus is evidence that Canadians owe much more to Indigenous influences than European ones.

Such articulations of Canada as an inclusive, non-racialized, liberal haven thanks primarily to the influence of Indigenous worldviews are problematic in that they both homogenize Indigenous peoples and their histories and fail in the sense that the egalitarian utopia proposed by such narratives has never come to any true fruition. Although it is true that many

Indigenous cultures place high value on notions of egalitarianism and collectivism to homogenize all Indigenous peoples as espousing these values does a disservice to the diversity of Indigenous cultures. While there are a number of studies which highlight this collectivist streak that runs through Indigenous societies, there are also studies that detail the existence of complex social and economic stratification within Indigenous societies (Salée, 2010). And while this articulation of Canada as being founded on such principles of egalitarian, liberal principles might have been partially materialized during the 1960s and 1970s as a number of minority groups fought for equal representation and voice in the political sphere in particular, the neoliberal<sup>45</sup> policies that began to take hold in the 1980s became serious barriers to the full deployment of such values (Salée, 2010).

Perhaps the most glaring problem with such a representation of the development of Canada and the influence of Indigenous peoples is its egregious neglect of the nature of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians. Certainly, Indigenous peoples have been immensely influential in the development of Canada. A narrative that focuses only on what Canada has gained in terms of values from Indigenous peoples, however, completely ignores the fact that except perhaps for some of the early relationships that developed during contact and the fur trade, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Europeans and then white Canadians has always been primarily and unequal defined more accurately by continued attempts to impose settler colonial social and cultural hegemony on Indigenous peoples (Salée, 2010).

The existence of such continuing processes of colonization are evident in the ongoing eviction and removal of Indigenous peoples from settler spaces. Such processes are central to Razack's (2012) account and critical analysis of the death of Frank Paul, a 48 year-old Mi'kmaq man, and the police inquiries and court proceedings that followed his death. Razack (2012) recounts the experience of Frank Paul to highlight ongoing colonialism represented by the racially and spatially organized relationship between the settler and those they continue dispossess. Frank Paul died from exposure and hypothermia on the streets of Vancouver on

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<sup>45</sup> Neoliberal policies are characterized by an intense concentration on the maximization of profits at any and all costs. Also known as the corporate agenda, neoliberalism promotes corporate power through tax cuts, privatization, deregulation of the private sector, increased regulation of the public sector, and reduced rights for workers (Orlowski, 2018) In education, neoliberal tendencies can be seen in the push for increased standardization and increased focus on efficiency and outcomes based curriculum.

December 6, 1988 after being dumped there by police, despite the fact that he was severely intoxicated and soaking wet at the time. The inquiries demonstrate that the experiences of Frank Paul at the hands of the state embody a constant process of displacement. Paul's body was subjected to a constant removal from the public space secured through rituals perpetrated by the state to establish state control of public, settler space.

These ritualistic encounters with the police and service providers served to create a placelessness and secure the city streets as settler space. As an Indigenous man, Paul's constant removal from the 'public' space indicates that this space belongs to settlers (Razack, 2012). Moreover, this placelessness serves to secure colonial possession because "the Aboriginal body, so inextricably linked to the land that is stolen, must be repressed, rendered simultaneously indispensable and expendable in a settler's psyche...the colonizer must both manage his fears and produce the material arrangements on which his entitlement lies" (Razack, 2012, p. 919-920). Limited narratives based in liberal notions of tolerance as well as settler innocence neglect both the fact that for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Euro-Canadians actually went to great lengths to erase any and all traces of Indigenous peoples (Salée, 2010) and continue to do so in contemporary landscapes through displacement and violence (Razack, 2012).

### **Indigenous Content and Perspectives in Education: Historical Context**

In many ways the historical absence and more recent inclusions of Indigenous peoples, content and perspectives in curriculum, resources and classrooms has mirrored the larger socio-political context of the nation. Deer (2013) contends that the recent recognition of Indigenous perspectives and content as an accepted component of public education has come as a result of the last forty years of socio-political events in the Canadian context. Historically, academic curricula have been developed in ways that heavily favour a Euro-Western culture through content, perspectives, approaches to teaching and learning, as well as values about conceptions of knowledge (Antoine et. al., 2018).

Beginning in the 1600s, education has had a long history of being the primary means through which the goal of assimilation was pursued by European and then Canadian governments (Cardinal, 1999). Institutionalized through the establishment and proliferation of residential schooling, education hastened the destruction of Indigenous cultures, a major part of which included the near loss of many languages (Cardinal, 1999). Reaching a height of 80

schools across the country in 1930, residential schools ranged in student enrolment anywhere from 50 to over 400. These schools intended to “Christianize and civilize” by separating children from their parents, their communities, and their cultures (Kirkness, 1999). Children would not only endure the devastating effects of separation and isolation, many were subjected to deliberate acts of physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, 2015). Grossly underfunded and understaffed in many instances, residential schools were often required to become self-sufficient institutions (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, 2015). This meant that much of the labour required to keep the schools running was performed by students, leaving limited time for academic study in many schools. Even for those children who did make it back to their communities following their experiences, it is estimated that by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 50 percent of the children who had attended the schools did not benefit from the education that they received (Kirkness, 1999).

As efforts to Christianize and civilize began to lose sway by the 1950s and residential schools began closing their doors, the federal government began a two pronged approach to Indian education. As the number of residential schools in operation dwindled beginning in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of federally funded schools on reserve as well as the number of Indigenous students in provincially run public schools began to increase. These efforts meant that by the 1970s, the federal government had succeeded in making provisions for approximately 60 percent of Indigenous students into either federally funded schools on reserve or within public schools. These integration efforts, though an improvement from the devastating conditions experienced by many students in residential schools, represent another extension of government control over the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities. Completely shut out of the decision making, planning, and implementation processes, this next stage in the narrative of Indigenous education was simply an extension of assimilative efforts where the primary goal, especially in the context of integration at public schools, was to absorb Indigenous children into non-Indigenous society (Kirkness, 1999).

In the wake of these efforts to transition away from residential schooling and growing concerns over the nature and quality of Indian education, a number of major investigations have shed light on the systematic inequities experienced by Indigenous students in the public education system in terms of administrative policies, classroom experience, curriculum, and



resources implemented in schools across the country. The Hawthorne Report (1967) begins with the assertion that the promise of integration had not produced the results the government had hoped for. The basic conclusion offered by the report was that Indian children possess a different set of needs - a set of needs not addressed by school programming at the time (Tremblay, Vallee, & Ryan, 1967). Data from the study indicated that education was characterized by much conflict and frustration for Indian children. As opposed to cultivating an environment where ethnic differences are embraced and used to benefit everyone, schooling produced situations where Indian children were left feeling isolated and alienated (Tremblay, Vallee, & Ryan, 1967).

Although no systematic study of curriculum was undertaken by the work of the study committee, the report offers several general points for consideration. Recommendations pertaining specifically to curriculum included a call to eliminate inaccurate, over generalized, and insulting content. The committee found that in most school systems across the country there was no material related to Indian cultures. In the rare instances where materials did address Indian cultures, the information was often inaccurate, stereotypical and harmful. In place of such harmful content, provinces should aim to include content that is both accurate and is respectful of diversity. In such instances where it is difficult to attain such materials, schools and teachers needed to look to community members for support (Tremblay, Vallee, & Ryan, 1967). The report also drew attention to prevailing attitudes towards Indian education across provincial jurisdictions. Saskatchewan, the report noted, considered both the goals of integration and the extension of public education services to Indian peoples as “desirable” (Tremblay, Vallee, & Ryan, 1967, p. 43).

Just a few years after the release of the Hawthorne Report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indian Affairs prepared a report on Indian education. Presented to parliament in June of 1971, the report presented some alarming conclusions regarding the state of Indian education in Canada. The report found that drop out rates for Indigenous students were four times higher than the Canadian national average, that in the few instances where content and perspectives were included they were often stereotypical and harmful in nature, that less than 15 percent of teachers had any kind of training in cross cultural education, and that less than 10 percent had any knowledge of Indian languages (Kirkness, 1999). The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB, now the Assembly of First Nations) also conducted their own investigations

into the issue of Indian education and shared their conclusions in a final report titled *Indian Control of Indian Education* released in 1972. The conclusion from the NIB solidified the findings from the Hawthorne and Standing Committee reports and called for increased parental input and local control over Indian education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). In the midst of growing public attention to the conclusions presented from all of these reports and a 1971 school strike in northeast Alberta over conditions in reserve schools, Indian education was propelled into the spotlight (Kirkness, 1999).

One of the most important studies to look at representations of Indigenous peoples in officially approved learning resources was conducted in Alberta. *Native People in the Curriculum* (1981), commonly referred to as the Decore Report, found that there was cause for serious concern when it came to representations of Indigenous peoples in educational resources. The report concluded that over 60 percent of authorized learning materials had major flaws in their representations including historical inaccuracies, stereotyping as well as grave omissions (Cardinal, 1999). As a result of the final report, Alberta instituted one of the strictest review processes for officially authorized educational resources – processes that would eventually be adopted by the other five provinces and territories that form part of the Western Canadian Protocol.<sup>46</sup>

In Saskatchewan in particular, major curricular renewals that would unfold over the course of the late 1980s and into the 1990s were informed by the conclusions offered by the final report of the Minister's Advisory Committee who began their work in 1981. It became the driving force behind the curricular renewals and included several recommendations aimed at attending to the needs of Indian and Métis students. The report argued that Indian and Metis students were not achieving at the same levels as their non-Indian and Metis counterparts at least in part because “course content offers little that relates to their history, language or way of life” (Saskatchewan Minister's Advisory Committee, 1984, p. 18). To remedy this issue, the committee suggested the integration of Aboriginal perspectives and content throughout the curriculum and the development of elective courses in Native Studies at the secondary school level.

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<sup>46</sup> The Western Canadian Protocol is a collaborative educational initiative that aims to, among others goals, foster an awareness of common educational goals. The group includes Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon and British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

In more recent years, the British Columbia Human Rights Commission released a report that focused on Indigenous students within the public education system. The central conclusion from the report was that current educational policies “fail to realize goals for education articulated by Aboriginal peoples” (BC Human Rights Commission, 2001, p. 8). The report includes a summary of what the commission considers the eight key barriers to education equity for Aboriginal students, including curriculum. The commission came to several conclusions when it came to their consideration of official curriculum. They found that in spite of the changes made to curriculum and resources to support curriculum implementation, schooling continues to reflect a predominantly European worldview. Where Aboriginal content and perspectives are considered, their inclusion is reflective of superficial add-on attempts, rather than any kind of meaningful integration. More specifically the commission argues that the curriculum excludes Aboriginal knowledges and languages, fails to reflect and reinforce the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, inaccurately portrays Canada’s history with respect to Aboriginal peoples, and neglects a holistic approach in favour of a focus on the development of narrowly defined academic pursuits (British Columbia Royal Commission, 2001).

In an effort to implement the suggestions offered by various studies and investigations into the current state of Indigenous education and counteract the harmful and assimilationist nature of the Eurocentric model of education that has prevailed in Canada, the state began to implement the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives into the curriculum. In so doing, since 1995 teachers in Saskatchewan specifically have been mandated to include Indigenous perspectives and content. In a literature review of Aboriginal perspectives on education prepared for the Western Canadian Protocol, Cardinal (1999) argued that a new direction in the education of all students was required if there was to be any hope in stemming the tide of alienation, poverty, unemployment, low academic achievement and other social factors affecting Aboriginal as well as minorities. Embracing and reflecting the popularity of multicultural education, Cardinal’s (1999) recommendations were aimed at reducing prejudice and discrimination against minority groups in order to work towards educational equity (Cardinal, 1999). With these goals in mind, Cardinal put forth a number of recommendations for the development of the K-12 social studies common curricular framework that was intended to then inform future curricular renewals in the five provinces that formed the membership of the protocol. Cardinal (1999) thought that the social studies curriculum should acknowledge the

importance of Aboriginal languages, provide opportunities for students to engage in decision making processes specific to studying diversity, ensure the importance of Aboriginal history, values, beliefs and practices as fundamental to Canadian history.

Another significant factor in the incorporation and delivery of Aboriginal content and perspectives in Saskatchewan has been the result of the work of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC). Created in 1989 by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations), the OTC was created to provide recommendations in the areas of Treaty Land Entitlement<sup>47</sup> and Treaty education in the province. Offering a substantial collection of resources for the implementation of treaty education in the province as well as developing and delivering professional development services for teachers across the province, the OTC has been a significant player to the incorporation of treaty education in the province. The result has been the incorporation of treaty education throughout curriculum within the outcomes for various courses, especially in the area of social studies, as well as the development of an adjunct guiding document that summarizes the integration of treaty education in each subject area across the K-12 school system. Despite these efforts, a number of sources indicate that Canadian students still graduate from high school with less than an adequate understanding of Indigenous peoples. As a result, many Indigenous students feel alienated from school and many non-Indigenous students continue in ignorance with intolerant attitudes, both of which greatly affect students' abilities to participate in a just society (Zurzolo, 2010).

### **Analysis and Interpretations**

Secondary source analysis provides the framework and lens through which I considered the inclusion and nature of representations of Indigenous peoples in social studies and history curriculum from 1971 to those most recent curricular renewals of 2008 in the province. Analysis and findings are intended to provide insight into the ways that Indigenous peoples have been included and excluded from narratives of Canada and Canadian identity and the ways in which those representations are connected to the larger socio-political context of the period. Since

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<sup>47</sup> Treaty Land Entitlement refers to a particular type of specific land claim where First Nations communities negotiate with the federal and provincial government in order to settle land debts which result from a failure to deliver the amount of land promised by treaty.

there is such a clear connection between these 25 curriculum guides and their respective educational and social context, for this chapter, I have elected to present findings chronologically by decade.

Close examination of the curriculum guides from the 1970s correlates with findings of the Social Studies Task Force in the province of Saskatchewan and other reports focused on the national scene. Indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories are largely omitted from the social studies guides from the decade. Appearing primarily in the context of cultural content aimed at examining cultural contact, Indigenous peoples occupy very little space in guides from this era. In grade nine Social Studies (1971) which, focuses on the development of ancient civilization and the connections modern Canadian society has with these ancient roots, pre-contact Indigenous peoples and societies are degraded in the context of the exploration of societies' growing and increasing complexity. Taken up in the context of the criteria set by the guide to determine whether a society is a "civilization", Indigenous societies are described as primitive and unorganized. The guide reflects an obvious intent to promote European, settled life as the natural and ideal progression for societies. Organized society does not include family or tribal organization - these are portrayed as prior, primitive models of social organization that fall by the wayside as societies adopt agricultural, settled lifestyles. "Settled living," students are encouraged to understand, "gives birth to a feeling of neighbourliness within the community" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 9, 1971, p. 13).

Building on this narrative of exclusion in favour of increased attention to the development of settled life, Social Studies 20 (1976) deals with the exploration of culture as its core concept, completely omitting Indigenous cultural connections to the land. Despite the centrality of the natural world to the development of a diverse set of Indigenous worldviews, the exploration of the connection between "culture and the physical environment" completely neglects Indigenous content and perspectives. Instead, the section focuses on the influence of the environment on settlements patterns, especially in the context of agricultural and economic development (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976). Later on, in the same guide, the Eurocentric lens becomes even more pronounced in a section of content that deals with educational structures. Educational structures and practices that do not reflect the European model of institutional education are degraded and presented in ways that discount these forms of education. "In most primitive societies, the basic task is to teach the child values,

mores and taboos of the society ...there is no formal education structure... [while] in other societies we find a good part of the socialization process carried out by a complex, formal education structure” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 33). Clearly the implication is that part of the primacy of primitive societies can be traced to their lack of formalized and “complex” structures such as those developed by Europeans.

Although not directly linked to representations of Indigenous peoples, both the treatment of cultural change and issues of race are important themes in the exploration of the treatment of Indigenous peoples over time in curriculum. Social Studies 20 (1976) includes an entire section dedicated to cultural change. The intent is for students to understand that as societies are presented with the challenges of fulfilling the needs of its members, these “societies modify their cultures by spontaneous and/or planned change” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 16). Cultural contact that results in cultural change is divided into four forms of interaction: accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, and repulsion. Although the content does include learning objectives that provide students with an understanding of assimilation, the content is crafted in ways that absolve the dominant culture from responsibility or culpability and in ways that neglect the devastating cultural and material loss that results from such a process. Assimilation is simply defined as a process in which “cultural differences are gradually reduced or eliminated” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 20, 1976, p. 17). The description and treatment of the process neglects the extent to which assimilation is achieved through the forceful implementation of policies and practices specifically aimed at the annihilation of a specific culture.

Increasingly problematic is the treatment of potentially troubling or controversial instances of cultural change. Any examples provided for the exploration of such troubling cultural exchanges take place outside of Canada. For instance, Social Studies 30 (1978), cultural contact and change are presented in much the same manner. Actively aimed at mitigating the oppressive role that dominant cultures have had on minority populations, cultural change is again framed using the four types identified in the earlier social studies 20 course, this time highlighting the interactions of minority populations in contemporary Canada. In their exploration of Canadians’ interactions with their social environments, students are encouraged to understand that “minority groups interact in a number of ways: acceptance, accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, rejection, repulsion, segregation and separation” (Saskatchewan

Education, Social Studies 30, 1978, p. 10). Such discourses of cultural contact and change completely ignore the role of the dominant group in those processes of change. Especially true in the example of minority contacts, such discourses work to conceal the actions of the dominant group in society, an example of omission as a hegemonic strategy. As opposed to highlighting how such interactions are connected to issues of power and domination, these processes of cultural change are presented as choices that minority cultures made or are making in attempts to fulfill the needs of their members.

Perhaps reflective of the growing climate in society to recognize systemic discrimination, race and racism are included as topics of study in the 1970s, and while this does indicate movement in the right direction, the representation of these two constructs are problematic. Social studies 10 (1975), focuses on the development of the individual in society through an examination of the internal and external factors impacting that development, and includes a section that considers “inherited and acquired factors” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 10, 1975, p. 40). Race is included within the section and although there is no outright support of an essentialist discourse in the sense of articulating the genetic superiority of Whiteness, the content does imply that racial traits influence behaviour and that students should think about ways that “some of these [racial] influences may be either removed or at least lessened in our society” (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Social Studies 10, 1975, p. 42). Such a descriptor of race and racial characteristics implies that an individual’s behaviour is influenced by their race and that when race produces what seem to be undesirable outcomes, these racial characteristics should be mitigated and eliminated where possible.

Although the Social Studies Task Force began their work in 1981, the first curriculum renewal produced at the middle/secondary level as a result of that work did not come until 1988. The work of the Social Studies Task Force explicitly identified the need for the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives, and while these calls are somewhat evident in the curricular renewals that followed through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the changes generally represent a contributions approach that does little to encourage critical thinking about the injustices of the past. In terms of the period under study, the greatest number of curriculum guides were released during the 1990s. Collectively, the decade saw the release of 10 curriculum guides across the subject disciplines of both social studies and history. History is a relatively unique discipline in the province in that the curriculum, produced only at the secondary level, was phased out for

several decades in the province. After decades of neglecting history as a separate course of study in the province, the Department of Education re-introduced history in 1992 with the publication of the History 10 curriculum. Focused primarily on historical study of major European events and processes during the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, both the History 10 and History 20 courses of study offer very little in the way of opportunities to even incorporate Indigenous content or perspectives. History 30 though, with its focus on Canadian history is of particular interest to my study because of that emphasis on Canadian content.

In addition to the curriculum guides released during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the K-8 guiding document for social studies produced in 1978 offers some important insights into the thematic focus for social studies in the province at the middle years level. The guiding document, that laid out the foundational topics, content and skills to be addressed in social studies curriculum for kindergarten to grade eight, provides a glimpse of the intended organizational structure of social studies in the province at the elementary level. Organized into the eight themes for social studies courses, the document provides a description of the focus and topics to be covered within each thematic area at each grade level.

Of particular interest to my analysis is the grade eight focus on the development of Canada's nationhood. Embedded within the larger theme of history, the aim is for students to "know the development of Canada's nationhood" (Saskatchewan Education, *I am a Canadian: An emphasis for curriculum kindergarten to grade 8*, 1978, p. 59). Despite reminders from the task force members themselves that an important component to curricular renewal should be the integration of Indigenous content and perspectives, the neglect and exclusion of Indigenous peoples is glaring. The breakdown of Canada's nationhood is framed completely in terms of Canada's dual British and French heritage. Students are expected to "know the events and processes by which Canada became a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system" (Saskatchewan Education, *I am a Canadian: An emphasis for curriculum kindergarten to grade 8*, 1978, p. 61).

The descriptors throughout the section, albeit brief and intended only to provide a basic overview of the aims within the course, pay absolutely no attention to the role of colonialism in the development of the nation, or the essential relationships and agreements that were forged with Indigenous peoples. As Battiste (2018) reminds us, treaty federalism precedes provincial federalism in Canada. Treaty federalism, in its historic and contemporary form (modern land



claims), recognizes the nation-to-nation nature of the negotiations between Indigenous and settler governments. It is the existence of this treaty federalism that provided, and continues to provide, the framework upon which the Canadian nation state is developed, a point completely missed by a historical examination that opts to completely omit the essential role that treaties have and continue to have in the story of Canada.

The focus on culture and cultural contact that appeared frequently throughout the 1970s guides remains a dominant theme within the overview of social studies kindergarten to grade 8 as well. Listed as one of the five major topics to be explored in social studies, students are to understand and explore Canada's historical and contemporary emergence as a cultural mosaic. Although cultural conflict and the struggles of various minority groups within Canada to secure their rights and maintain distinct identities are mentioned, there is little to indicate that students should be encouraged to explore the reasons for struggle. While Indigenous peoples are represented within this context as distinct from other cultural groups in Canada because of their unique "historical and constitutional differences" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *I am a Canadian: An Emphasis Curriculum for Kindergarten to grade 8*, 1978, p. 146) these statements are directly preceded by commentary which deals with the plural and multicultural nature of Canada. Within this context, Indigenous peoples lose their distinct status within Canada, and the historical relationship is somewhat lost because the bottom line is that Canada is a country that accepts its many cultures; that Canadian identity is indeed based on that foundation of "accepting and celebrating" (Saskatchewan Education, *I am a Canadian: An Emphasis Curriculum for Kindergarten to grade 8*, 1978, p. 148) those many cultures.

Such articulations of exploring cultural diversity in Canada also emphasize the extent to which these ideas reflect the persistence of the Euro-Canadian perspective in the development of Canada present in guides produced throughout the 1980s and 1990s. While the first guide to emerge from the work of the task force does make some inroads in terms of including Indigenous content, the few spaces afforded to Indigenous content continue to reflect the dominance of Euro-Canadians as the centre. *Social Studies 8*, that addresses the development of the individual in society, deals with culture as the first unit of study. Here, the aim is for students to "become aware of unique and common values held by other ethnic groups..., develop an awareness of the contributions of different cultural groups...[and] empathize with Canadians of different cultural backgrounds" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Social Studies 8*, 1987, p. 9, 13).

Ethnocentrism is noted too within the exploration of culture as students are encouraged to “become aware that differences among cultural groups do not imply rightness or wrongness.” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1987, p.11) Student learning that aims specifically to include Indigenous content is primarily added into investigations that continue to focus on a Euro-Canadian perspective where Indigenous content is always included within the larger narrative of Euro-Canadian historical developments, social and political structures. Students are provided with an opportunity to explore the relationship of interdependence that exists between people, economies and the land, where one of the suggestions is for students to investigate Cree and Dene pre-contact lifestyles, but only if time permits. Another outcome deals with the topic of decision-making within the broader context of the unit of study focused on citizenship. Students are expected to become familiar with the concept of self-government and “demonstrate the impact of federal legislation on treaty rights and other Indigenous rights” (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 8, 1987, p. 45), but without any recognition of the broken promises in the original treaties on the part of the federal government.

The 1991 renewal of the social studies curriculum at the grade nine level included a significant shift in the inclusion of Indigenous content. Left untouched for twenty years, the 1991 renewal includes the addition of Indigenous peoples as a major source of “ancient” influence in terms of the development of the contemporary Canadian identity. Where the previous 1971 guide had represented Canada’s ancient roots as exclusively linked to the ancient Middle East, the 1991 guide dedicates one unit of study to the exploration of ancient North American traditions. Indicative of the continued need to remedy inaccuracies in curriculum and curriculum resources, the 1991 guide includes content that provides a false impression of the health of pre-contact Plains First Nations peoples in particular. Within the study of the role of the environment and its impact on the development of societies, students are encouraged to understand several misleading points about the health and survival of pre-contact Plains peoples. The general impression provided through the content and objectives is that Plains pre-contact peoples were constantly on the verge of extinction and constantly dealing with the threat of starvation. For instance, students are expected to “know how pre-contact peoples had to deal with starvation,” a point reiterated a second time for students with the objective that they “Know how pre-contact peoples had to deal with the ever-present threats of starvation and hunger.” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1991, p. 425, 431) Displaying elements

of the narrative of the vanishing Indian, it is a representation that not only mischaracterizes the health and vitality of pre-contact Plains peoples<sup>48</sup> but also promotes the sentiment that these groups were on the verge of extinction before Europeans arrived, and so, if anything, European contact and the shifts in economic and social lifestyle they would have brought would have been beneficial for Plains peoples.

The focus on Indigenous peoples as one of the major “roots” of Canadian society is maintained in the curricular renewal of the grade nine guide released in 1999. The grade nine update draws greater attention to contemporary Aboriginal issues and attempts to link historical processes and events to those contemporary issues. Students are expected to “explain the contemporary concerns and issues of Aboriginal peoples of Canada and understand how these are rooted in the events of the past” (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 9, 1999, p. 220). The most notable update with this renewal is the addition of the link to contemporary Aboriginal issues within Canada and the attempt to recognize Aboriginal beliefs, values, and ways of life in the contemporary context. For instance, in the exploration of Aboriginal spiritual practices, it is suggested that students research an aspect of Aboriginal spirituality and then explain its significance to both traditional and contemporary culture (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 9, 1999, p. 227). Students are also encouraged to conduct research into contemporary issues facing Aboriginal communities. Part of such an exploration includes the perspective that these contemporary social and economic issues are rooted in the past (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1999). There is also an attempt to represent First Nations perspectives with an article by Sheldon Cardinal. The central point made in the article is that First Nations never actually ceded lands because of the differing perspectives on land title, and also that peaceful settlement was the basis for treaty in the West.

The unit also makes some effort to explore contemporary issues facing Aboriginal communities and peoples in a historical context. Although a promising shift, the missed opportunity within that shift lies in the attempt to mitigate Canada’s connection to the issues facing communities today. As opposed to understanding the role that the Canadian government has had in the challenges that Indigenous peoples continue to face, decisions made at the point of

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<sup>48</sup> Skeletal studies of pre-contact Plains peoples have consistently shown that they were among the tallest and best nourished peoples living at that time. By the 1880s, these high levels of nutrition, provided by the buffalo predation, would begin to dwindle and eventually disappear along with the buffalo (Daschuk, 2014).

contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples is a point of emphasis (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 1999). Equally disappointing is the treatment of the dispossession of lands as overtly passive. Students are encouraged to understand that European countries “claimed large territories in the Americas for their countries [and that] Aboriginal peoples *lost* the rights to use the land in traditional ways” (Saskatchewan Ministry Education, Social Studies 9, 1999, p. 230).

Rounding out a renewal phase for social studies at the middle years level in the province, curricular renewals in both grades 7 and 8 were also released in 1999. Both renewals maintain the same thematic focus as the earlier 1980s guides, with a focus on Canada’s Pacific neighbours in grade seven and the individual in Canadian society in grade eight, and also include the same commentary offered in the social studies 9 1990s guide with regards to the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives. Following much of the same add and stir approach found at the grade nine level, grade seven and 8 social studies incorporate Indigenous content and perspectives in a piecemeal fashion. Framed in the broad context of a unit of study interested in identity formation within the grade eight course of study, the foundation of Canadian identity is tolerance of other cultures and its multicultural character. While students are expected to “learn why Canada is often called a nation of immigrants” they are simultaneously expected to know the “contributions” that Aboriginal peoples have made to “a uniquely Canadian culture” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1999, p. 143).

The grade seven course of study includes Indigenous content in three sections in particular: resources, power, and change. Indigenous views of the land and resource usage are inserted as counterpoints to the Europeans perspectives that underpinned the settlement and subsequent economic development of the west and experiences are conflated with the experiences of settlers in those early years of development. An activity included within the section dealing with resources and early settlement suggests that students read an excerpt that details “the hardships faced by early settlers and/or Aboriginal peoples.” Furthermore, that “Aboriginal peoples and/or early settlers could not take any of these needs for granted [because] most had limited supplies and limited access to additional supplies” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 84). Conflating such experiences in this way not only works to alleviate the discomfort felt by settlers in reflecting on the historical record of treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada but also builds a narrative of shared experience that denies the

history of colonial practices and policies that targeted Indigenous peoples in ways intended to eliminate, assimilate or marginalize them.

The exploration of violence is similarly removed from the Canadian context. In a unit focused on the concept of change, students are expected to “know that some groups may use violence to bring about change,” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 222) but learn to explore this concept of violent change through transformations brought about in Russian society as a result of the October uprising in 1917<sup>49</sup>. The concept of change is explored within the historical context of Canada but the focus moves away from violent change where students simply explore “how MacDonald’s decision [to construct a transcontinental railway] affected Aboriginal peoples of Canada” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 7, 1999, p. 225). Although there is acknowledgement of Indigenous populations inhabiting the west, framing this within the larger “The Building of the Nation” narrative overlooks the removal and displacement of Indigenous peoples. Among the several factors that contributed to widespread malnutrition experienced by Indigenous populations in the West during the 1880s was the regular practice of withholding rations until it spoiled in dominion storehouses. Such practices did not go completely uncontested as the McDonald government itself acknowledged in 1880 that the “absolute failure of the usual food supply of the Indians in the North-West” and prepared Parliament for “the necessity of a large expenditure in order to save them from absolute starvation” (Dyck, 1970 as cited in Daschuk, 2014, p. 132) The Macdonald administration worked to avoid political backlash that would result from such a region-wide mortality of Indigenous populations from famine, but quantities of rations were often kept at the absolute minimum required to sustain life (Dashcuk, 2014).

Where the processes of assimilation and ethnocentrism are addressed in the grade eight course of study, released in the same year, there is a similar distancing from violent colonial processes in the Canadian context. Both concepts are briefly listed and addressed without any particular historic or contemporary context in the unit of study focused on culture. In another instance, the loss of language as it relates to cultural loss is addressed within a section dedicated to the study of educational patterns but content indicative of efforts to distance Canada from such practices persist. For instance, an exploration of attempts to eradicate Indigenous cultures

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<sup>49</sup> Refers to the second and last major phase of the Russian Revolution in which the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, led a coup to overthrow the provisional government and seized power.

accentuates the role that “white Europeans from England” had on the Haida people. The English, the article describes, “invaded Haida land [and] were almost successful in destroying the Haida” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 1999, p. 69). By using the language and examples of “white Europeans” and “the English”, the curriculum succeeds in distancing Canada and Canadians from the violent practices that aimed to eradicate Indigenous populations.

Curricular renewals at secondary level were also released throughout the 1990s. In addition, history curriculum was reintroduced in the province at the same time. Secondary social studies and history courses of study were released at the grade 10, 20 and 30 levels in 1992, 1994 and 1997, respectively. All of the guides released throughout those years, following the recommendations of the Social Studies Task Force, make some effort to include Indigenous content. Reflecting the same add-and-stir approach evident at the 7-9 level, guides released at the secondary level attempt to incorporate that content without changing the traditional structure of the course or Eurocentric approach to history. History 10 for instance includes Iroquoian society as a site of comparison in two units of study centred on the exploration of 18-19<sup>th</sup> century European societies. In a unit of study that deals with international relations, students are exposed to some foundational points of Aboriginal worldview but are expected to see that “traditional Iroquoian assumptions fit a balancing model, rather than the linear continuum models that are typically applied to *our* culture” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 121, emphasis added). Indicative again of the persistence of misrepresentations, as had been the case in Social Studies 9 with reference to the lifestyle and health of Indigenous populations prior to contact, History 10 distorts, through the homogenization, the importance of trade to Indigenous economic organization. In a section that aims to examine economic decision making, the course of study explains that “although Aboriginal societies traditionally engaged in trade with other Aboriginal societies, this practice and tradition was of secondary economic importance” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 10, 1992, p. 236). While this may have been the case for some Aboriginal populations, there is ample evidence to suggest that trade and the trade economy that developed among the peoples of the Northwest Coast was central to a number of groups in the area. The Indigenous peoples of British Columbia developed and maintained highly developed economies that were built on trade, and where the wealth created by the abundance of

salmon led to the development of trade networks that spread to interior regions with significantly different resource needs (Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003).

Social Studies 10 includes some content that focuses on post-contact changes to Aboriginal economies. One small part of a broader focus on agricultural development in the West, the deliberate discrimination and dispossession of lands that brought about devastating changes for many Indigenous populations in the West are obscured by a discourse that seeks to mitigate the role of settlers and Canadian policy. Students are expected to “know that cultural change requires time and patience while people learn to adapt to new patterns of knowledge, skills, and values [and] know that these changes led to economic dependence on the Canadian government” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 10, 1992, p. 228). It is a narrative that promotes a dominant trope of Indigenous peoples as incompatible with modern life and that predicates an understanding of the loss of self-sufficiency and self-determination on Aboriginal peoples’ inability to adapt to cultural change. Despite this focus on economic dependency, there is some core content in the guide focused on the exploration of the treatment of farmers. A suggested activity, within the same unit as the commentary focused on the situation of economic dependency as brought about by cultural change, recommends that students compare how Indian and European farmers were treated (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 10, 1992). This would provide a potential avenue through which to explore racist and discriminatory agricultural policies aimed at limiting the development of Indigenous communities.

The 20 level guides include some of the same promise and pitfalls of those found at the 10 level. The supposed inability of Indigenous peoples to adapt to and cope with modern life is reiterated at the 20 level. Focused on international history and world issues respectively, History 20 and Social Studies 20 provide little in the way of explicit integration of Indigenous content and perspectives. History 20, because of its focus on international trends and historical processes which surrounded the lead up to and fallout following World War II, does address the topic of race and racism. Viewed from a largely essentialist perspective, race and racism are examined with particular attention to the physical or biological conceptualizations of race: “Racism is the idea that there is a causal relationship between the physical traits individuals inherit and their traits of personality, intellect, or culture which make individuals of one race superior to individuals of another race” (Saskatchewan Education, History 20, 1994, p. 114). Taken up again

within the same unit of study, and most closely attributed to the exploration of Hitler's nationalism, students are expected to "know that anthropologists have encountered many difficulties in establishing a racial classification system because there are no clear differences between races. There is no agreement on the number of races" (Saskatchewan Education, History 20, 1994, p. 230). Framed in strictly biological and physical terms, the important and less obvious social constructions of race and racial attributes are left unexplored. Later in the guide in the context of global issues the topic of racism arises again. Here, there is much more promise for exploring more complex and deeply ingrained forms of racism in society. Within the content that deals with human rights, students are exposed to the idea that racism can take on various forms: personal, institutional and societal, and, although there may be little opportunity to examine the historical construction of race and racism as it relates to Indigenous peoples in Canada, there is also the suggestion that social issues facing Indigenous peoples are connected to the persistence of racism in society (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994).

Unit four in the Social Studies 20 course of study, that deals with the topics of production and distribution, includes some additional explicit references to Aboriginal peoples and encourages students to "know that because of large cultural differences between Aboriginal and modern society, Aboriginals found it more difficult or were reluctant to adjust to a new lifestyle" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, p. 424), and that "Aboriginal peoples fall into the trap of being unable to find their cultural identity and being unable to join modern society and thus turning to solutions such as alcohol" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, p. 424). Additionally, students are encouraged to view Aboriginal peoples as incapable of modernity in subtler ways as well. A suggested activity, within the same unit focused on production and distribution, asks students to consider how a situation would be interpreted from an Aboriginal worldview and then how the situation would be settled "in modern society" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1994, p. 425). In one instance, the 20 level course goes one step further than the 10 level and not only mitigates the impact of colonial policies in Canada but promotes a narrative that completely neglects the violence of Indigenous displacement in Canada. In the unit that deals with the theme of human rights in the international context students are asked whether the practices of racism and genocide were isolated to Germany in the 1930s or if the same "could" happen in North America given the right set of circumstances (Saskatchewan Education, Social Studies 20, 1994, p. 135).



Framed in this hypothetical sense, students would have been given the impression that Canada had and has no real history of racism or genocide.

Experiences of Indigenous peoples are again explicitly taken up at the 20 level in a topic that deals with social justice. Since the course is aimed at analyzing the international context of contemporary issues of the day, content includes the mention of Canada but also deals with Indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand. The guide attempts to explore issues related to obstacles in the achievement of social justice. The pursuit of social justice with regards to Indigenous peoples is offered as a suggested, not core, area of content to explore where students are encouraged to understand that “these people are caught between two cultures and may try to escape their loss of native identity through crime, alcohol, drugs, and sometimes suicide” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 20, 1994, p. 156). History 20 also includes some reference to the experience of injustice in the context of human rights and social justice as well. In the unit of study aimed at dealing with global issues, it is noted that “Indigenous groups, women and immigrants have all expressed grievances that they have had limited access to the nation’s decision making and have not received full rights guaranteed to all citizens” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 20, 1994, p. 512). Indigenous peoples and their experiences of “cultural collapse that accompanies the loss of their land, their language, their social and political systems and their knowledge” (p. 520) are addressed again within a topic that deals entirely with Indigenous peoples and social justice. The role of colonization and the negative perceptions of early colonization efforts beginning with Christopher Columbus are noted, but without attention to the violence and brutality enacted by such early colonization efforts. The unit simply mentions that Columbus and his fellow colonizers did not view Indigenous societies as equally viable to European ones (Saskatchewan Education, History 20, 1994). Although it is important to note that these issues are broached within the context of human rights and social justice, which implies there has been experiences of injustice, it is also important to note the potentially harmful framing of the issues. Disconnected from an exploration of the historic injustices faced by Indigenous communities, this type of power-blind narrative may promote the impression that Indigenous peoples have simply fallen victim to a lost sense of cultural identity and deal with such struggles in harmful ways.

Both Social Studies 30 and History 30 focus explicitly on Canadian content and include multiple references to Indigenous content. Both the social studies and the history courses do

acknowledge, as did the grade nine course of study, the central role of Aboriginal peoples in the formation of Canada. The constant theme at the 30 level in both the social studies and history curricula is the role that accommodation of diversity has had in the development of Canada. In the context of references to Aboriginal peoples this means that both courses of study acknowledge the importance of early contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples in what would become Canada. Social Studies 30 for instance, emphasizes that “circumstances forced these groups [French, English and Aboriginal] to agree on relationships that would allow them to live together [and that] ... it is important for students to understand that present day Canadian society is the product of these agreements” and also that life in the New World for the French depended on learning from Aboriginal peoples (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 103). Existing social and economic inequities in Canada are also acknowledged by the Social Studies 30 course of study. Commentary from within the unit on economic development, though not core content, expressed the fact that “despite Canada’s commitment to equity in standard of living, there are still groups who are treated as well as others. Many members of Canada’s Aboriginal community do not have the same access to health care, education, cultural amenities and high personal expectations” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 222). Although it is important that this type of content and acknowledgment be included, these acknowledgments continue to take place in the wider discourse of articulating white Anglo-Canadians as the norm or centre in Canadian society. In Social Studies 30, the same unit also includes the statement that “modern Canada is the result of this dialectic. *Our* struggle to find an accommodation with the Aboriginal and the French Canadian...” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 122).

History 30 also includes a number of references to Indigenous peoples and history in the broad frame of Canadian history. History 30, like other guides at the secondary level, uses the Iroquois as kind of case study to illustrate the organization, politically and socially, of Indigenous peoples. In the first unit of study, History 10 encourages students to examine the Iroquois Confederacy’s constitution in order to illustrate the point that it “possessed many of the attributes found in twentieth century [European] constitutions” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 112). So again, the point is easily made that while these inclusions are important and do represent a move away from omission of Indigenous content and perspectives, when this content does arise, the broader narrative undermines any real

consideration of Indigenous content on its own terms. In this specific instance, the Iroquois Confederacy is explored not on its own terms, but because of its similarity to European structures and organization.

Once the History 30 guide begins its narrative of Canada's journey from colony to nation, the course of study reflects a common narrative with respect to Indigenous peoples in Canadian history. Indigenous peoples and their roles in early trade and settlement activities are noted, but once the focus turns to the "road to responsible government", Indigenous peoples and their presence in Canada is largely neglected until rights and protest movements hit mainstream society in the 1990s. Where Indigenous peoples are included in the narrative, it is to mention their exclusion from the political sphere. For instance, in the unit that explores "the road to democracy" it is noted that both First Nations and women were largely excluded from the political process that led to the creation of Canada. The importance of the earliest treaties in what would eventually become Canada, like the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed with the Mi'kmaq peoples in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, are completely ignored. The formation of Canada, it seems, begins with the Seven Years War and the subsequent influence of British rule and the development of British style governance. Metis peoples are included in the discussion and content that deals with the settlement of the West and students are also expected to explore the impact of MacDonald's National Policy on Aboriginal peoples (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997). Reflecting a largely Eurocentric and traditional historical narrative of the formation of Canada, the unit culminates with discussions of the challenges faced by Canada at the time of Confederation with respect to challenges of unity presented by the issue of diversity. Unity is framed as the ideal goal of the nation, but the views and position of Indigenous peoples within what would become Canada are not a source of serious attention within that national narrative.

Just as other guides at the secondary level do acknowledge the discriminatory and harmful policies of the Canadian government with respect to Indigenous peoples, 30 level courses do some work to acknowledge past and present injustice too. The issue of genocide is breached again at the 30 level in much the same way as it had been addressed at the grade 10 level. At the 30 level, students are exposed to the idea that "genocide against Aboriginal peoples was attempted by the British during their wars with the French and various Indian nations during the 18<sup>th</sup> century" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 330).

Cultural assimilation is similarly acknowledged, but also again with reference to European practices. Students are exposed to the idea that Europeans “rationalized [cultural annihilation] as a kind of self-defence even though it was obvious that the Indian nations represented no serious threat to European culture” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997, p. 332). There is a marked improvement in the acknowledgement of harmful and violent *Canadian* practices in the guide as students are provided with the opportunity to explore examples of cultural annihilation in Canada including the historical cases of the Beothuk of Newfoundland and the horrors associated with residential schooling. In addition to the specific context of cultural annihilation, students are also afforded the chance to explore general historic injustices committed by Canada such as the large amounts of land diverted illegally from reserves and the many instances of bands not receiving the amount of land promised through treaty negotiations in the first place (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, 1997). With specific reference to residential schooling, students were to be exposed to the fact that boarding schools for Aboriginal children were “highly destructive to both Aboriginal children and Aboriginal culture” and that these communities are still dealing with the breakdown of families caused by such experiences (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 30, p. 306).

History 30 specifically recognizes the pervasive and harmful legacy of the Indian Act 1876 as well as the devastating impacts of the failure of the government to supply agricultural aid and supplies as they were promised in Treaties four and six (Orlowski, 2018). Despite the important incorporation of such content, including the clear articulation that the aim of the Indian Act was assimilation of First Nations peoples, there remains a tendency to distance the Canadian government from such harmful actions and to pass blame to the British and the French. Frequently portrayed without explicit attention to the deliberate nature of such policies and actions, students are potentially left with the impression that policies put in place that had devastating impacts for Indigenous peoples and communities were drafted and enacted without knowledge of that harm. For instance, while it is constructive to include the starvation and destitution faced by many Western First Nations communities and highlight the role that government officials had in this situation in terms of the speed with which aid was available to communities, the content concludes with an explanation that minimizes government culpability: “Without a means to secure their economic wellbeing, the First Nations of the Prairies were to

continue to ensure frequent starvation, disease, inadequate housing and other ills that accompany poverty” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, History 30, 1997, p. 252).

History 30 culminates with a focus on the challenges and opportunities facing Canada heading into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Attention to Indigenous issues within this final unit focuses largely on the topic of Aboriginal rights. The exploration of the repatriation of the Constitution Act 1982 requires that students explore the various sets of rights secured within the Canadian legal context, including Aboriginal rights. Aboriginal protest and lobbying efforts in response to Trudeau’s White Paper are addressed, with the assimilationist aim of the policy noted as well. The unit also includes some key amendments made to the Indian Act to diminish its discriminatory sections, with special attention to the passing of Bill C-31 that aimed to remove sex-based discrimination when it came to status qualifications. Although these pieces of content are included and students are exposed to some contemporary issues related to Aboriginal rights in particular, the course culminates with an articulation of regionalism and Quebec separatism as the two challenges facing Canada as the country moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century - challenges that neglect the place of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Canada.

More current renewals of social studies at the middle years level demonstrate the continued goal of incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives in Saskatchewan curriculum. These most recent renewals have done away with a separate section that deals specifically with the incorporation of such content in favour of offering commentary related to the importance of exposing students to diverse perspectives in order to better equip them to live in pluralistic society and two new sections that deal more broadly with the goals of multicultural education and the portrayal of persons with disabilities. The reorganization and reformulation of the most recent curricular renewals into much more broad outcomes for learning ultimately results in fewer explicit references to Indigenous peoples. Part of this reduction must also be examined with recognition of the fact that these curriculum guides are much shorter and much less prescriptive than previous guides released throughout the 1990s. With this in mind, the vast majority of references to Indigenous content and perspectives appear in the indicators sections that accompany each outcome. Although these references are important to note, it is equally essential to understand that indicators are not required learning outcomes. Instead, they simply provide potential avenues by which teachers can reach broad learning outcomes. Ultimately this means that much of the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives rests with

individual classroom teachers and their attitude about the importance of adopting an approach that seeks to include and explore such content and perspectives.

It is also worth mentioning that efforts to include Treaty Education in the province are represented by the publication of a separate K-12 Treaty Education document that outlines where teachers are expected to incorporate such content at each grade level and each subject area. Taken in the broad context of the renewed curricular framework for K-12 social studies released with these most recent guides in 2008, an argument can be made that there is intent to include Indigenous content throughout each course of study. Of the four goals that serve as the organization framework for social studies K-12 in the province, there are multiple references to the importance of Indigenous content and perspectives. These four broad goals guide the curriculum with specific aims that “examine the local, indigenous, and global interactions and interdependence of individuals, societies, cultures, and nations” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Social Studies 7*, 2008, p. 6).

Reflecting the overall trend in these guides to include Indigenous content and perspectives as optional learning experiences, the grade seven course of study includes the suggestion to incorporate Indigenous content in four indicators found throughout the guide. With a focus on Canada and its circumpolar neighbours, the suggestions typically reflect the aim to include Indigenous peoples as a possible source or site of analysis in achieving the required outcome. For instance, where students are required to examine the impact of human habitation on the natural world, it is suggested in one indicator that students “identify the influence of physical features such as water bodies, topography, and natural resources on the location of people in Pacific and northern Canada (including the traditional homelands of Indigenous peoples) and in a selection of Pacific Rim and circumpolar countries”(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Social Studies 7*, 2008, p. 20). Here Indigenous peoples are simply grouped into the broad learning outcome that focuses on Indigenous peoples in a narrow ecological frame. In another instance it is suggested that students accomplish the analysis of the relationship between historic and current events and social and physical environments by analyzing “the influence of contact with another culture on the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, circumpolar countries, and a selection of Pacific Rim countries (e.g., the influence of Europeans on the Indigenous peoples of Canada, Mexico, and Australia)” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Social Studies 7*, 2008, p. 21). Again, Indigenous peoples are just one of many options presented to teachers as possible

sites of analysis. Such outcomes help to illustrate the potential for Indigenous content and perspectives to be marginalized or completely ignored because of the broad sweeping options presented to teachers.

In grade eight, where the theme remains the individual in Canadian society, there are seven explicit references to Aboriginal peoples. Adhering to a common theme in contemporary and historic discourses of Indigenous peoples as ecological and one with the land, the grade eight course of study includes a suggestion, in the form of an indicator, that students explore “the traditional Aboriginal concept of land (an animate being; the source of life) and the contemporary Western European notion of land (a resource to be owned and exploited) through the centuries” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008, p. 20) in the pursuit of developing an understanding of the significance of land in the development of Canadian identity. In attempts to explore the connection between key historical events in Canadian history and present day Canadian identity, one indicator suggests the exploration of various perspectives on issues of historic injustice, where the Aboriginal right to vote is listed as an example of such injustice (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 8, 2008). Aboriginal forms of political organization and decision making are also listed as potential sites of analysis aimed at examining the role of power and authority in a variety of contexts.

The grade nine course of study follows the same sort of implementation, opting to suggest the inclusion of Indigenous content and perspectives within the suggested indicators that would demonstrate achievement of the overarching, open-ended outcomes. Fixated on the exploration of ancient societies and medieval or renaissance era western Europe, the grade nine course of study requires the examination of at least one ancient North American society and includes five specific references to Indigenous peoples throughout the guide. Taking up the same critical lens as some examples from secondary level social studies, this guide also includes some potential to explore past injustices. Aimed at exploring the impact of societies of the past on contemporary life in Canada, it is suggested that students “analyze the impact of knowledge acquired from historical events on the future of contemporary society” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 22). Listed examples of such “historical events” include “the attempted annihilation of Indigenous cultures and languages...[and] the contribution of Indigenous peoples to the survival of newcomers at the time of contact” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 22). In addition to references in the optional indicators

throughout the guide, the grade nine course of study includes only one reference to Indigenous peoples in the required outcomes for the course. Found within the broad goals of exploring the notions of power and authority as they existed and were exercised in ancient societies, students are required to “analyze the impact of empire building and territorial expansion on Indigenous populations and other groups in the societies studied” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Social Studies 9, 2008, p. 23). Yet another example of the potential to distance Canada from its colonial past, this outcome does not guarantee that the society selected would be any of the Indigenous societies of North America. Instead, this would be at the discretion of individual teachers.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In order for Indigenous knowledge and histories to be meaningfully incorporated into mainstream education and curriculum, the existing monopoly that Eurocentric ways of knowing and being in the world hold in education must be recognized (Battiste, 2002). Furthermore, the past and the study of the past has an integral role to play in remedying misinterpretations, inaccuracies, and myths about Indigenous peoples that serve to uphold narratives that mitigate Canada’s colonial past and obscure today’s Indigenous peoples and cultures by making them relics of the past. This is a hegemonic strategy that effectively conceals the more sordid aspects of Canada’s past. Critical analysis of such representations then also has a huge role to play in the realization that Indigenous peoples are an integral part of Canada’s past, present and future (Dickason, 2005). Despite the recognition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge as an educational empowerment tool for Indigenous students and necessary knowledge for *all* students, there remains a lot of work to be done. Just as few teacher training programs have developed meaningful goals and programming related to understanding the diversity and complexity of legal, political and cultural foundations of Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2002), there is little evidence to suggest more than a recognition and contributions approach to the integration of Indigenous content and perspectives into grades seven to twelve social studies curriculum in the province. Broad socio-political and educational trends that have seen the increasing presence of Indigenous voice in both public and academic spheres are reflected in the integration of Indigenous content and perspectives into social studies curriculum over the last 40 years. Almost completely omitted from guides published during the 1970s, the work within both educational and public spheres has resulted in increased efforts to remedy the misrepresentations and



inaccuracies of both historical and contemporary narratives of Indigenous peoples within school curriculum. Although there is ample evidence to support increased attention to the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives throughout the years in question, there is much more work to be done in curriculum in particular, and in education more broadly speaking.

Evidence from this curriculum analysis suggests that our efforts to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and content are interlaced with discourses seeking to mitigate Canada's colonial past and can be generally characterized as piecemeal at best. Where Indigenous content and perspectives are included throughout the years in question, those efforts are primarily framed within the larger Euro-Canadian narrative of progress and development. Despite this broader characterization, there is also ample evidence to suggest some recognition of the harmful and unjust treatment of Indigenous peoples in both historical and contemporary contexts. In addition to attempts to distance and mitigate colonial policies and practices, curriculum renewals throughout the 1990s and 2008 do also include a few attempts to integrate learning and content that focuses on injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples as well as other minorities in Canada, both past and present. These ideas offered in the form of indicators are only suggestions, however, and are not mandatory for teachers to include in their pedagogy.

Voices of Indigenous peoples need to be incorporated in more meaningful ways throughout social studies curriculum. Far from the often simplistic and contributions-oriented approaches evident in both society and educational narratives, Indigenous histories are diverse, multifaceted accounts that provide alternative ways of seeing that have the potential to encourage meaningful shifts in the relationships in this country. Integration of voice should be complimented with a greater integration of not just literature and art, but also of primary sources in the study of history. Werner (2003 as cited in Clark, 2007) suggests the metaphor of a "montage" in thinking about the ways in which such meaningful integration could be carried out. The "montage" metaphor is a way of thinking about the integration of Indigenous voice and perspectives that combines diverse primary and secondary sources without overlaying a unified narrative. In this approach, students would then have to interrogate and interact with these various accounts in order to make sense of events and processes of the past (Clark, 2007). In more simplistic ways, curriculum and teachers in classrooms could also challenge the gaps and inaccuracies that they see within and across sources.

Teaching history in ways that recognizes complexity and provides students with the opportunity to view the historical development of present-day relationships and also supports the ability to see and resist histories that seek to perpetuate colonizing relations needs to become a prioritized in social studies curriculum. For instance, treaty education is a prime example of the ways that historical understandings can be used to undercut the inaccurate framing of Indigenous communities as the recipients of “handouts” from the government (McGregor, 2017). Additionally, education that aims to address the calls to action created by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provide important guidance in working towards remedying past injustices and the continued intergenerational impacts still felt by Indigenous communities today as a result of the residential school system. Education certainly has a central role to play as one of the primary institutions through which students come to learn about the injustices of the past as well as understand the implications for current and future generations of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Where gaps in narratives that ignore the presence of Indigenous peoples for long stretches of Canadian history exists or where narratives fail to incorporate the implications of historical injustices still felt today, governments and educators, in consultation with Indigenous peoples and communities, must work to develop and continue to develop learning experiences aimed at the investigation of such omission and marginalization.

Another meaningful and integral approach designed to disrupt more traditional Euro-centric historical narratives in particular is the recognition and integration of Indigenous sources of historical knowledge. The incorporation of Indigenous perspectives requires a rethinking of history itself, in terms of both the narratives themselves and the primacy given to western epistemological orientations (Brownlie, 2009). At the foundation of the promotion of unitary historical accounts of nation building is a concerted reliance in Western historical traditions on documentary evidence. Such dependence on evidence left behind by non-Indigenous peoples reinforces an understanding of historical methodologies that views western historical canons and conventions as superior; essentially implying that the Western European tradition is the standard in historical study. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike have spoken to the challenge of disrupting such a heavy reliance on non-Indigenous methods and sources and many agree on the importance of incorporating Indigenous oral history into the research, writing and teaching of Indigenous histories (Wheeler, 2005). Although not commonplace yet, especially within official educational guides and resources, historians are slowly coming to the realization that Indigenous

oral histories offer new and valuable insights related to historical personalities and processes (Wheeler, 2005).

Although valuable in terms of thinking about moving towards representations and historical accounts that promote diverse ways of looking at our nation's history, such approaches continue to rely largely on Western thinking and Western historical consciousness in particular. Perhaps the most difficult task in thinking about curricular renewal aimed at respectful, meaningful reconciliation is figuring out how curriculum could acknowledge, explore and integrate *both* Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing. While several provinces have clear aims about the importance of teaching Indigenous heritage in the classroom, there is little in the way of recognizing the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2002). Battiste (2002) argues that meeting this challenge is the first step in addressing and correcting the failures of the existing Indigenous educational system as well as bringing about "a blended educational context that respects and builds on both Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems" (p.3). The difficulty in thinking about such integration lies partially in the epistemological foundations of Indigenous knowledges and oral accounts. Since Indigenous oral accounts blend together material, spiritual, and philosophical elements in the creation of a historical entity, it would be a clear violation of the cultures from which such accounts emerge for well meaning non-Indigenous scholars to demythologize them in order to 'validate' them. (Wheeler, 2005). An even greater violation is to strip those accounts of their historical authenticity by discounting them and categorizing them as mythology (Wheeler, 2005). Instead, there is a need to move away from strict categorizations of knowledge. In its place could emerge diverse, multifaceted, layered understandings of the past which take into account the processes of meaning-making exercised by both the historical personalities as well as historians. Such reformulations of history also have great potential in promoting nuanced histories that challenge simplistic accounts of processes of colonial history as "progress" and integrate localized human and non-human histories. Steeped in localized knowledge and parallel, overlapping histories with the non-human world, these histories require students to question and rethink traditional narratives of progress and economic development that ignore Indigenous peoples and the natural world (Marker, 2011).

A good place to begin this difficult task might be to integrate situated approaches to local historical learning. An important starting place is to consider the history of the land on which

schools are built and that students call home. This situatedness, if you will, which is one of the many facets that distinguishes Indigenous approaches to history, moves away from disciplinary logics that have a tendency to place emphasis on more universal techniques and tend to ignore the particularities of our local contexts (Brownlie, 2009). Framed within a larger context of reconciliatory efforts, perhaps both in terms of our human and non-human relationships, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous historical consciousness provides a “foundation from which to see the land and the stories that flow from it as part of a past that carries us on a common journey” (Marker, 2011, p. 111). Indigenous knowledge and historical consciousness, viewed in this way, become an even more crucial element in the reconfiguration of not only relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples but also those wider ecological relationships that are both so essential for thinking about living in sustainable ways.

## **Chapter 10:**

### **Conclusions**

Ultimately, educational history is an attempt to think about where we would like to head in the future. On a very basic level, it is also based on the premise that there is great practical value in thinking about where we have been in to order to think meaningfully about where we would like to head. As such, educational history has served as a “means of expanding our interpretations and understanding of the relationship between curriculum and society” (Christou, 2018, p. 1). The purpose and aims of this study are to analyse and deconstruct discourses of the development of Canada and the Canadian identity, locate such discourses in the larger socio-political context, and then use these interpretations to think about future curricular renewals in the field of social studies in Saskatchewan. With these aims in mind, the conclusions and recommendations aim to explain overall themes concerning the overarching discourses of nation and national identity found within social studies curriculum and how these narratives connect to the broad socio-political as well as educational climates. Such conclusions are offered within the ultimate aim to think about what such a historical analysis can offer in the work of future curricular renewals in the province. With this focus, it also seems pertinent to make mention of the limitations of such concluding remarks. Although not entirely inapplicable in other regional contexts, all analysis, conclusions and recommendations are limited by the specific focus on Saskatchewan social studies past, present, and future.

A natural extension from this narrow regional context would be a comparative study that provides focus on other distinct regions of the nation. Such comparative work would provide interesting insight into the extent to which my conclusions concerning the regional influence at work in Saskatchewan social studies is found in other regions of the country. Questions about whether regional context weaves particular narratives of the nation and what such implications mean for the ways students come to understand their place within the broader context of the nation could be addressed and conclusions could potentially offer interesting avenues for the pursuit of regional studies of students’ understanding of Canadian history. A comparative study that looks at a similar region in terms of the sentiments of alienation could lend itself to thinking about how the challenges and particularities of feelings of belonging are taken up within the wider context of alienation. A comparative study could also look at a region with a very different history and geography, such as Ontario. This type of comparative study, focused on a

province defined by its regional centrality and dominance, might provide a meaningful contrast for the exploration of a sense of belonging different from the feelings of alienation so prevalent in the West.

Social studies curriculum in Saskatchewan mirrors the same kind of interplay of continuity and change that we see manifest in the broader context of the field of education as well as the prevailing socio-political climate. A far cry from benign, simple, or uncontested representations of the Canadian nation and Canadian identity, Saskatchewan social studies reflects the complex and nuanced nature of curriculum and the approaches that influence its development over time. As evidenced most obviously in the analysis of the influence of political culture on curricular development, curriculum is conceived and produced within climates of competing political ideologies and philosophies with regards to education but also in the broader frame of Canadian society. The Saskatchewan curriculum produced throughout the 40 years analyzed here has been subject to wider education trends that favour the individual needs of students and accountability directives espoused by individualist oriented and back to basics approaches to education. There is also ample evidence, however, that demonstrates the influence of much more progressive and collectivist oriented curricular orientation, something that is needed more in Saskatchewan, if you will.

The development of social studies curriculum in Saskatchewan presents an interesting microcosm for larger questions of nation building and national identity at the core of my study. A foundational conclusion in considering the totality of analysis is that much like the case for the nation itself, regional identity is a major point of influence in the history and current state of curriculum in the province. Over the years, within both social studies and history courses at the secondary level, students were consistently exposed to ideas of cooperation, collective well-being, and the role of the natural environment in the development of societies. The particularities of the West and the regional factors that influenced its development and its place in the broader context of the Canadian nation are certainly emphasized in Saskatchewan social studies curriculum. Far from presenting a challenge to thinking about formulations of Canada and the Canadian nation, I think that a full appreciation of the regional context can provide a pathway to providing opportunities for students to see themselves, others and their natural environments in nuanced, authentic and meaningful ways. Prairie political culture, especially the

cooperative ethic and Western alienation, emerged as an obvious theme throughout social studies curricula in the province throughout the years in question.

Perhaps indicative again of the regional influence in curricular development, representations of land and place occupy a central role in social studies in Saskatchewan throughout the era examined. Since questions of national identity are frequently linked to ideas of the natural landscape in context of Canadian literature, artwork, media, and the fact that these notions are often amplified in common conceptions of the West as promised land, it is no surprise that this is a dominant theme throughout social studies courses in Saskatchewan. Despite some references to geographic areas outside of Canada's borders, History and Social Studies 10, 20 and Social Studies 9 in particular, sustain consistent reiterations of the role that geography and the environment play in the subsequent development of societies and cultures in Canada. Such articulations of land and place though are primarily framed in terms of Western, anthropocentric notions of land and place that focus on the functionality or utility of the land as opposed to its inherent value. Whether taken up in the regional context of Western Canadian settlement and development, the creation and evolution of the hinterland-heartland relationship, or concerns about resource use and development in the contemporary context, the land and its resources are consistently articulated in ways that focus on the primacy of its usefulness to people and the development of increasingly complex societies. Even in the most recent curricular renewals in the province that aim to cultivate the values of sustainability and a care for the collective well being in students are somewhat marred by the lack of meaningful inclusion of such goals within the actual outcomes and indicators for the courses.

Swept up in the dominance of liberalism and neoliberalism both with respect to educational and socio-political trends, social studies in Saskatchewan during this era (1971-2008) broadly defines Canada and Canadian identity as based on plurality, diversity and inclusivity. Similar to larger trends in curriculum development across the country, social studies in the province of Saskatchewan have become increasingly inclusive and critical of the benign, single narrative of Canada prevalent prior to the 1970s. In the broader context of increasing calls from minority groups for a voice and representation in the political sphere and the stories that we tell about our past, social studies in Saskatchewan has worked to recognize and incorporate the idea of Canada as a diverse nation, and promote the recognition of student needs based on that diversity. Events that pointed to the undercurrent of divisiveness in Canadian society that

unfolded during the 1990s are well represented in the curriculum produced in those years, particularly the Canadian Studies courses offered at the 30 level in the province. Forces like the Quebec separatist movement, the Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords as well as growing regional discontent in the West and civil unrest in Indigenous communities become the main foci for Social Studies 30 students. Students are left with the task of thinking about how the challenges presented by such crises in identity and unity can be met in the future.

Furthermore, I believe the study serves as a powerful reminder of the challenges curriculum theorists and curriculum writers face in reshaping and shifting long held, dominant narratives, especially those that relate to content embedded in the work of nation building. Although there has been obvious development over time with respect to shifting philosophical orientations and the more specific aims, goals, objectives, and outcomes of official curriculum, what is equally apparent is the stability found within those same curricula. In the formulation and dissemination of historical narratives focused explicitly on the development of Canada, history courses at the secondary level are concerted in their efforts to recognize some of the injustices experienced by minorities. The material on the formation of the country recognizes and encourages students to understand that what unfolded was an elite affair that actively excluded marginalized populations, namely women and Indigenous peoples. Despite such adjustments to recognize processes of exclusion and injustice, curriculum guides produced throughout the 1980s and 1990s reflect shifts in the broad socio-political climate to include marginalized groups, but largely within the overarching liberal frame of limited participation and tolerance.

While this research suggests some significant shifts with respect to the inclusivity and diversity of the narratives, Saskatchewan social studies curriculum encourages students to adopt and recognize the challenges that Canada faces because of historical, cultural, and regional diversity. The overarching forces and broader narrative about the development of the nation and what it means to be Canadian remains largely stable. Just as middle years students of social studies in the 1970s and 1980s learned about Canada's relationships with its Pacific neighbours, their role as individuals in Canadian society, and Canada's ancient roots, students in Saskatchewan classrooms today are exposed to those same thematic course narratives. At the secondary level there is even less opportunity to think about change as the current guides in place across the province today are over 20 years old. Secondary social studies students are exposed to the same content and narratives about the structure of societies, international issues, and



Canadian historical and contemporary development that many of their parents would have encountered.

Evidence again of the challenges involved in shifting dominant, taken-for-granted narratives, these same courses also illustrate the extent to which threads of colonial discourse and traditional unified meta-narratives of the Canadian nation state remain entrenched within curriculum. As Mackey (1999) argues, Canada's brand of multiculturalism reflects an acceptance of diversity and difference in service of the maintenance the dominant order. In Canada, the multiculturalism narrative is one dominated by the fact that these ideas are subsumed by larger goals of management of difference. It is a discourse that does not value diversity on its own terms, but instead coopts such notions in an effort to maintain the overarching narrative of acceptance and tolerance that Canada promotes within its own borders and within the international community. Similar to developments in social studies in the province of Alberta identified by Richardson (2002), social studies in Saskatchewan has developed a narrative increasingly distanced from British ties in favour of developing narratives that accept the role of pluralism in the national landscape while simultaneously maintaining modernist qualities that establish fixed referents for identity as rooted in a number of shared historical experiences of a predominantly Euro-Canadian military and political nature. Canada is a nation built on the liberal principles of equality, tolerance, and diversity but only to the extent that those values fit within the broad narrative of the political and military achievements of white Euro-Canadian males. History 30 includes several significant indicators that point to the adoption of a more traditional nation building narrative that Osborne (2011) argues became largely obsolete by the 1970s. Despite some minor recognition of the exclusion and marginalization of groups from the development of Canada, History 30 presents a meta-narrative of Canadian development that largely excludes early contact with Indigenous peoples in favour of beginning the story of Canada with the Seven Years War, and development punctuated with significant political achievements and milestones of the dominant white male Anglophone political elite.

Equally evident within secondary social studies curriculum from the era is a deliberate effort to obscure Canada's colonial past and troubling history of destructive policies and practices. Colonial policies and the impact that such policies had on Indigenous populations are addressed in some cases throughout the years and curriculum guides included for analysis here

but the overall trend does not acknowledge the extent to which government policies purposefully aimed to marginalize and, in some instances, completely wipe out Indigenous populations on the Prairies. Where harmful colonial practices are included within a historical context in secondary programming, there is no attempt to connect such practices with contemporary injustices experienced today. The only guide to attempt to incorporate such a focus, Social Studies 9 (1999), has been phased out. In its place, current curriculum at the grade nine level merely suggests that students explore the impact of colonization on local populations. Even in situations where teachers choose to incorporate such content, there is still no suggestion to connect these impacts with contemporary issues facing Indigenous populations.

Perhaps the most glaring shortcoming of social studies programming throughout the years in question is the actual nature of the content covered throughout the years and across the various grade, subject levels. Focused primarily on narratives of dominant political, economic, and military milestones in Canada and the international community, the fact is that social studies 7-12 leaves teachers with little opportunity to explore the difficulties and challenges of accommodation, negotiation, and inclusion of minority and marginalized groups. Even at the middle-years level, which is not so exclusively focused on politics, economics and the military, attempts to create a more inclusive, diverse and critical examination of Canada and Canadian history are piecemeal at best as well. No matter what the context in terms of course content and grade level focus, a constant throughout the analysis is the point that curricular narratives have and continue to prop up and justify male dominated, Eurocentric narratives. Mirroring the findings of some older and more recent studies into the representations of women and Indigenous peoples in curriculum (Clark, 1996; Loutzenheiser, 2004; Orłowski 2001; Sears, 1997) women and Indigenous peoples, where they are included, are represented in largely limiting ways. Despite explicit articulations of the importance of addressing the historic marginalization and omission of groups such as women and Indigenous peoples in social studies courses, curricular renewals have made limited progress in terms of addressing those issues in meaningful ways.

Ultimately, the emphasis placed on traditional approaches to historical study that highlight political and military achievements results in the overall marginalization of both women and Indigenous peoples in social studies courses throughout the years in question, unless they fit into the stories that celebrate the military and political history of Canada. Often perceived as insignificant and excluded from the official public sphere of politics, women's work

and their experiences were largely absent from social studies curricula throughout the era, especially so at the secondary level. Where women were included it primarily reflects a piecemeal approach of inclusion as a separate topic of study within a broad androcentric model. Despite the fact that Saskatchewan developed its first gender equity policy to guide educational programming and initiatives in 1991, even the most recent curriculum renewals fail to live up to the ideals proposed by such policies. The province's most recent curricular renewals from 2008 do little to challenge the status quo in practical or applicable ways in relation to the broad, overarching narratives of Canada and Canadian identity. While it is certainly advantageous to craft curricular objectives in such a broad and open ended manner as the newest renewals do because of the service such an approach brings to teacher autonomy, it can also mean that there is a danger of continuing to cement the dominant narratives so many teachers have been exposed to throughout their own education.

Despite these shortcomings, this historical analysis also provides some optimistic insight into potential paths towards developing curricula that recognize the histories and contemporary patterns of exclusion and marginalization. The recognition of such narratives is crucial to providing students with opportunities to understand past and current social organizations and their place within those systems of organization at community, national, and globalized contexts. The prevalence of a regional socio-political landscape in Saskatchewan social studies throughout the years in questions and across numerous courses of study could potentially provide a foundation from which to build and articulate learning that centres collectivist and cooperative values that work to cultivate a sense of place based belonging that rests on providing equitable opportunities for all members of society. The regional development and dominance of social democratic tendencies in the regional context of Saskatchewan has the potential to prompt a curricular orientation aimed at cultivating a sense of belonging for students within their communities that could extend into their thinking about their connections to each other, their communities, and the land. Constructing histories and contemporary geographic studies that focus on the distinct landscapes of the Western Prairies and the long and complex histories of contact between Indigenous peoples and early settlers, could help to lay a foundation for students to build meaningful connections to place that honour the power and agency of the natural world. These principles could potentially be extended into notions of identity building, working to highlight the histories of exclusion and the work to be done in reconsidering our national

narratives in ways that honour our earliest efforts at accommodation and negotiation found in the processes of treaty with Indigenous peoples.

As much as the goals of national identity and the crafting of national histories can be harmful and ultimately exclusionary when taken up in assimilative and traditional ways, the important notions of belonging and a sense of community that can be cultivated by such studies are essential to thinking about promoting in students a shared value for both equity and sustainability. If our current goals are to cultivate students who value equity, speak up against injustice, and value the continued existence of their communities, in a variety of contexts, historical and contemporary learning experiences that provide opportunities to recognize past injustices and foster connections regionally and beyond certainly have an important role to play. The desire to promote greater equity and sustainability within our communities is rooted in our connections to both people and our natural landscapes. Our connections with and understanding of one another, especially in the context of reconciliation, is strongly based on the foundation of understanding various perspectives and also coming to terms with the reasons for broken relationships. Students need to be provided with opportunities to see issues of exclusion and marginalization from different perspectives that go beyond the current practice of piecemeal inclusion of such issues. Although there has been a progression over time that reflects increasing efforts to recognize past injustices, the egregious shortcoming is the failure to clearly link those experiences of exclusions and marginalization with current societal structures, especially with respect to the Indigenous peoples and the natural environments that we inhabit.

Although the integration of treaty education throughout Saskatchewan curriculum in 2008 is certainly a step in the right direction, the next step is reorienting and reconstructing the narratives crafted in curriculum in ways that provide students with opportunities to see Canada and Canadian citizenship as a product of treaty. As John Borrows (2013) articulates so well in speaking about the importance of treaty to Canada's past and present, Canadians are presented with a choice when it comes to thinking about the formation and foundation of our country. On the one hand we can think about Canada as a nation founded on the principles of violence and coercion, and on the other we can think about a nation founded on the principles of negotiation, accommodation, and respect. The point is that while the formation and subsequent development of Canada includes narratives that speak to both of these perspectives, as Canadians today, we can choose which narrative we want in thinking about the future of the country and our roles

within that project. In choosing treaty, the history of treaty, and the continued importance of treaty in the understanding of Canada and what it means to be Canadian, we create opportunities for students to see Canada as a nation built on the principles of respect, accommodation and negotiation. While we may have lost sight of those principles, building a narrative grounded in the unique circumstances surrounding the perspectives taken up in the treaty making process and the injustices experienced resulting from government failures and broken promises can provide students with learning experiences important to the work of reconciliation and cultivation of a citizenry concerned with working towards a more equitable and sustainable future. Such historical and contemporary emphasis on the foundational importance of treaty in Canada could provide students with the skills to grapple with various approaches to historical consciousness, support critical examination of the places we inhabit, and our relationships with one another within those places.

Such national foundational historical and contemporary teachings can begin with localized examinations of our own communities and our own relationships to the history of the lands we call home. Local histories provide opportunities for students to not only see themselves, but also see themselves in relation to their communities, both regional and national. In localized contexts with little history of treaty, like British Columbia where the government failed to uphold the requirements of the Royal Proclamation as well the Canadian constitution with regard to Aboriginal title, there lies space to explore the contested, diverse, and at times unjust history of the Canadian nation state. These regional, historical, and contemporary analyses of negotiation and accommodation, as well as careful attention to the power dynamics involved such instances, could provide a foundation for similar approaches to related issues in the story of Canada that include marginalized groups in Canadian society.

The recent publication of the final conclusions and recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada offer significant guidance in thinking about the shortcomings of current systems, including education, and the work involved in disrupting narratives of exclusion, marginalization, and ignorance. Central to the conclusions and recommendations offered at the end of their seven years of investigation into the legacy of residential schools in Canada is the importance that education and the education system has in the work of reconciliation. Efforts to challenge and shift dominant narratives of Canadian history that largely excluded the histories of Indigenous peoples and their experiences as Canada

shifted from colony to nation are tremendously dependent on the narratives promulgated by formal education. “Too many Canadians,” the report concludes, “know little or nothing about the deep historical roots” of the contemporary issues and conflicts facing Indigenous individuals, families and communities today. The past and continued teaching of historical narratives that have gained dominance in the story of the development of Canada have almost everything to do with such misunderstanding and ignorance. Instead, there is a great need to challenge and reformulate such narratives so that Canadians can begin to understand the historical truths so integral to the work of reconciliation. The core work of the recommendations from the TRC are delivered in the form of calls to action targeted at various sectors in Canadian society, including education. Calls to Action 62 through 65 deal explicitly with the role of public education and the curriculum developed and delivered within that context. These Calls to Action, explicitly target the responsibilities that provincial and territorial governments have in the development and implementation of curriculum and curricular resources. Essential to thinking about present and future curricular renewals in the field of social studies, these calls demand that governments provide “age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada” (TRC Calls to Action, 2015). The work of the committee, along with the development of resources like the “Where are the Children” website and accompanying educational materials developed by the Legacy of Hope Foundation<sup>50</sup>, serve as important resources in the challenge to reformulate narratives in ways that respect and honour the histories of colonial policies that continue to have an impact Indigenous individuals and communities today.

The challenge of developing and adopting an approach that fosters a sense of unity while also recognizing variety in belonging that is evident in recent scholarly work (Battiste and Semaganis 2002; Blackburn, 2009; Burrows, 2000; Kymlicka, 2004) around citizenship and the changing nature of what it means to be a member of the nation state (Richardson, 2002) could be at least partially accomplished through approaches and content that take into account the foundation of treaty and treaty relationships across the country. Such an approach might have the potential to open up avenues for many of the skills and attributes critically minded,

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<sup>50</sup> The Legacy of Hope Foundation was created in 2001 with a mandate to educate, raise awareness and increase understanding of the legacy of residential schools. The work has driven the creation of a variety of resources including a curriculum guide for teachers and educators.

progressive social studies educators aim to cultivate in their students – the type of skills and attributes that honour our localized, nuanced, contested and sometimes difficult regional, and national histories, while simultaneously cultivating a sense of national history that recognizes the importance of understanding historic injustices to the project of creating equitable and sustainable future relationships, both human and non-human. Many of the current aims of social studies education in the province of Saskatchewan, and its development over the last 40 years, do speak to many of the concepts that must underpin our goals to cultivate a sense of belonging that fosters a desire to work for the common good in local, national, and global contexts. If social studies in Saskatchewan aims to provide opportunities for students to “thrive in their cultural and Canadian identities..., understand Canadian and world history, better understand the present and to influence the future..., and develop a sense of stewardship for the land”, a shift is required – one that seeks to move beyond the current narratives of inclusion presented in curriculum towards content and approaches that disrupt long held, taken-for-granted notions of Canada and the Canadian identity.

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## Appendix

### A1 Interrogative framework: Political Ideologies

Political ideologies: liberalism, conservatism, social democracy, neoliberalism (economic ideology)	
Markers/key words/phrases	Interrogative/Interpretive Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental ‘Canadian’ values: i.e. equality, tolerance, diversity, freedom, liberty</li> <li>• Balance between order and freedom</li> <li>• Individual versus group or collective rights</li> <li>• Consumption, material wellbeing; economics</li> <li>• The collective; the common good; cooperation; cooperatives versus privatization</li> <li>• Social stability/tradition versus change</li> <li>• Social hierarchies – meritocracy</li> <li>• Social welfare state and programming</li> <li>• Keynesian economic policy</li> <li>• Workers’ rights, unions, unionization</li> <li>• Political activism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are these markers, words, and phrases taken up, framed? i.e. is balance and order valued more than individual freedoms?</li> <li>- How do curricular content and learning objectives reflect tenets of dominant ideologies (liberalism, conservatism, social democracy, neoliberalism)?</li> <li>- Does one ideology dominate? Does this change over time?</li> <li>- To what extent is the regional political culture of Saskatchewan reflected in curricular content and learning objectives? What are the larger implications for the broader national identity?</li> <li>- How can a historical examination of the influence of political ideologies help to think about our current curriculum and future curricular renewals?</li> </ul>