In this book we have explored the possibilities of using various art forms: fiction, visual art, and public commemorative art in history education. We have set our work in the context of five scholarly conversations: the nature of history and historical truths and the role of interpretation in history; connections between history and the arts; the phenomena of collective memory and historical consciousness and how they work to integrate the past into our sense of the present and future; the relationship between Indigenous worldviews and approaches to the past and Western disciplinary perspectives on history; and new scholarly work in history education.

All of this begs a number of questions including: Why study the past at all? What contribution does, or can, history make to a person’s education? Aren’t other areas of school curricula much more important for people’s real lives? Making connections between the arts and teaching about the past might make the latter more interesting, but does it have any value beyond that? The past is after all past, so why pay any attention to it at all?

In an era where many subjects compete for curricular attention these questions are not just academic, and whether they have been asked explicitly or not, history has not fared well in the decisions of curriculum policymakers around the world. In recent years it has consistently lost ground to other subjects deemed more economically relevant such as
literacy (not literature) and the so-called STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). In recent years there has been an attempt to add the arts to the latter mix, creating the acronym STEAM, but the arts in this case are usually in service to the technology, being used to enhance skills in computer-based graphic design, video game development, and other career-oriented pursuits.

One reaction to this curricular narrowing has been to make the case that studying history does foster knowledge and skills important to many career paths. In a 2019 letter to the president of the Public Service Commission of Canada, the president of the Canadian Historical Association made the case that students of history were well prepared for many jobs in the public service. She highlighted the relevant skills learned in the study of history including “excellent research skills,” “analytical skills and the organization of complex materials,” and “interpersonal skills,” and closed her letter by requesting that the Commission “add History as a qualifying degree in your standard advertisement for analysts and related positions.”

While we concur that the study of history is good preparation for many professional careers, central to the arguments of this book is that studying the past has value well beyond a narrow focus on career development. Facility with the past is critical to develop a full sense of who we are as human beings both individually and collectively, who the other people are who share the world with us, and how we might engage together in working toward the common good. Studying the past, in other words, is both a humanizing and a civic mission and it has never been more critical than it is today.

**How the Past Permeates Our Present**

From the time of Australia’s Federation as an independent nation-state in 1901, political and social leaders conceived of the idea of creating a national history museum to preserve elements of the past and help explain the country to itself and others. Political bickering, financial contingencies, and historical controversies delayed the project for 100 years. A key issue centred around the purpose for this national museum: should it portray “an agreed upon sense of national identity” or be more focused on presenting complex and contested aspects of the past?

After a century of discussion and wrangling, the National Museum of Australia opened in March 2001 as part of the celebrations of the
centenary of Australian nationhood. With the opening of its doors the controversies that had dogged the project for years spilled out into the public realm. Criticism of the museum’s focus and displays came from professional historians, members of the Museum Council, the popular press, and prominent politicians including Prime Minister John Howard. Iconoclastic writer and historian Keith Windschuttle led the charge claiming the museum “had been hijacked by postmodern and postcolonial theorists and social historians and consequently the museum overemphasized past injustices.” In particular, he argued, it paid far too much attention to colonial injustice perpetrated upon Indigenous Peoples and excluded the views and contributions of mainstream historians, political leaders, and ordinary citizens. Other historians countered with the argument that the museum “should encourage debate and not shy away from controversy.”

The debate quickly migrated to the wider public realm becoming part of what Stewart Macintyre and Anna Clark call “the history wars” in Australia. These wars were fought on a number of fronts including academic conferences and publications, the mainstream press, sites of public history, and schools. They were characterized by personal attacks and polemical language such as the description of the approach the museum had taken as “black armband history” designed to promote sorrow and guilt about the past. That was countered by claims that traditional approaches constituted “three cheers history” focused on blind adherence to nation grounded on a narrow and overly positive presentation of its past. As Macintyre and Clark point out, these debates were not characterized by a search for understanding but by a desire “to vanquish the enemy.” The combatants, they argue, demonstrated very little desire to convince the other side but set out to “caricature their opponents and impugn their motives” through appeals “to loyalty, hope, fear and prejudice.”

On the other side of the world in March of 2015, Canadian politician and future prime minister Justin Trudeau gave a speech at Montreal’s McGill University. In the speech Trudeau addressed a prominent public controversy about whether or not a female Muslim immigrant to Canada should be required to remove her niqab (face veil) at the forthcoming ceremony where she would swear allegiance to Canada and become a citizen. Stephen Harper, the prime minister at the time, felt strongly that she should be required to show her face for the oath, Mr. Trudeau disagreed. In responding to the prime minister’s position,
Trudeau invoked three specific historical incidents important in Canadian collective memory. He said, “This is not the spirit of Canadian liberty, my friends. It is the spirit of the Komagata Maru. Of the St. Louis. Of ‘none is too many.’”

The first refers to a shipload of mostly Sikh migrants from India which arrived in Vancouver Harbour in March of 1914. The migrants were seeking refuge in Canada from nationalist and anti-colonialist struggles in India. Of the 376 passengers only 24 were admitted to Canada and the rest were returned to India. Some of the returnees were arrested or shot by police on arrival there. The incident became a symbol of racist and exclusionary immigration policies in early twentieth-century Canada and two later prime ministers, both Mr. Harper and Mr. Trudeau, apologized for the Canadian government’s response.

The other two references are allusions to the history of anti-Semitism in Canada, particularly related to the Holocaust. The first refers to the MS St. Louis, a ship full of some 900 Jewish refugees fleeing pre-Second World War Europe. The ship was turned away from a number of countries including Canada, and the Jews were returned to Europe where many perished in the Holocaust. The second reference is to the more general Canadian policy toward Jewish immigration in the 1930s, made famous in a book by Irving Abella and Harold Troper, None Is too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933–1948. Like the Komagata Maru incident both of these referents are often used as symbols for dark parts of Canadian history.

Mr. Trudeau’s invocation of these was not only an attempt to illustrate his position on the issue of whether or not it was appropriate to wear a niqab when taking a citizenship oath, it was also an attempt to tie Prime Minister Harper to the virulent racism associated with all three references. There is not space here to argue the specific merits of the link, but Trudeau’s technique clearly employs history as a device to impugn both the position and the character of his opponent. He takes three complex and nuanced historical events or policies and uses them simplistically without providing context or specific evidence to support the connections he asserts. To be clear, Mr. Trudeau is not uniquely guilty of this, it is something politicians and other people do all the time. This is one example of what historian Margaret MacMillan calls “the uses and abuses of history.” She writes that humans regularly “spin the events of the past to show that we always tend to behave well and our opponents badly or that we are normally right and others wrong.”
These two examples demonstrate that engagement with and use of the past occurs regularly across cultures and national boundaries. They illustrate an important wider truth that is central to this book: the past surrounds us all and permeates our everyday lives, often in unrecognized and unexamined ways. It pervades our discourse about museums, historic sites, monuments, other works of art, and commemorative rituals. Public debate about these things, and there is lots of it around the world, is really focused on defining who we are as individuals and communities and who the others are who share the world with us.\(^1\) It goes to the core of our sense of identity and place in the world. The invocation of elements of the past also regularly surfaces as part of our civic and political deliberations. When politicians like President Donald Trump in the United States and pro Brexiters in the UK sling slogans like “make American great again” and “take our country back,” they are calling on people to remember better, more glorious times past. In all of these cases the past is invoked not only, not even primarily, to tell us about who we or others were, but also to tell us who we and others are and should be. It is eminently contemporary and relevant. In the words of American novelist William Faulkner, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”\(^2\)

Much of this use of the past to define ourselves and others or score points in civic and political debate is either unconscious or simplistic, often resulting in exclusion, injustice, malicious conflict, and poorly thought out social policies and institutions. The absence of women and Indigenous Peoples from official histories, for example, contributes to their marginalization or outright exclusion from important aspects of civic life and institutions. Kent Monkman’s painting *The Daddies* discussed in Chapter 4 was designed to make exactly this point.

The abysmal quality and tone of civic discourse and practice has been the cause of considerable angst in societies around the world. A particularly virulent example is the case of British Labour MP Jo Cox, a passionate campaigner for the remain side during the Brexit referendum campaign in 2016. Ms. Cox was murdered during a rally in her Yorkshire constituency by a man shouting, “Britain first.” The killing shook Britain deeply and the raging protagonists on both sides retreated from the campaign trial for 36 hours or so but were soon back at it with every bit as much vitriol. As one reporter for *The Telegraph* put it, “Death threats and images of sexual torment have become part of the job for our MPs.”\(^3\) While this level of violence in civic interactions is not common,
violent and exclusionary language is. As one French political scientist put it in commenting on the 2016 election in her country:

I’ve never been so worried, so stressed out and so shocked. Most unnerving has been the division of the country and the hatred that came out of groups of people who can’t discuss anything, can’t understand each other, can’t talk...It’s like they don’t even speak the same language.17

While the study of history is no panacea for these ills, it does offer the potential to develop the knowledge, skills, and sensibilities to address them in more productive ways. A more complex sense of the past, for example, can help us develop much more nuanced understandings of ourselves and others. The fostering of historical perspective helps students understand that human beings in other contexts operate with different sets of knowledge and assumptions about the world that, while foreign to us, make sense in their milieus. This sense of perspective is relevant not only to understanding others in the past but also in the present. Developing facility with the historical thinking concept of evidence can help students understand the potential and limitations of sources, to make judgements about them, and to use them in constructing points of view about important questions and issues. As is elaborated in some detail below, a deeper sense of historical consciousness, of how people use the past to develop personal and collective identities and situate themselves vis-à-vis others, is a critical element of cross-cultural competency generally and empathy in particular.

It is our contention that history education has never been more necessary or relevant. Its two central missions are to contribute to our growth as human beings and citizens: to help us understand in complex and nuanced ways the many and varied ways to be human; and to use that understanding as a platform for fruitful and vigorous civic engagement. In this book we have shown how attention to the arts can contribute to both those important endeavours in a number of ways that connect to the five scholarly conversations that framed our approach to this book and are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
ENGAGING THE ARTS IN HISTORY CLASS
Fosters More Complex Understandings of History and the Nature of Truth

In January of 2017 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) documentary radio programme Ideas ran an hour-long show titled “The Truth About Post-Truth.” Host Paul Kennedy interviewed three academics asking them to reflect on a number of questions including whether or not the issues with our public discourse were because we live in a “post-truth era” where truth is either impossible to determine or “doesn’t matter anymore.” CBC was not alone in its interest in how truth is manifest in the contemporary world. Writing separately in the journal Nature, University of Texas philosopher Kathleen Higgins, one of the guests on the Ideas segment, pointed out that “The Oxford Dictionaries named ‘post-truth’ as their 2016 Word of the Year.”

In their national longitudinal study of emerging adults (18–23 year-olds) in the United States, Christian Smith and his colleagues found that philosophical ideas flowing from postmodernism including “uncertainty, difference, fluidity, ambiguity, multivocality, self-construction, changing identities, particularity, historical finitude, localism, audience reception, perspectivalism, and more” often lost their nuance and complexity when they moved to the more general population. Among study participants these ideas manifested themselves “as a simple-minded ideology presupposing the cultural construction of everything, individual subjectivism, soft ontological antirealism, and absolute moral relativism.” All of these contributed to both an inability and an unwillingness to engage in civic discourse designed to wrestle with complex questions about what might constitute the common good and how that might be better enacted through policy and institutional structures.

Higgins acknowledges that philosophers, especially those writing “about epistemic relativism, the view that truth can vary depending on the context,” are often blamed for current public ambivalence about the idea of truth. She goes on to argue, however, that

Scientists and philosophers should be shocked by the idea of post-truth, and they should speak up when scientific findings are ignored by those in power or treated as mere matters of faith. Scientists must keep reminding society of the importance of the social mission of science — to provide the best information possible as the basis for public policy. And they should
publicly affirm the intellectual virtues that they so effectively model: critical thinking, sustained inquiry and revision of beliefs on the basis of evidence.\textsuperscript{22}

While Higgin’s article focused on deliberations about public policy related to science, we contend that a well-developed and delivered history education can contribute to the kind of critical thinking, sustained inquiry, and revision of beliefs on the basis of evidence for which she argues. It can do this by fostering more complex ideas about historical truth in particular as well as more general understanding of the nature of truth in human affairs and its relation to evidence and perspective. The study of history demonstrates that while truth is always partial, contextual, and shifting, it is neither endlessly flexible (absolute relativism—everything is true) nor completely elusive (absolute cynicism—nothing is true).

A key aspect of the scholarly debate about the nature of history and historical truth discussed in Chapter 2 and elaborated in a number of other parts of this book, is the recognition of and wrestling with the partial nature of historical truth. It is partial in several ways. First, history includes only selected parts of the past; second, it is limited by the available evidence; and third, it is communicated in forms shaped by people with particular perspectives and purposes, it is never told from an external, neutral standpoint. Comprehensive history education, including encounters with the arts, will engage students with all of these limitations in substantial ways.

A common activity in introducing students to the partial nature of historical truth is to ask them to describe the difference between history and the past. Initially they are often perplexed with the question assuming that history and the past are the same thing. But of course, they are not. The past is everything that has happened, but history only covers a small selection of the past and always from particular perspectives or standpoints. As explored in some detail in several places in this book, a key development in the discipline of history over the past half century or more has been an expansion of the past—or pasts—considered by the discipline. Feminist, labour, and social historians more generally have moved beyond the traditional focus on male political and military leaders and their exploits to cover a broader range of people and topics. While this has not been without controversy as books critical of the shift with titles such as \textit{The Disuniting of America} and \textit{The Killing of History: How
Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past illustrate, the trend continues.23

Throughout this book we demonstrate ways in which drawing on the arts can broaden the range of pasts considered by our students. In Chapter 3, for example, we explore, among other things, how period fiction can provide a glimpse into the drawing rooms of Georgian Britain, the lives of women in rural Prince Edward Island, Canada in the early twentieth century, or insight into the lived experience of dustbowl farmers driven off their land and into migrant poverty during the Depression era in the United States. The art of Kent Monkman and other Indigenous artists discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 forcefully inserts other peoples and alternative perspectives into events and processes long regarded as settled parts of the past. In Chapter 5 we argue that critical engagement with local public art installations offers the potential to enhance attention to how even small communities experienced significant world events and processes and foster understanding about how collective memory shapes peoples and places.

Critics of the so-called “new history”24 and its examination of a wider range of perspectives and peoples, see several related problems: the disparaging of the Western Tradition, which they argue is largely responsible for moral, social, political, and economic progress; giving up on a single, and largely heroic, national narrative in favour of “professing trivia” such as the exploration of “housemaid’s knee in Belleville;”25 and the negative consequences of both of these for social cohesion and national unity. In terms of the latter, one prominent Canadian historian lamented “the privatizing of the mind” flowing from “the sundering of Canadian history” and resulting in the “sundering of Canada.”26 There are echoes of these criticisms in the cries of some participants in contemporary monument controversies to “not allow political correctness to erase our history.”27

These critiques and the many responses to them are a key element of the scholarly conversation on the nature of history and historical truths explored in several parts of this book, so here we will only say that a significant issue with the claim of the erasure of “our history” is that it was never really “ours” in the full sense. Women, people of African descent in Western countries, Indigenous Peoples in Australia, the United States, and Canada, and working-class people, are just some of the groups that have been marginalized or left out completely from the grand national
narratives that have dominated history education. Far from these narratives promoting social cohesion and national unity, they have left people feeling excluded, isolated, and angry. If, as social policy generally and educational policy in particular, advocate in diverse societies around the world, we want to build societies where people understand one another and feel included and engaged, the teaching of diverse elements of and perspectives on the past is essential. This not only helps diverse groups feel included, it fosters cross-cultural competencies as students are required to wrestle with and understand experiences and perspectives quite different from their own. Knowing the “truth” about the world in which we live is only possible if we understand something about the history and contemporary experiences of the diverse range of peoples who populate it. The arts provide an important vehicle for achieving both those ends.

One of the reasons particular groups of people have been left out of historical accounts is the lack of evidence upon which to develop narratives and make claims about them. In 1991 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich won the Pulitzer Prize for a book on US History, *A Midwife’s Tale, The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary.* As the title indicates, the book documents the life and work of Martha Ballard, a woman who practised midwifery in southern Maine between 1782 and 1812. It also explores “a larger theme: of how the revolution initiated sweeping social changes that promoted individualism at the expense of the more collective values that had framed Ballard’s life.”

While Thatcher Ulrich’s book was recognized for the story it told, it was also acclaimed for its innovative approach to using historical evidence. A central theme for Thatcher Ulrich is addressing the absence of women from the historical record through deep engagement with new forms of evidence. She points out that “few New England women of [Martha Ballard’s] generation left writing in any form,” and that which was left was widely considered trivial. Thatcher Ulrich argues that Ballard’s diary itself was considered so mundane that “those few historians who have known about the diary have not known quite what to do with it.” It was not only male historians who failed to see the potential richness of this source. “Curiously, a feminist history of midwifery published in the 1970s repeated the old dismissal: ‘Like many diaries of farm women, it is filled with trivia about domestic chores and pastimes.’”

Thatcher Ulrich, however, recognized the potential of the diary to fill out aspects of the historical record neglected by other sources. In particular, it opened up a fuller consideration of the economic activity that
sustained the life and vitality of small communities in the new republic. “A standard merchant’s ledger” for the period, for example, neglects the role of women in the economy altogether. As she points out,

One might conclude from such a record that Kennebec women had no role in economic life beyond their own households. An intriguing page at the very end of the account book lists flaxseed sold by the Kennebec Agricultural Society, yet there is little evidence in the account book itself of any sort of textile production in the town.

She goes on to highlight the importance of Ballard’s record.

Martha’s diary tells us what happened to the seed. It not only records when Ephraim Ballard planted the flax, but when she and her daughters weeded and harvested it. It not only identifies the male helpers who turned and broke it, but the many female neighbors who assisted her and her daughters with the combing, spinning, reeling, boiling, spooling, warping, quilling, weaving, bucking, and bleaching that transformed the ripe plant into finished cloth. Martha’s diary fills in the missing work—and trade—of women.33

Part of the scholarly conversation about the nature of history and historical truth is shifting ideas about what constitutes historical evidence and how new forms of evidence might be included in filling out the historical record. Thatcher Ulrich’s work with Martha Ballard’s diary is one important example of that conversation, but as we show throughout this book, artistic representations also have potential to open consideration of more diverse aspects of the past. In various parts of this book, for example, we have discussed the potential of public art as a source of knowledge about the past.

In one example of this we write about different sets of murals and one diorama, created almost contemporaneously in the 1920s and 1930s, displayed in four very different public spaces: St. Stephen’s Hall in the Palace of Westminster, London (Chapter 6); The rotunda of the British Columbia Legislature in Victoria, BC (Chapters 4–6); the theatre in Humberside Collegiate School in Toronto, Ontario (Chapter 6); and The American Museum of Natural History in New York City (Chapter 6). In three of the four cases actual events are represented, while in the other (the mural at Humberside Collegiate) historical themes and relationships are illustrated. All deal with themes related to Western domination and
colonialism in different parts of the world, and all are designed, in the words of Sir Henry Newbolt, to “go beyond fact, and to symbolize the inner meaning of certain events.”

While Newbolt, an advisor on the St. Stephen’s Hall murals, and the other creators of these pictures intended them as accounts to be absorbed passively, they offer evidence of the attitudes of those in power in the time they were created. Close interrogation of them as primary sources reveals important aspects of social organization, power relations, and the perspectives of the dominant culture in the 1920s and 1930s in Britain, Canada, and the United States. They allow us to engage more fully with important historical themes such as conquest, colonialism, racism, and power. Their diverse placement illustrates the pervasive nature of similar ideas about the pre-eminence of European “civilization” in the early to middle part of the twentieth century.

As we have argued throughout this book, a key aspect of this and other kinds of evidence from the arts, is its power to impact us viscerally and therefore extend our understandings of the impact particular forms of social organization or discourse might have on different groups of people. Pictorial or textual fictional accounts of the experience of racism and social marginalization can help us deepen our sense of historical perspective both about the attitudes and experiences of those in mainstream society and those on the margins. As we will discuss more fully below, students will also learn to contextualize these forms of evidence with that gathered from other sources to bring new perspectives and ideas to the historical record. It is not so much that the previous historical knowledge—or truths—are wrong, although in some cases they may be, but that they are incomplete. Students should learn from this that truth in history, and other areas, is neither impossible to determine nor unimportant, but it is tentative and should be asserted with a degree of humility that allows for adaptation in the face of new voices being included and new evidence considered.

While there is wide consensus across the community of academic historians that historical truth is partial and contingent in the ways described above, there is also community-wide commitment to the importance of grounding truth claims in rigorous analysis of primary and secondary sources. The available sources for any particular event, era, or set of ideas being studied may be used to support a range of interpretations and perspectives. They also, however, establish parameters that exclude
support for some perspectives. Serious engagement with sources will allow for a range of opinion, but not an infinite range.

In their book *The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in American Schools*, historian Jonathan Zimmerman and philosopher Emily Robertson take up the point that evidence and argument constrain public consideration of alternative positions on important questions. “There are issues,” they argue, “where reasonable arguments can be made on different sides of the question,” but there are also more settled questions where “there is one position that is decisively supported by the available arguments.” For example, “since historical evidence overwhelmingly supports the claim the Holocaust happened, this question is not controversial.” They go on to provide detailed ideas for how considering contested questions, wrestling with evidence, and learning about the nature of expertise can enhance students’ abilities to engage in productive civic discourse. History education provides both examples of how others have done this, and opportunities for students to do it themselves.

**Engaging the Arts in History Class Fosters Cross Curricular/Disciplinary Connections**

The second scholarly conversation taken up in Chapter 2 and illustrated throughout the book is the relationship between history and the arts. In the winter of 2020 award-winning Canadian journalist and novelist, Linden MacIntyre explored this relationship in a public lecture titled “Making (Up) History” which was largely an exploration of his own work as a journalist, popular historian, and novelist. He began by considering the widely held view that “making things up while writing history, is a serious offence, an intellectual crime, a creative sin.” The problem with that, he went on, is that “everything I have written, over more than fifty years, journalism or fiction, everything I’ve read including history is unavoidably, and sometime deliberately, to some extent, made up.” That is because “any account of any event that has already happened, even if it was written by someone who was part of the event, will be recorded after the fact and therefore is an act of remembering.” How we remember, he continued, is shaped by many factors including missing or conflicting pieces of evidence and the perspectives and biases we bring to the enterprise. Any account of the past is recreation, and “recreation is a creative enterprise.”
Macintyre’s point here is that historians are at some level artists engaged in creative acts of storytelling, but his lecture also dealt with the flip side of that, artists are often historians seeking to tell complex truths about events from the past. In September 1982 a horrific massacre occurred in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in southern Lebanon. As a journalist working in the region MacIntyre was assigned to cover the event and arrived just a day or two after the killings. The situation was so devastating “it demanded to be remembered,” but by the time he arrived an “aggressive campaign of deception” was already mobilized. The governments of both Lebanon and Israel, as well as a number of private militias, were all actively involved in covering up evidence and spinning accounts to focus blame away from themselves and onto others. As MacIntyre said, “The attempt to conceal what had happened would permanently obscure the truth of who did what to whom and why.” Any reporting of this incident, he went on, would require “judgement calls and conjecture.”

As well as he could, MacIntyre covered the situation as a journalist but was left unsatisfied with the result. He felt his, and others’, accounts failed to get at the essence of the story, to show this was more than a single event but “a catastrophic human story of what people were capable of doing to other people.” He thought this story illustrated a key aspect of the history of the twentieth century, “a century defined by massacre.”

To explore the impenetrable complexity of the event MacIntyre turned not to history but to fiction, writing the historical novel The Only Café. He felt this artistic medium better enabled him to get at “the essence of what happened.”

Throughout this book we explore a number of examples of these kinds of blurred boundaries between history and the arts. In Chapter 3, for example, we argue that period novels are important primary sources allowing historians windows into aspects of the past often ignored. In Chapters 4 and 5 we show that visual art and public commemorative art are also important traces that provide evidence of significant aspects of the historical contexts in which they were created. In Chapter 6 we discuss ways to engage students in the detailed and complex work of reading artistic works as sources of information about the past, including the importance of contextualizing those sources with regard to other forms of evidence.
The arts as evidence are valuable for doing history, but they are also important as historical accounts. As we illustrate in Chapter 3, many writers of historical novels draw extensively from primary and secondary sources of evidence and, like Linden MacIntyre, intend their work to communicate important “truths” about the past. They are, in fact, acting as historians. As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, the same is often true of painters and sculptors. In painting his *The Death of General Wolfe* (Chapter 4), for example, Benjamin West intended to shape how viewers of the work thought about Wolfe, the events at Québec in September of 1759, and the burgeoning British Empire more generally. Historian Simon Schama argues the artist was immensely successful in controlling the narrative well into the future. “After West,” he writes, “nothing could dispel the odour of sanctity that lay over Wolfe’s memory.”

Throughout this book, but especially in Chapter 6, we argue that history education should take seriously both the creative nature of historical work and the historical nature of artistic endeavours. Students should be taught to systematically interrogate all historical accounts considering the context in which they were created, the perspectives and purposes of the creators, and the creative techniques they employ to make their arguments and challenge or obscure the accounts of others. Again, this engages students in complex consideration of the nature of truth and how it is communicated.

At one in the same time in an American high school it might be possible for students to be reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* in English class, considering the sculpture *Foot Solider* (Chapter 5) in art class, and studying the civil rights movement in history class while never making connections among the three. One of us has written elsewhere about school subjects as “fortified silos” rather than “interconnected webs.” When curriculum is approached like the former, the students in English class might never consider the wider historical and social context of Harper Lee’s novel, while in art class where the focus might be on the sculptor’s technique, questions about the shaping of his historical narrative might never arise, and in history class students might not be asked to think about how artistic representations, like Lee’s novel and Ronald McDowell’s sculpture, have shaped their own and others’ ideas about race relations in America. It is our contention that student learning would be enhanced if these subjects were treated more like interconnected webs.
Engaging the Arts in History Class Fosters Consideration of the Relationship Between History, Historical Consciousness, and Collective Memory

We opened this chapter discussing the narrowing of school curricula to focus on subjects considered to enhance employability. No single organization has had more impact on this than the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), through its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA is an international testing programme that traditionally assesses student achievement in reading, mathematics, and science. The tests are administered in almost 100 countries or regions around the world. The results are reported widely, generate considerable press in many countries, and shape discussions and decisions about educational policy and practice in important ways. One group of scholars writes that “PISA has arguably become the most influential educational assessment today,” and goes on to emphasize that the programme was developed “to assist the OECD with its economic mandate and that this rationale informed the assessment’s framework and continues to guide its development.”

In 2018, in response to perceived growing social and cultural fragmentation and conflict, the PISA programme moved beyond the three traditional subject areas to begin assessing “global competence” which was described as “a multidimensional capacity.” According to the OECD, “Globally competent individuals can examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being.” While the OECD has not diverted from its economic focus arguing, among other things, that “educating for global competence can boost employability,” it seems to us that a broadly humanistic approach to history education would be the most effective way to foster the particular elements of global competence outlined in their description.

At the centre of the OECD’s conception of global competence is intercultural perspective taking and the ability to work with others to productively address common issues. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton identify perspective taking as one of the six foundational aspects of historical thinking. Perspective taking is also deeply connected to understandings of historical consciousness and collective memory which are described
in some detail in Chapter 2. We know that people, individually and as cultural, ethnic, or national collectivities, narrate themselves temporally in terms of the past, present, and future. We begin Chapter 6 with an illustration of the way this worked itself out in the lives of Rumanians and Hungarians in their disputes over the territory of Transylvania in the 1930s. Each of these groups had a widely shared collective memory of the region extending back two thousand years and those memories shaped how they thought about the proper national location of the territory in their own time and into the future.

Given that situating Transylvania within the nation of Rumania was a contested result of the Treaty of Versailles which sought, among other things, to create a new international order, this is just the kind of global issue the OECD proposes that globally competent citizens should be able to address. It would be impossible for these groups, or others working with them, to “understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being” without taking into account the collective memories described above. Those memories, which are part of the collective historical consciousness of the peoples involved, define contemporary positions and constrain possibilities for the resolution of conflicts about the territory. That is not to say accommodations and even a final resolution to the issue are impossible, but they will require hard work including careful attention to, and empathy for, the perspectives shaping the views of interested parties.

Throughout this book we provide examples of how engagement with the arts can foster deeper understandings of the perspectives of people in other times and places. In Chapter 3, for example, we argue that period novels often capture aspects of the spirit, or collective understandings, of particular historical contexts. Lucy Maud Montgomery’s novel *Rilla of Ingleside*, for example, provides insight into how rural Canadians responded to the horror of the Great War and its aftermath. The novel’s verisimilitude shaped the way succeeding generations remembered the war, an issue that continues to have salience in public discourse in Canada. Chapter 5 focuses on public commemorative art which both reflects collective sensibilities from the time and place in which the works were created but is also designed explicitly to shape shared understandings into the future. That chapter also draws on several examples of public commemorative art of the Great War to demonstrate that collective memory is not static but can shift significantly over time in
response to changing contexts. The critical audit of public historical art suggested in Chapter 6 as an activity for students, is one way to begin to build a deeper understanding of the historical consciousness and collective memory of communities and to consider how those exclude some individuals and groups and shape the way we think about possibilities for the future.

In his book *How Propaganda Works*, philosopher Jason Stanley recognizes the ubiquitous and powerful nature of “group identities” which he calls the coral reefs of cognition: much of the beauty of the production of human intellect is due to their existence. But certain group identities are democratically problematic: the Teutonic identity constructed by National Socialism is an obvious example. Such identities channel rational and affective streams in specific ways, creating obstacles to self-knowledge, as well as to the free flow of deliberation required in a healthy democracy.47

Stanley goes on to develop the concept of “civic rhetoric” as a counter to flawed ideology and demagoguery.48 Civic rhetoric tries to improve the reasonableness of debate through “appeal to empathy and understanding to lead people to include the perspectives of some citizens whose perspectives had previously been ignored.”49 In other words, those who employ civic rhetoric attempt to help others understand their perspective by demonstrating areas of deep connection between the collective ideologies of both groups. This requires, of course, close attention to the collective consciousnesses of one’s opponents. Stanley gives the example of American civil rights advocate W. E. B. DuBois who wrote and spoke using liberal democratic ideals themselves to “draw attention to the fact that cherished ideals among the Whites are also cherished among the Blacks.”50 This kind of “civic rhetoric is an attempt to share the perspective of a group whose perspective has been made invisible thereby preventing democracy; civic rhetoric is the tool required in the service of repairing rupture.”51 It is also a tool, we argue, that would be greatly enhanced by close attention to historical consciousness and collective memory and the arts provide a window into deeper understanding of those.
**Engaging the Arts in History Class Fosters the Introduction of Indigenous Perspectives**

In 2017 Indigenous carver Charles Joseph had a large totem he had created installed for several months on a main street of the city of Montreal in front of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The totem drew on traditional Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl) forms but adapted them “to tell a tragic story that shaped Joseph personally,” the story of Indian Residential Schools in Canada.\(^{52}\) Joseph’s account flows from his own sense of historical consciousness but also connects to the collective memory of residential school survivors and their descendants about the devastating impact of a policy and process designed to “to kill the Indian in the child.”\(^{53}\)

Joseph’s work is just one example of a burgeoning collection of art designed to bring Indigenous perspectives on the past into public spaces. The front lobby of Marshall D’Avray Hall at the University of New Brunswick, the building where one of us works, contains a large sculpture in the form of a Wampum Belt, a traditional Indigenous form of storytelling and commemoration. The sculpture was developed under the auspices of Project of the Heart, “an inquiry based, hands-on, collaborative, inter-generational, artistic journey of seeking truth about the history of Aboriginal people in Canada.”\(^{54}\) It was created by many people across the province of New Brunswick under the direction of the Aboriginal Visual Arts Programme at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. Like Joseph’s work it seeks “to bring awareness of the atrocities associated with the Residential Schools” from the perspective of survivors.\(^{55}\)

These are two of the many examples of how Indigenous perspectives on the past are portrayed in artistic forms. In Chapter 2 we discuss five scholarly conversations that frame and inform our work. As we point out there, these conversations do not have hard boundaries between them and often overlap and run together. This is particularly true of the conversations related to historical consciousness and collective memory and Indigenous perspectives. It could be argued that issues around paying attention to Indigenous perspectives in history education are really a subset of the larger category of collective memory. At one level this is true, but we argue history itself mandates particular attention to Indigenous concerns and perspectives. In their work on historical thinking Seixas and Morton identify the ethical dimension of history as one of the six
key concepts foundational to the study of history. In delineating the critical attributes of the concept they write, “a fair assessment of the ethical implications of history can inform us of our responsibilities to remember and respond to contributions, sacrifices, and injustices of the past.” We contend that the injustices of the past both in terms of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and many other parts of the world, and in how their history has been portrayed or ignored in academic and public history, mandate separate and substantial attention to Indigenous perspectives in history education.

The arts provide opportunities to engage with Indigenous perspectives in history education in at least two ways. First, is the critical examination of the representation of Indigenous Peoples in artistic forms across time and contexts. One of us has written about the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples in the illustrations and photographs used in Canadian school history textbooks arguing that “depictions of Aboriginal people of the more distant past can be placed in two categories: spectator and savage warrior. Aboriginal people of the more recent past and present can be placed into five categories: exotic, problem, uniquely spiritual, protestor and invisible.” The artworks dealt with in this book provide examples of virtually all of these. The painting, The Fathers of Confederation (Chapter 4) is an example of Indigenous People (and a number of other groups including women) as absent from the founding of the Canadian nation-state. The murals in the British Columbia legislature (Chapters 4–6), The American Museum of Natural History (Chapter 6), and Humberside Collegiate School in Toronto (Chapter 6), present Indigenous Peoples as spectators to European action or recipients of settler largesse both in material and spiritual terms. Benjamin Wolfe’s The Death of General Wolfe (Chapter 4) presents the exotic Indigenous person deep in contemplation about the passing of the great man. Simon Schama points out this was a fiction invented by the painter and in no way reflected the history of the event, where the Indigenous People present fought with the French, or feelings of Wolfe himself who regarded Indigenous People as “irredeemable barbarians, cruel and depraved.”

It is important that history education engage students in analysis of the historical images and sculptures of Indigenous Peoples that surround them at historical sites, in and around civic and other public buildings, in their school textbooks, and on the walls of their schools. That analysis should include critical questions such as those outlined in describing the audit of public art described in Chapter 6. One approach can be
to ask students to decide what should be done with works of art that are anachronistic and offensive in their portrayal of Indigenous Peoples. That is the question that faced an expert panel considering the murals at the British Columbia Legislature in Canada and the curatorial staff and advisors working with the diorama at the American Museum of Natural History. In the case of the former “the panel considered five options for the murals: maintain the murals as they are, maintain the murals as they are with the addition of other materials, alter the murals, cover the murals, and remove the murals.” 59 The Museum of Natural History professionals considered a similar range of options. 60

In BC the decision was made to remove the murals as the location itself, inside the main hall of the provincial legislative assembly, gave the appearance of attributing official sanction to the images. The museum, on the other hand, opted to historicize the diorama by adding material that would help visitors contextualize and critique the display. In Chapter 6 we discuss the study conducted by Peter Seixas and Penney Clark that clearly demonstrates high school students’ ability to engage with these kinds of questions. 61

Sometimes the critique of traditional and demeaning portrayals itself comes in artistic form. The work of Kent Monkman, particularly his paintings *The Daddies* and *The Scream*, discussed extensively in Chapter 4, are examples of this. Monkman adapts or plays off traditional images and themes to create works that present powerful challenges to culturally dominant themes and ideas.

A second way the arts can help incorporate Indigenous perspectives in history education is through their ability to present those perspectives in compelling ways. The two examples that open this section illustrate the fact that Indigenous Peoples from very different parts of the territory now called Canada are adapting traditional artistic and cultural forms to present accounts of their own experience with the past in that land. Again, Kent Monkman is a leader in this movement. His recent works mounted in the entrance hall to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (Chapter 6) both challenge traditional ideas about Indigenous history and present new narratives. In both paintings mounted there, Indigenous people are presented as central actors and agents with Europeans pushed to the margins. 62

Monkman’s work and the two examples at the beginning of this section are all new works. It is also important to engage with historical art from Indigenous communities as something other than curios
of “a disappearing race.” In his reflection on totem poles as Canadian symbols, historian John Lutz argues this important medium for traditional stories and community history has been stripped of its deeper meaning and turned into common tourist trinkets. He points out the irony that the world’s largest collection of totem poles is in the Great Hall of the Canadian Museum of History where they “glare with fixed wooden eyes directly at Parliament, where politicians had tried for many years to suppress Indigenous culture while appropriating Indigenous art.” Working with Indigenous communities, elders, and educators, history educators should work toward including examples of Indigenous art from the past as both historical sources and accounts.

As we argue in Chapter 2, the scholarly conversation about including Indigenous perspectives in history education is relatively new and highly contested. This makes it difficult terrain for history educators to navigate. That difficulty cannot be an excuse for doing nothing. The record of past distortions of history and the injustices that accompany and flow from those mandates action as reflected in recent reports in Canada and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In moving forward it is essential that Indigenous people be involved as collaborators at every step. In the words of the common saying, “Nothing about us without us.”

**Engaging the Arts in History Class Fosters the Development of History Education**

In 2012 Ken Osborne wrote an article reflecting on his more than fifty years as a history teacher and professor of education. In that piece titled, “A History Teacher Looks Back,” Osborne wrote, “I hold great hopes for the current emphasis on teaching students to think historically,” but he also went on to make the point that many of the key elements of the historical thinking movement have been around for a century and have not made a substantial impact on the teaching of history in schools. Commenting on his own efforts to produce a history of the field he wrote:

My pursuit of the history of history education has been both intriguing and depressing; intriguing in that I discovered a largely forgotten history of debate, argument, and experimentation stretching back to the 1880s; depressing in that it had so little impact on the classroom. I concluded
that ever since the 1920s we have known what is involved in teaching history well, but we have been unable to translate what we know into classroom reality.\textsuperscript{67}

In response to Osborne’s absolutely correct assertions that inquiry-oriented history education generally and historical thinking in particular has been around in some form for more than a century and over that time it has had very little impact on actual practice in public education, one of us wrote a piece articulating what is different about contemporary approaches to historical thinking that might make it both longer lasting and more effective.\textsuperscript{68} That article identified eight elements of the current historical thinking movement that give reasons for hope that it might move beyond the academy and policy to impact practice:

- There is a pervasive consensus around the world and across various sectors that fostering historical thinking is an important key component of history education;
- There is a substantial and growing evidentiary base about how people think and learn about the past that provides a basis for curriculum development and implementation;
- The core concepts and procedures central to historical thinking are being clearly delineated in ways that are accessible to practitioners;
- High-quality teaching materials that support the inquiry orientation of historical thinking, such as primary source documents, are more widely available than they have ever been;
- Cross-sector scholarly and professional communities including historians, educationists, curators, teachers, and others have been created and are maintained by regional, national, and international organizations;
- Sophisticated and practical ideas for assessing historical thinking are being developed and disseminated;
- Cross-disciplinary approaches to both pre-service and in-service professional education are being theorized, developed, and implemented; and
- Historical thinking is increasingly being given official sanction as central to teaching history by educational jurisdictions around the world.\textsuperscript{69}
As we point out in Chapter 2 the model of historical thinking that is dominant in Canada and influential in other parts of the world is that developed under the leadership of Peter Seixas of the University of British Columbia. We have been collaborators with Seixas since the beginning of his work and therefore research and practice in the field are central to our own scholarship and to what we have tried to do in this book. Throughout this book we seek to build on a number of the elements outlined above in order to address Osborne’s concern and foster better practice in history education.

We draw on scholarship related to historical thinking and apply it to using the arts in the teaching of history. In a number of places we illustrate how the work on prior conceptions, or cognitive frames, has contributed to knowledge of how learners think about the past as well as how that thinking might be enhanced. The new and exciting work of Lévesque and Croteau (Chapters 2 and 6), for example, is helpful in understanding the cognitive frames of groups of Canadian young people and in thinking about the intersections between historical thinking and historical consciousness/collective memory. We also draw on similar studies from Canada and other parts of the world in this area and show how it connects to using the arts in history teaching.

We have also examined some of the scholarship on students’ interactions with commemorative places and, in particular how the sacredness of memorial sites constrains asking and investigating critical historical questions (Chapter 5). Catriona Pennell, for example, investigates the connection between battlefield tours and critical history education, wondering, “Can history education and remembrance be blended so easily?” Her work demonstrates that public commemorative sites have the kind of visceral power we argue is characteristic of art, and that power often overwhelms students’ experiences at the sites. “The lack of space for critical reflection is in stark contrast to the emphasis placed in tour content on remembrance practices.” Throughout this book and elsewhere we have examined this tension between art’s ability to communicate compelling and powerful ideas about the past and the danger of having one’s critical judgement weakened by that very power.

Our work contributes to the nuanced deliberation of concepts and issues related to historical thinking. In particular, we spend a lot of time discussing the nature of primary source evidence and how artistic forms such as novels (Chapter 3), paintings (Chapters 4 and 5), sculptures, and memorial sites (Chapter 5) can be engaged as evidence. As we write earlier
in this chapter the expansion of what is considered evidence has been critical to the evolution of the field of history over the years, it is also critical to the ongoing development of the field of historical thinking. In Chapter 6 we developed some applied ideas about how teachers might help students develop expertise in reading and analyzing artistic works as both primary source evidence and secondary accounts of the past.

Two related concepts in historical thinking also feature prominently in our work: perspective taking and the ethical dimension of history. In regard to the former, we argue throughout the book that artistic forms provide clear windows into the perspectives of other times and peoples. In Chapter 3, for example, we argue that period novels give a rich sense of how people thought about and experienced social and cultural phenomena such as primogeniture, social exclusion, or poverty. We present many examples of how public commemorative art reflects prevailing attitudes and perspectives of particular times and places such as the prevalence of nationalism and Christianity in the memorials created just after the Great War and the almost total absence, even rejection, of those in more contemporary monuments to the same war (Chapter 5).

Throughout the book, we argue that artistic works provide a rich potential source of accessible and engaging teaching materials to foster historical thinking. One of the biggest challenges for teachers seeking to incorporate historical thinking into their work has been locating materials that students find interesting and can use. As we have pointed out in a number of places in this book, historical art permeates our world and is just waiting for creative teachers and students to take it up in critical ways as both primary source evidence and secondary accounts.

While strong and diverse cross-disciplinary communities of historians, curators, educationists, and practitioners have increasingly been a feature of the contemporary historical thinking movement, artists are noticeably absent. As we show in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as above in discussing the works of Linden MacIntyre, writers of historical novels do a lot of public reflecting on the relationship between their genre, their own work in that genre, and history. Other artists such as the sculptor Ronald McDowell (Chapter 5), or the painters Benjamin West (Chapters 1, 4, and 6) and Kent Monkman (Chapters 4 and 6) also explicitly understand their work as presenting historical accounts. It seems to us it is long past time that the artistic community be included in deliberations about history education generally and historical thinking in particular.
One of the strengths of current approaches to historical thinking, especially Seixas’s model, is fluidity; the ability and willingness to adapt in the face of new evidence or theorizing. Over the years we have observed the articulation of core historical thinking concepts change in response to empirical work with students and theorizing about the nature of history and historical inquiry. The scholarly conversations exploring the connections between history and memory and academic history and Indigenous perspectives on the past are two examples of this. As demonstrated in Chapter 2 these conversations have had a significant impact on the theory and practice of historical thinking. The models produced by Seixas and Lévesque and Croteau for combining attention to academic history and collective memory in history education are examples of this evolution. This book is also designed to push scholars and practitioners of historical thinking in particular and history education more generally to think about and engage in the field in new ways through more explicit attention to the multilayered possibilities of the arts for teaching history.

CONCLUSION

As we completed this book in the late winter and early spring of 2020 Canada experienced a significant economic crisis due to weeks long blockades of railway lines and other key transportation links by protesters supporting opposition to a natural gas pipeline by Indigenous groups in British Columbia. India was plagued with deadly demonstrations because of a new citizenship law that was perceived as discriminating against Muslims. In the midst of a violent dispute with the United States the Iranian military mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian commercial airliner, precipitating an international crisis. After years of intense wrangling a divided United Kingdom began its exit from the European Union. The president of Russia pushed lawmakers in that country to make constitutional changes allowing him to sidestep legal term limits to his time in power. All of these countries and more were caught up in a global pandemic brought on by Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

This is just a sampling of the news stories from around the globe that were capturing the world’s attention while we worked on our book. While they were very different, they had some distinct similarities. They all
had significant national and international implications, they all impacted people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they all were rooted in deliberations about public policy, and they all were infused with aspects of the past. Even the coronavirus, while itself new, was subjected to vigorous historical analysis. Commentators examined how that outbreak was similar to or different from contagions of the past such as the Spanish Influenza of 1918–20 or Sever Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) of the early 2000s. Claims were made in public discourse about the lessons that had been learned and applied from those earlier events or where opportunities to learn lessons had been missed. One article from the website of the World Economic Forum extended the links even further back with a headline proclaiming, “From the Black Death to the coronavirus: What we haven’t learned from history.” Politicians and public health officials appealed to aspects of that history to justify the positions they were taking and public policy directions they were promoting.

All of the examples above and many others from around the world arose in particular historical contexts. It would be impossible to understand any of them in a complex way without some sense of history, and public discussion of them all included historical claims and counter claims designed to shore up support for particular policy directions both in national affairs and international relations. These are just the kind of global issues the OECD claims require globally competent citizens to address. Our contention is that globally competent citizenship requires comprehensive, inquiry-oriented attention to the past. To engage with others in working for the common good people have to have some sense of the context of the issues they face, including the complicated historical factors that have brought them to the fore. They also have to know something about the others with whom it will be necessary to join forces in order to address the issues, whether those others are next door or across the globe. There is no way to develop a deep, empathetic understanding of others without knowing something about their history and the collective memories that inform their worldviews. To know others and understand the civic contexts we share are the humanizing and civic missions of history education. In this book we have argued that attention to the arts will enhance both aspects of that enterprise.
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