

# USING PRIMARY SOURCES AS A FORM OF SOCIAL JUSTICE:

*THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES, MUSEUMS,  
AND COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS  
IN VISUALIZING DIFFERENT  
PASTS AND IMAGINING  
DIFFERENT FUTURES*



DR. SAMANTHA CUTRARA

MARCH 31, 2016

CANADA'S HISTORY

## NOTE:

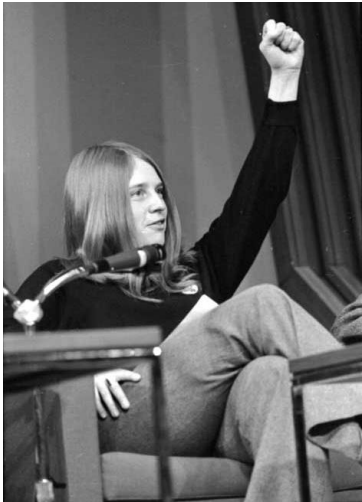
- This is an annotated PowerPoint of a webinar completed for Canada's History on March 31, 2016.
- A video of this webinar can be found HERE on YouTube.
- All images in this PowerPoint are available online; many can be found on Flickr, a photo sharing site, and are hyperlinked.
- Please email the author Samantha.Cutrara@gmail.com for any questions, comments, or corrections.



# SOCIAL JUSTICE:

- “the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society”

Ingram & Walters, 2007  
See also [Wikipedia](#)



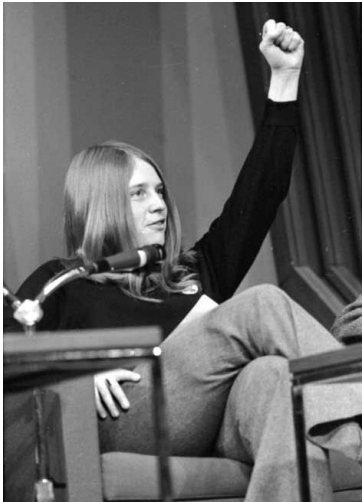
Abortion Caravan, Town Hall meeting  
C 193-2 strip 2294 #18  
Archives of Ontario, I0012247

We often think about how to teach this

## SOCIAL JUSTICE:

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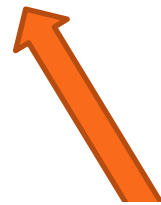
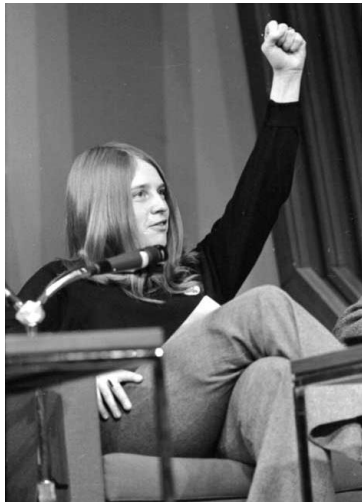


Abortion Caravan, Town Hall meeting  
C 193-2 strip 2294 #18  
Archives of Ontario, I0012247

# SOCIAL JUSTICE:

- “the way in which human rights are manifested in the **everyday lives of people** at every level of society”

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Without remembering that this part  
is equally powerful

Abortion Caravan, Town Hall meeting  
C 193-2 strip 2294 #18  
Archives of Ontario, I0012247

# SOCIAL JUSTICE **AND** TEACHING HISTORY

- “the way in which **human rights** are manifested in the **everyday lives of people** at every level of society”

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Abortion Caravan, Town Hall meeting  
C 193-2 strip 2294 #18  
Archives of Ontario, I0012247

... involves not just teaching this history of **human rights**, but also acknowledging the **everyday lives of people**

# RESPECTING EVERYDAY LIVES AS SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Privileging the lives and knowledges of students *and* historical actors
- Social justice involves recognizing young people as **whole, smart, thinking, contributing** members of society.



[Children on dock] , (1936)  
Photography by James Crookall  
AM640-: CVA 260-616  
City of Vancouver Archives

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Photography by James Crookall  
AM640-: CVA 260-616  
City of Vancouver Archives

Is what I'm teaching is worthy of their learning?



In my research,  
I have found that...

**We don't have to convince  
young people that  
history is important.**

**We have to make history  
important enough for them  
to learn.**

As one student said  
in her interview...

*“We come to a class  
to get educated  
and you’re going to  
have to bring  
it to the table”*



# SOCIAL JUSTICE IS AN *ETHOS* IN YOUR PRACTICE

- **Ethos:** *The characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations.*



A class of primary school students, 1928

Photograph by  
Malak Karsh  
Department of  
Manpower and  
Immigration.  
Library and  
Archives Canada,  
e010999965

# SOCIAL JUSTICE IS AN *ETHOS* IN YOUR PRACTICE

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Photograph by Malak Karsh  
Department of Manpower and Immigration.  
Library and Archives Canada,  
e010999965

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Department of Manpower and Immigration.  
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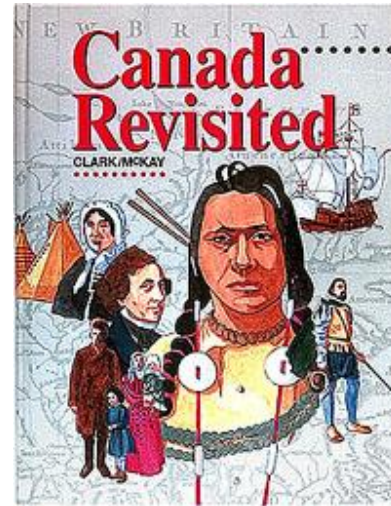
A class of primary school students, 1928  
Photograph by Malak Karsh  
Department of Manpower and Immigration.  
Library and Archives Canada,  
e010999965

These beliefs and actions are **essential** to social justice



# THE PAST AS IMAGE

- Students see the past all around them
- We/they may not think they know anything, but they have **an implicit understanding of national narrative frameworks** because they see who and what is celebrated and/or commemorated



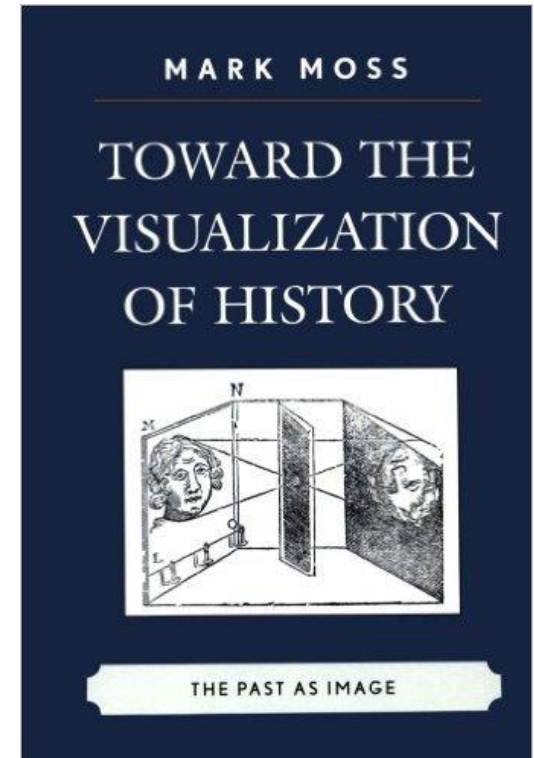


# VISUALIZATION OF HISTORY

- *Toward the Visualization of History:  
The past as image*
  - Mark Moss

“ Students today are exposed to history – ideas, knowledge, culture – from film and television far more than from print versions.

What this suggests is that traditional notions of history – textbook, academic, footnoted – must be reevaluated to factor in the impact of the visual nature of contemporary history. ”



# MEANINGFUL LEARNING IN HISTORY IS:

“ History education that has **significance to students' lives** now and in the future, both **inside and outside the classroom**, framed with interpretations of the past that align with students' sense of **familial and/or community history** in and for the **wider world**. ”

*Cutrara, Creating Possibilities*

# MEANINGFUL LEARNING INVOLVES

1. Prior knowledge
  2. Meaningful material
  3. Assent of the learner
- **Joseph Novak and David Ausubel**
    - Cognitive theory



Native child in classroom of residential school  
at Muncey, Ontario  
F 4369-1-0-6  
Archives of Ontario, I0023005

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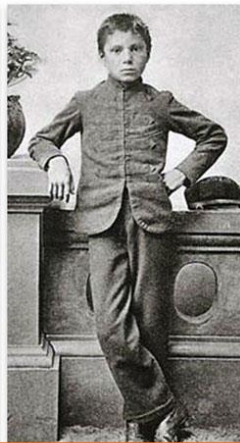
**NOTE:** These ideas can also be found in the work of radical theorists such as bell hooks and Paulo Freire

These  
visuals  
can teach  
human  
rights





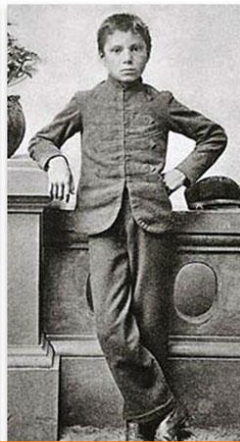
These  
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rights



But with an **ethos of social justice and meaningful learning** in your teaching...



These  
visuals  
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But with an **ethos** of social justice and  
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They are  
not the  
only  
ones

# THREE WAYS INSTITUTIONS CAN THINK OF THEIR WORK AS SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK:

1. Introducing students to new faces, places, and experiences otherwise flattened in traditional History and Social Studies lessons.
2. Giving students a chance to bear witness to the ordinary lives of Canadians.
3. Breaking down traditional relationships between teacher/student, student/teacher, practitioner/teacher, and student/practitioner.



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These ways infuse the *ethos* of social justice and meaningful learning into practice

# ONE:

By introducing student to new faces, places, and experiences otherwise flattened in traditional History and Social Studies lessons, **primary sources can provide evidence of the multiplicity of people and experiences in the past.**

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE



Portrait of [railway construction workers?] at camp  
ca. 1915  
C 156-4-0-3-9  
Archives of Ontario, I0021516

By showing evidence of who was there in the past, we broaden who we imagine as part of the past and part of our history.

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

Some images we have are staged, but that doesn't mean they can't be used as learning tools.



Nova Scotia Archives,  
200100119

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They may not be “authentic,” but **what is “authenticity” anyway?**



Nova Scotia Archives,  
200100119

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An image like this demonstrates the presence of Aboriginal peoples in the past – not just in a pre-historical narrative, but negotiating tradition and culture within a 19<sup>th</sup> century content.

Nova Scotia Archives,  
200100119

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

By showing evidence of who was part of the past, we broaden our understanding of “us” and “them” and emphasize that **WE were part of the Canadian past.**



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1266, Item 6845

Shriners Santa Claus at  
Empire Theatre  
December 23, 1925  
Fonds 1266, Item 6845  
City of Toronto Archives



## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

A multicultural,  
multiracial,  
multireligious  
Canadian people(s)  
who have been  
carving out a  
Canadian identity  
and culture for  
hundreds of years.

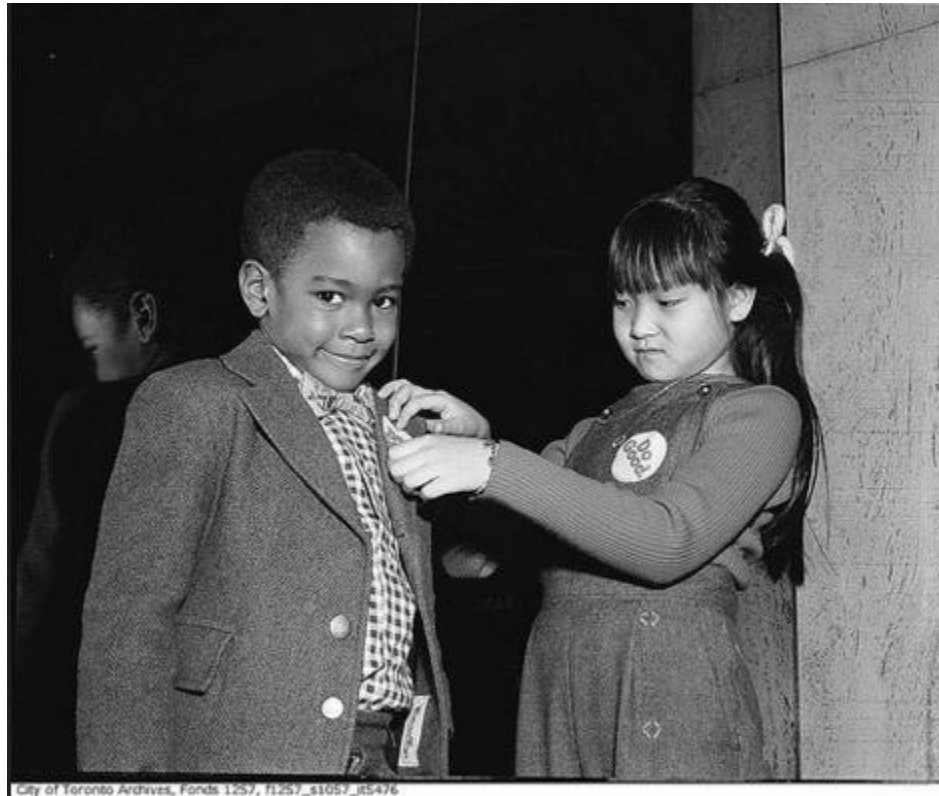


Jewish butcher sign, The Ward  
ca. 1910  
Fonds 1244, Item 2548  
City of Toronto Archives



# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

This isn't  
reinventing the  
Canadian past or  
projecting our  
present values  
onto history.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1257, 11257\_s1057\_it5476

Children at Canadian Council of  
Christians and Jews Brotherhood  
Week  
1975  
Series 1057, Item 5476  
City of Toronto Archives

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

Rather, it is challenging a **White Supremacist narrative** that continuously denies the presence of diverse people and experiences in the Canadian narrative.



Sam Wing Laundry & Restaurant,  
Bowden, Alberta  
Provincial Archives of Alberta

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

THEY were there



Nova Scotia Archives, 201308935



Portrait of two soldiers from the 187th  
(Central Alberta) Battalion, Canadian  
Expeditionary Force, Bowden, Alberta  
Provincial Archives of Alberta

WE were there

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We were there serving.



Red Cross Corps marching  
out of Armoury, 1944  
UBC 103.1/87  
University of British  
Columbia Archives



Antoine Minnewasqwe in his  
Canadian Expeditionary Force  
uniform  
[ca. 1914-1918]  
C 273-1-0-15-6  
Archives of Ontario, I0024755



Five Chinese-Canadian soldiers, Nov. 22, 1945.  
Credit: Sgt. Karen M. Hermiston / Canada. Dept.  
of National Defence / Library and Archives  
Canada / PA-211879

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We were there living our lives.



John and Sarah Fraser, no date  
Photographer: George Walker MacKay  
accession no. 1983-262 no. I-9  
Nova Scotia Archives



Alex Wilson Lazore, seen here with his  
youngest son, St. Regis Reserve  
ca. 1930-1960  
Dept. of Manpower and Immigration  
Library and Archives Canada,  
e011051650

Lizzie Amurualik, Mashusie  
Amurualik, and Alacie Naqtui  
of Resolute Bay, NWT  
PR1991.0383/158  
Provincial Archives of Alberta



# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We were there providing for family and community.



Staff of Shannonville Canning Ltd., Shannonville, Ontario, in September 1938.  
Deseronto Archives

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

**We were there  
becoming Canadians.**



Galician immigrants, ca. 1911  
William James Topley. Library and Archives  
Canada, PA-010401



Elgin County  
Refugee  
Assistance and  
Resettlement  
Programs-  
Church  
Receives  
Family, 1980  
St. Thomas  
Times-Journal  
fonds  
February 27,  
1980  
C9 Sh4 B6 F9 8  
Elgin County  
Archives

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We were there providing labour.



Dundas and Keele streets, looking west  
November 28, 1923  
Series 71, Item 2815  
City of Toronto Archives



Women doing war work in Marelco factory  
Date: ca. 1940  
C 5-2-0-129-1  
Archives of Ontario, I0002762

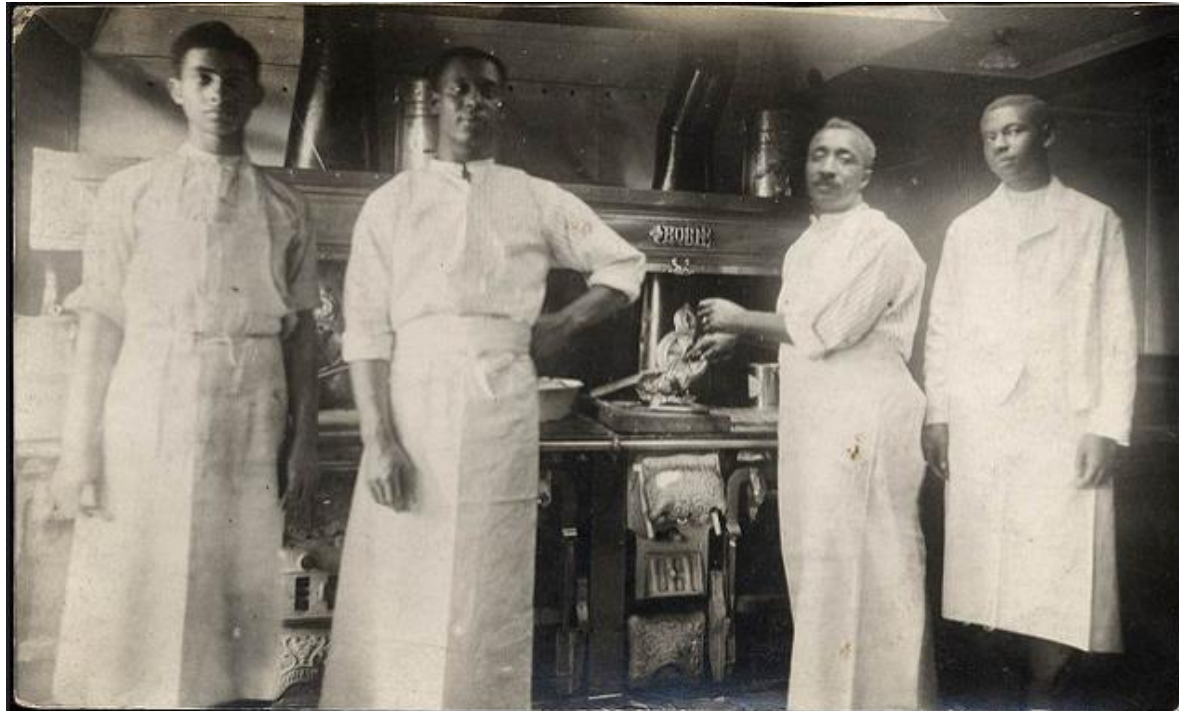


# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

The labour hidden from sight in our time and theirs.



Agnus Mary McCleery  
and Greta McCleery  
churning butter  
ca. 1898  
AM1533-S2-4: 2009-  
005.231  
City of Vancouver  
Archives



Ara Wilson, Henry  
Banks Jr., Roy Banks,  
Fremont Nelson:  
cooks aboard a  
steamboat  
ca. 1890  
F 2076-16-3-9  
Archives of Ontario,  
10024829

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE



They were there too.

Knights of the Ku Klux Klan standing  
in front of a cross  
August 31 1927  
C 7-3, 21329  
Archives of Ontario, I0003697

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE



**They were there too.**

With this approach, we don't  
have to shy away from the  
difficult parts of history.

Knights of the Ku Klux Klan standing  
in front of a cross  
August 31 1927  
C 7-3, 21329  
Archives of Ontario, I0003697

# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We can acknowledge  
the privilege and  
oppression of this  
history in order to work  
through  
and past it –  
**Reconciling and truth-  
telling as we build a  
new future together.**



Indian Residential School students and staff, Regina, Saskatchewan, 1908  
Library and Archives Canada, PA-020921



Fort Qu'Appelle Indian  
Industrial School showing Red  
River carts and teepees  
Lebret, Saskatchewan, 1884  
O. B. Buell  
Library and Archives Canada,  
PA-182246

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

We can also show that  
we were there,  
separate from  
struggles and  
discrimination,  
**but we were there**  
**building community,**  
**making friends,**  
**having fun.**



Teenagers doing a native  
dance  
ca. 1970  
Archives of Ontario,  
10012344



Nova Scotia Archives  
201309008



Chinese Community Queen and  
Cathay Queen in Vancouver Chinese  
Community Council on P.N.E.  
Participation decorated car  
Aug. 22, 1959  
Pacific National Exhibition fonds  
City of Vancouver Archives

# Living life



## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

In seeing pictures  
from the past, we  
can challenge  
what we think  
about gender...



Amasa Wood Hospital, St.  
Thomas, ca. 1905  
C1 Sh3 B6 F1 1  
Elgin County Archives



# THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

... about class and race.



Sam Wing in his sitting room,  
Bowden, Alberta  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, H548.



Miss Guilmartin, Montreal, QC  
1877  
McCord Museum, II-45957.1

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

By  
acknowledging  
the faces,  
places, and  
experiences of  
the past we can  
shift our focus to  
see,  
acknowledge,  
and discuss  
what isn't  
always seen,  
acknowledged,  
and discussed.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1266, f1266\_i14697

CPR buffet car  
March 1, 1925  
Fonds 1266, Item 4697  
City of Toronto Archives

## THEY WERE THERE – WE WERE THERE

This approach turns an ordinary picture into one used for social justice.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1266, f1266\_i4697

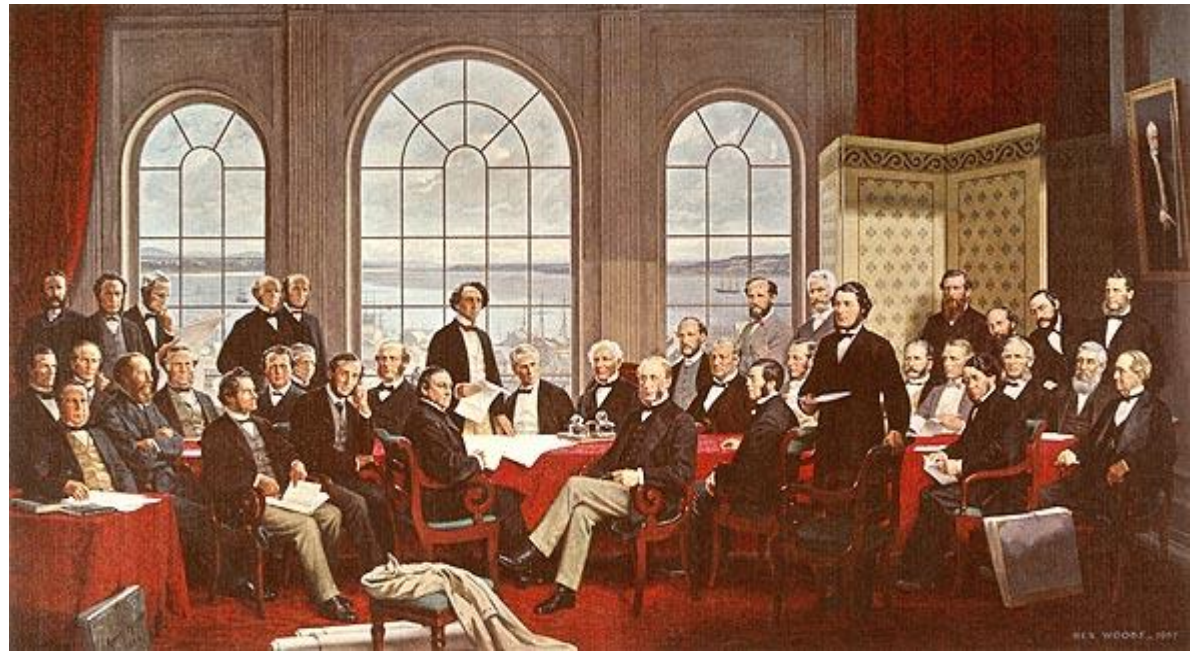
CPR buffet car  
March 1, 1925  
Fonds 1266, Item 4697  
City of Toronto Archives

**TWO:**

By giving people a chance to bear witness to the ordinary lives of Canadians, primary sources can **democratize the past** in ways that invite students to imagine their ordinary selves and experiences as having **potential importance** when viewed part of a larger narrative.



## Images are visual cues that signify importance.



# ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS

By focusing on  
ordinary people,  
we can  
demonstrate that  
**all lives can be  
extraordinary**  
when we pay  
attention to  
them.



City of Toronto Archives, Series 1907, s1907\_f10073\_i0021

Lester Pawis and friend,  
north-west corner of  
Queen Street West and  
Bathurst Street  
ca. 1992  
Series 1907, File 73,  
Item 21  
City of Toronto Archives



# ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS

Even the  
ordinary lives  
and interests  
of the students  
you teach.



West Lorne Sun and Rodney Mercury- "The Shades of Night", 1967  
August 31, 1967  
C9 Sh6 B1 F1967 7  
Elgin County Archives

# ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS

We can ask:

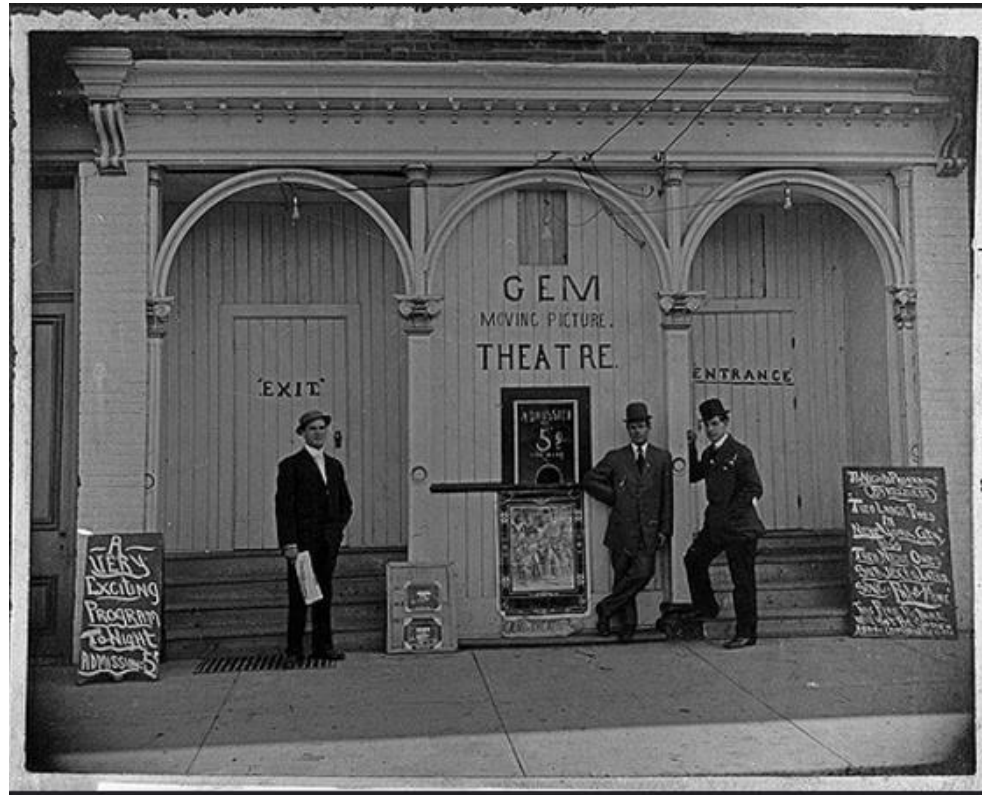
**How have things changed? How have things stayed the same?**



Nova Scotia Archives, 200402305

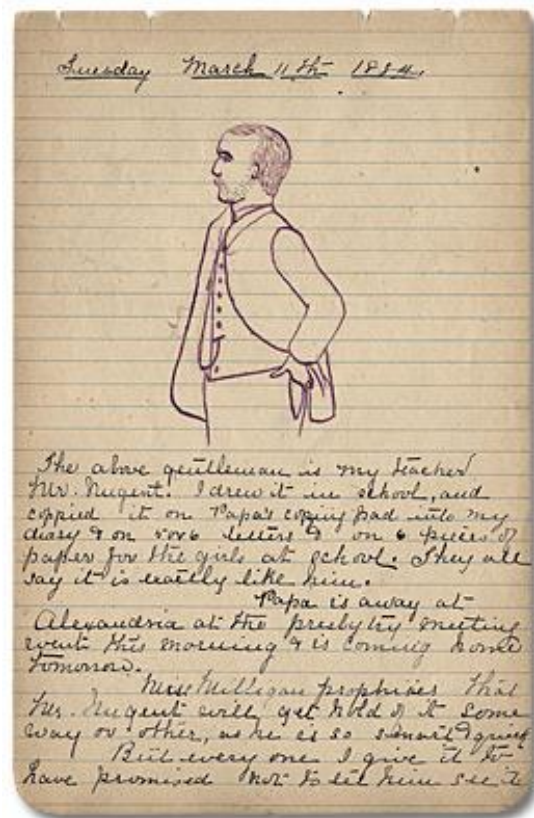
# ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS

If we think of this ordinary picture as extraordinary – by virtue of studying it in a history class – we suggest to our students that **they too can be extraordinary.**



GEM Moving Picture  
Theatre, 1909  
Whitby Archives

## ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS



We can take a 13 year old girl's diary and invite our students to see the similarities between their lives and the past.



## ORDINARY LIVES – EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS



**WWI**  
*Dear Sadie*  
LOVE, LIVES, AND  
REMEMBRANCE  
FROM ONTARIO'S  
FIRST WAR

Dear Girl: 8<sup>th</sup> Oct  
I finished this letter last night but the rest of it was too awful to send so I tore it up. This morning saw some truly prisoners they are a very thin pale lot and ill kept but seem quite cheerful captives though.  
This morning the Colonel sent for me at 7.45 and when reported he laid out a very difficult task for me which will mean digging in under cover in shell fire - its going to be dangerous but its extremely important because its consolidation work and means the way for fresh troops to relieve those in also supplies.

Before I mail this I will enclose a new address, at present Bramshott  
my dearest wife Sadie: 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1916 Bant's  
This will very probably be my last letter written while I remain a member of the 74<sup>th</sup> Bn. I will know within two hours definitely whether it shall be the 44<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> Bn. In any case dearest address  
Lt D. Mason  
4<sup>th</sup> Bn Canadian  
10<sup>th</sup> Brigade  
4<sup>th</sup>  
This is more correct  
Lt D. Mason  
44<sup>th</sup> Battalion  
10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade  
4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division  
British Expeditionary Forces  
Army Post Office  
Bendon Eng



This was the strategy I developed for the Archives of Ontario's World War One exhibit.

# Dear Sadie – Love, lives, & remembrance from Ontario's First World War

Archives of Ontario

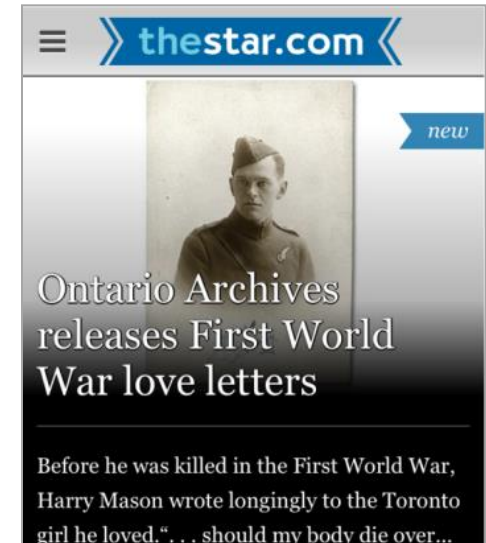
Allowing students to explore the ordinary lives and records of ordinary Ontarians, students could see themselves in the stories we were telling.





# Dear Sadie – Love, lives, & remembrance from Ontario's First World War

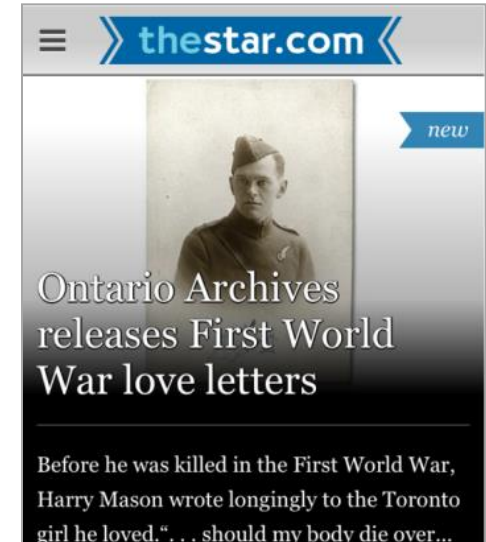
This strategy was not only successful for students, but for the larger community. We even got the **support of the families** for telling even more of this story.



# Dear Sadie – Love, lives, & remembrance from Ontario's First World War

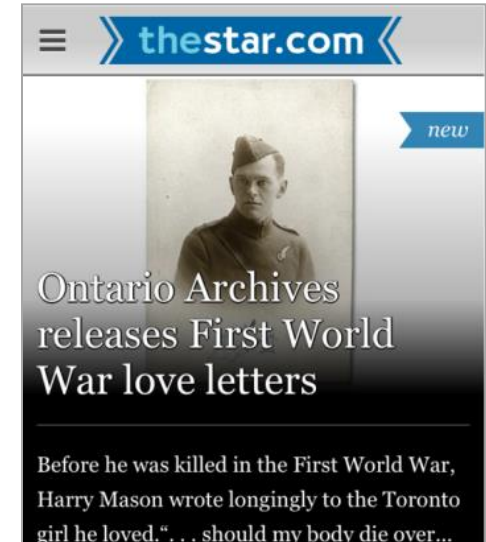
These ordinary people became extraordinary because we focused on them.

The extraordinary comes from the focus, not the deed.



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**The extraordinary comes from the focus, not the deed.**



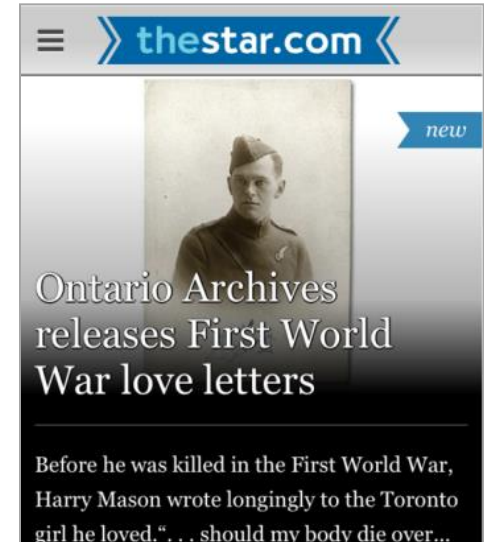


# Dear Sadie – Love, lives, & remembrance from Ontario's First World War

These ordinary people became extraordinary because we focused on them.

This approach democratizes our history.

This democratization leads to social justice



## THREE:

By breaking down traditional relationships between teacher/student, student/teacher, practitioner/teacher, student/practitioner, all parties can be understood as **participating in exploring, inquiring, and co-creating meaning** of sources and how they fit into – and perhaps challenges – one's understanding of the past.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

As educators, archivists, museum curators and interpreters,  
we come into the classroom believing we know the records,  
and know the history, better than students.

**And in some cases we do.**



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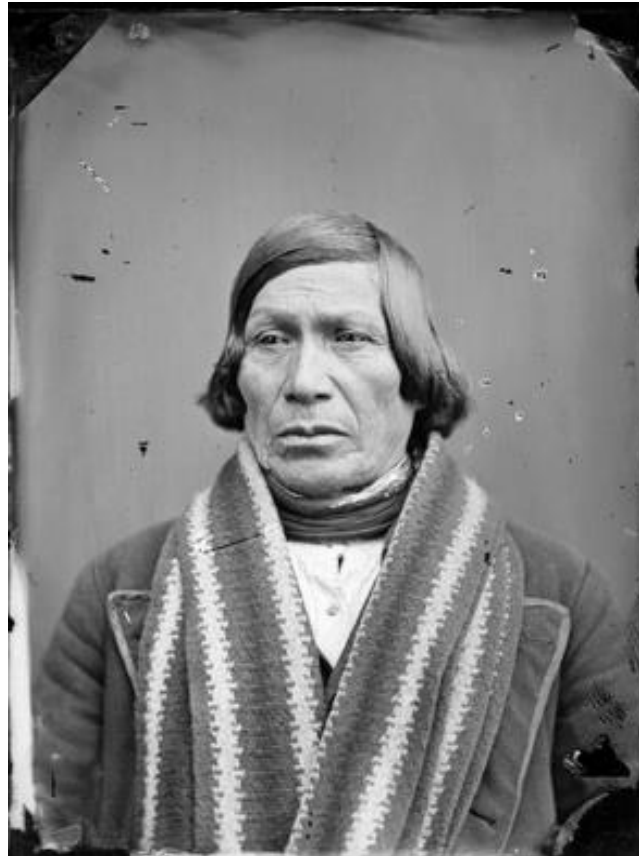
But opening up interpretation, being a novice along with our students, we can allow our students to teach us what they see in an image and what they know about the past, their cultures, and their selves.

Lorraine  
Carpenter in  
typing class at  
Aldergrove  
Highschool,  
British Columbia  
ca. 1930-1960  
Department of  
Manpower and  
Immigration.  
Library and  
Archives Canada,  
e011051658



## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

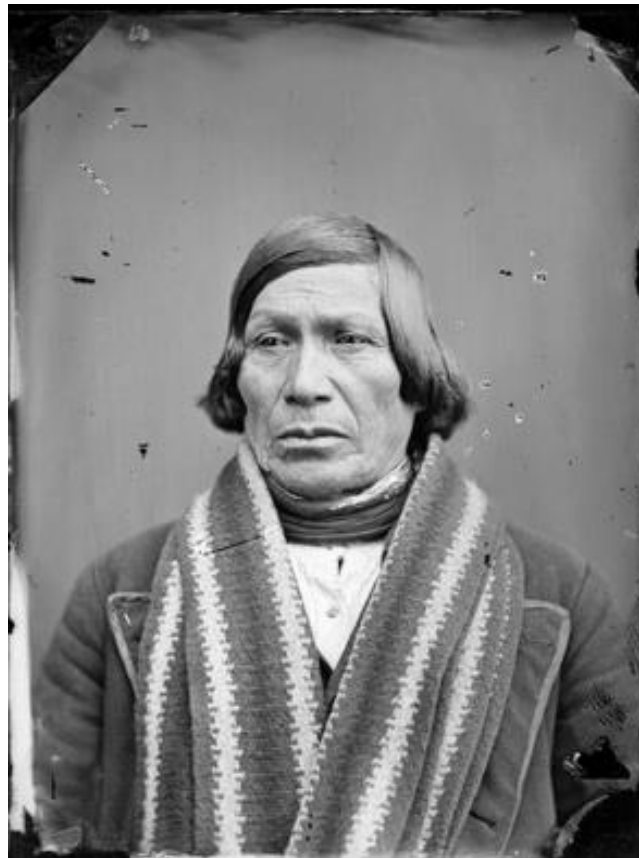
The information we have about records and artifacts is contingent on the information and perspectives available at the time of creation and/or description.



Portrait of an Aboriginal man  
[between 1860 and 1929]  
C 286-1-0-11-23  
Archives of Ontario, I0011636

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

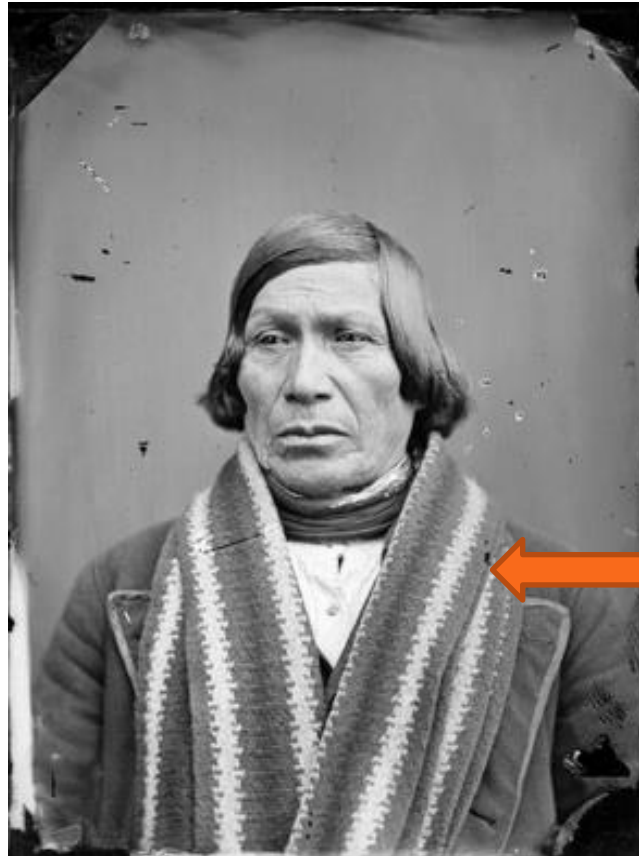
The information we have about records and artifacts is contingent on the information and perspectives available at the time of creation and/or description.



Portrait of an **Aboriginal** man  
[between 1860 and 1929]  
C 286-1-0-11-23  
Archives of Ontario, I0011636

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

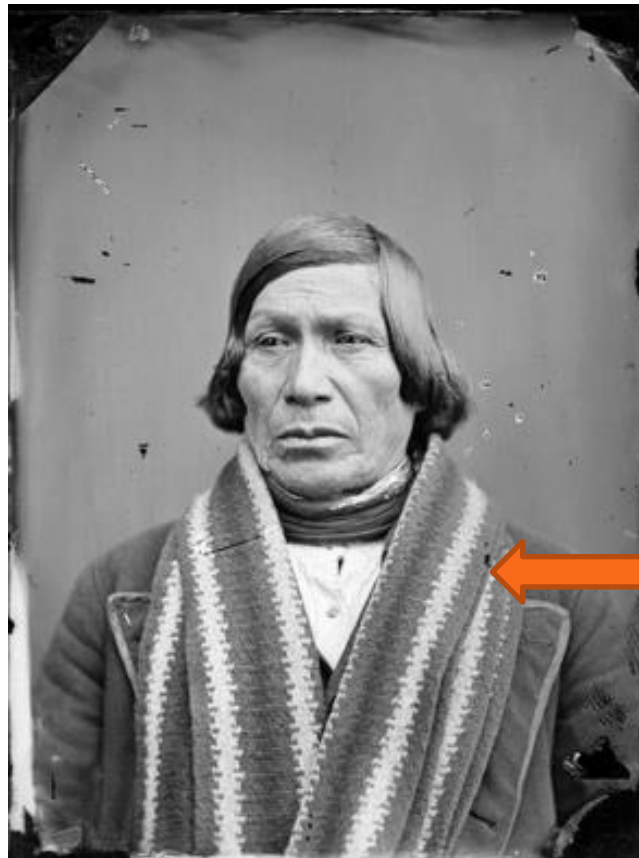
The information we have about records and artifacts is contingent on the information and perspectives available at the time of creation and/or description.



Is this man Aboriginal or could he be Métis?

Portrait of an **Aboriginal** man  
[between 1860 and 1929]  
C 286-1-0-11-23  
Archives of Ontario, I0011636

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE



Is this man Aboriginal  
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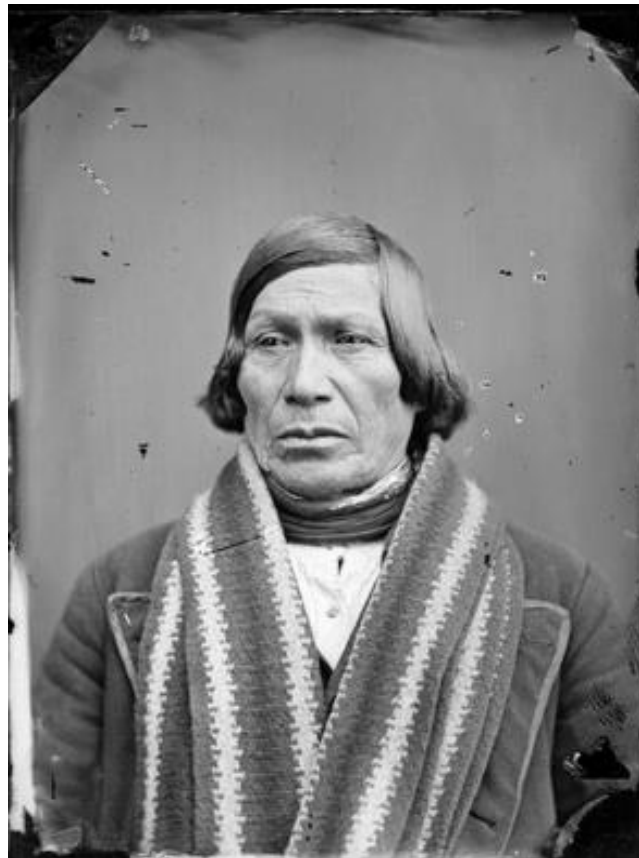
Métis sash



Portrait of an **Aboriginal** man  
[between 1860 and 1929]  
C 286-1-0-11-23  
Archives of Ontario, I0011636



## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE



By keeping the interpretation open, we can invite our students to look deeper at an image, ask questions, and be active in learning about the past.

Portrait of an **Aboriginal** man  
[between 1860 and 1929]  
C 286-1-0-11-23  
Archives of Ontario, I0011636

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

Everyone comes to interpretation with their own set of eyes – their own life experiences and cultures that colour what they see.



Sam Wing in his sitting room, Bowden, Alberta  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, H548.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE



Watching the flying. Camp Rathbun  
ca. 1917  
Deseronto Archives

By sharing what you see,  
by sharing what I see,  
we begin a dialogue about  
**what it means to build  
stories together.**

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

We can ask these questions of the images we often think of when we think of social justice.





## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

But we don't need to.



Mrs. George Baxter  
lacing a beaver pelt into  
a drying frame.  
Overhead hangs half of  
a tanned moosehide.  
1951  
C 330-14-0-0-46  
Archives of Ontario,  
I0012439



## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

These democratizing discussions can happen with any image.



Viola Desmond Powder Compact  
Nova Scotia Archives

# WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

However familiar they may seem.



Coin Université (Robert-  
Bourassa) et Sainte-  
Catherine. - 9 août 1963  
Photo par Yvon Bellemare  
VM94-A0107-007  
Archives de la Ville de  
Montréal

## WHAT DO YOU SEE – WHAT DO I SEE

Ask your students to  
interpret history.

**These  
interpretations  
become a form  
of social justice**



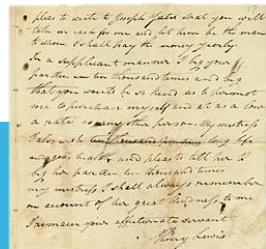
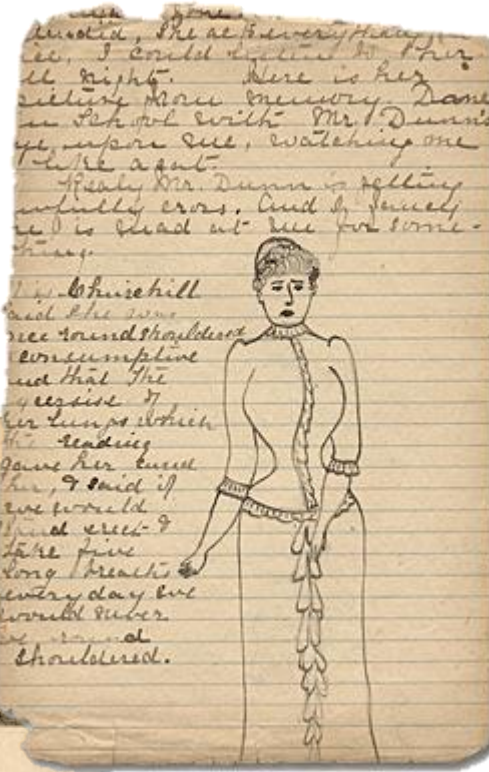
Four girls having a  
laugh  
[between 1898-1920]  
C 130-5-0-0-159  
Archives of Ontario,  
10013484

## THREE WAYS INSTITUTIONS CAN THINK OF THEIR WORK AS SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK:

1. Introducing students to new faces, places, and experiences otherwise flattened in traditional History and Social Studies lessons.
2. Giving students a chance to bear witness to the ordinary lives of Canadians.
3. Breaking down traditional relationships between teacher/student, student/teacher, practitioner/teacher, and student/practitioner.



# ARCHIVAL MATERIAL CAN HELP PRESENT A DIFFERENT STORY







Amherstburg, Nov 3 1890

My dear I regret my wife's poor  
 vision and may all the trouble which  
 may result from my being gone on a  
 country drive - black and white  
 by the hour as much as a white and white  
 man is willing to make you are  
 of purchasing myself. I am a  
 black man and am not able to pay you  
 all the money down because what you may  
 ask for me but upon their conditions  
 I will purchase myself. On Friday this  
 year and every other year I have promised  
 until the whole sum of money I should  
 wish to pay the money to people of color the  
 town. When of this letter comes it is the  
 most proper man that I can think  
 of at present. The reason why I left your  
 house is this the woman was so high  
 a reason that it was far beyond the  
 power of man to support it it is as  
 hard as I will say in all company  
 that I believe as well as I have  
 since as I have said.

• Please to write to Joseph states that you will  
 take me with you and let him be the man  
 to drive & shall pay the money yearly  
 in a sufficient manner & by your  
 power in two hundred times and his  
 that you would be so kind as to permit  
 me to purchase myself and let as a then  
 a note as many other persons. My master's  
 lady will be the person to pay the  
 money yearly and please to tell her I  
 say her husband in two hundred times  
 my master's I shall always remember  
 me content of her great kindness to me  
 I remain your affectionate servant  
 Henry Lewis



# DIFFERENT STORIES FORCE A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT HISTORY

**NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT  
HISTORY  
INVITE US TO  
IMAGINE  
NEW  
WAYS TO  
THINK  
ABOUT  
THE FUTURE**



# THANK YOU!

More information can be found on my website:

[www.SamanthaCutrara.com](http://www.SamanthaCutrara.com)



*Consulting services available*



## NOTE:

- This is an annotated PowerPoint of a webinar completed for Canada's History on March 31, 2016.
- A video of this webinar can be found HERE on YouTube.
- All images in this PowerPoint are available online; many can be found on Flickr, a photo sharing site, and are hyperlinked.
- Please email the author Samantha.Cutrara@gmail.com for any questions, comments, or corrections.

