My personal journey with inquiry began some twenty years ago as a much younger elementary teacher working with the research process in my classroom. At the time, I seemed to be one of a few teachers interested in using the research model and resource-based learning on more than a "once-a-year" basis. Resource-based learning encourages students to use a wide variety of books, articles, video and other resources to explore and answer questions about an assigned or self-selected topic. This interest must have captured the attention of my school administration as I was asked if I might like to become the school's teacher-librarian. Teacher what? Apparently a new district initiative was forthcoming that would see a teacher-librarian placed in each school. Not having even heard of such a position, I did some "inquiring" of my own and soon found myself enrolled in the post-graduate diploma program in school libraries at the University of Alberta.

Before long I was preaching and supporting the "research" process with students and teachers of all grades, relying heavily on the Alberta Education document *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills* (Alberta Education, 1990) as my guide. I do believe there was value in what we did. Students seemed engaged with an instructional model that expected more from them than the lecture method of delivery typically used in classrooms of the day. They explored and learned to use a wide variety of resources, incorporating electronic versions as they became available.

Yes, students were engaged with the process initially, but after completing several of these "projects" the enthusiasm appeared to wane. "Copy and paste" and plagiarism issues seemed to increase as time went on. Teachers were supportive and enthusiastic if I was there to "steer the ship" but there was no lasting carry-over when left to their own devices unsupported by a teacher-librarian. Something was missing.

That "something" became apparent with my first introduction to *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-based Learning (*Alberta Education, 2004*)*, the newly minted sequel to *Focus on Research* (Alberta Education, 1990). The *Focus on Inquiry* document, an inquiry model heavily influenced by constructivist learning theory, identifies a concern with research projects where:

> students may think that inquiry is finding the answer to other people's questions for the satisfaction of their teacher rather than understanding inquiry is the process of being puzzled about something, generating their own questions and using information to satisfy their own interests and to develop their own knowledge. (p. 8)

My initial attempts at using the document were amateurish at best but I began to see a difference. The infusion of the "reflective" component throughout the process, while at first awkward for both students and myself, stimulated greater student self-awareness and metacognition.

In retrospect, I now recognize my initial understanding of research was very much, just another "bird unit" as described by Loertscher, Koechlin, and Zwann (2005). In the social studies context, students dutifully completed projects on explorers, ancient civilizations, and key historical events seemingly distant and irrelevant to their personal lives. Although they had access to a wider variety of resources than in a text-based/lecture instructional model, students were seldom asked to do more than find facts to answer basic, teacher-driven questions and present these in a variety of formats to teacher and classmates. There was little or no opportunity to construct their own questions and, on the rare occasion this occurred, these were guided and shaped by teacher input to morph into the generic fact-based questions one would typically find in research projects. Students were seldom required to think

critically about the information they uncovered or to use that information in new or active ways. In fairness, these students did learn to work through the research process. They could effectively select resources, use graphic organizers to compile their jot notes in their own words and acknowledge and reference sources used in their study. Although these projects provided some variety from the traditional lecture-style instructional practices so prevalent in social studies classes at the time, the focus was still primarily on the collection and regurgitation of facts following a linear, step-by-step process.

This growing awareness and appreciation for true "inquiry" and the inquiry process was the impetus for further learning and my master's degree – I had to know more. My masters program has allowed me to explore this interest in a variety of contexts.

Throughout the program, my understanding of the value of true "inquiry" learning has been deepened through the writings of such early educational influences as Dewey, Vygotsky, and Bruner; clarified through the more current practical work of Kuhlthau, Oberg, Branch and Loertcher; and extended through the historical inquiry studies of Levstik and Van Sledright. I have come to appreciate that true "inquiry" is more complex than teaching generic research skills. It is using inquiry to answer questions and solve problems. What distinguishes inquiry from research is the attempt to draw meaning out of experience. Without guiding, reflective questions and an emphasis on sense making, no classroom experience has a true connection with the process of inquiry.

It is simply incorrect to assume teachers and students understand what inquiry and inquiry-based learning is or how to effectively use it as an instructional model. Mandating its use in curriculum documents is no way to support or ensure that it happens. In response to this, I most recently find myself acting as consultant for a district-wide "Focus on Inquiry"

project based on the document of the same name (Alberta Education, 2004). The impetus for this project was the recognition of the key role inquiry plays in new curricula and of the need for schools today to adequately prepare students for the future. A key goal of the project is to have students engaged in studying relevant topics or solving real-world problems that involve high-level critical thinking skills and promote connectivity to the larger world through technology – at the same time meeting required curricular outcomes. While this project recognizes the need for "Inquiry-based learning" it does not provide for teacher-librarian support at the school level. Instead, as consultant, I work with designated "lead-teachers" in each participating school providing them with the support and guidance to mentor teachers in their own schools. This experience has provided me with new and interesting perspectives on the roles of teachers and teacher-librarians.

My interest in historical inquiry blossomed as three seemingly unrelated pieces fell into place. In early 2007 I enrolled in a recommended course on Constructivist Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies context. I believed the course would fit well with my interest and provide me with the necessary background to support the implementation of the new Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies (Alberta Education, 2005), a curriculum where inquiry plays a central role. This new curriculum supports the use of historical inquiry as an instructional model. It recognizes that "historical thinking allows students to develop a sense of time and place to help define their identities. Exploring the roots of the past ensures the transmission and sharing of values and helps individuals realize that they belong to a civil society" (p. 9). Through the Research for Deliberative Inquiry strand, the new curriculum seeks to make social studies a genuine inquiry where the task for students is to consider various perspectives and use the information drawn from various sources to reach their own

conclusions. Through inquiry, students are challenged to "rethink the past and to reimagine both the present and the future" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 9).

The course itself was inspiring from the start and I looked forward to the component featuring historical thinking, wondering what role inquiry might play there. After all, my past experience had provided me with an abundance of opportunities to plan and monitor "research" projects on a variety of historical themes and topics. What would true "inquiry" look like here?

Concurrently, in my professional role as consultant, I was asked to work with one of the lead teachers in my Inquiry project. Her entire school was preparing to embark on a historical inquiry project tied to a significant school birthday celebration – an inquiry project with a different focus at each grade level and tied to curricular outcomes. An ambitious endeavor indeed! My professional interest drove my academic interest as I sought a deeper understanding of "historical inquiry". My studies seemed to come alive in my very "real-world" example. Throughout the process there were many "ah ha's" as well as more than a few "oh no's" for all involved. The experience was powerful and left me wanting more.

The "Critical" Piece

"The scientific mind does not so much provide the right answers as it asks the right questions." (Claude Levi-Strauss in McKenzie, 2000 p. 22.)

Another area of growing interest for me is that of critical inquiry and the increasingly important role it plays as it nudges inquiry from an instructional model to a school or classroom culture; a way of being and thinking. Critical inquiry brings together the key concepts of guided inquiry, media literacy and critical literacy; preparing today's students and

tomorrow's citizens to take a critical stance (Oberg, 2007). Schools in a democratic society are charged with a responsibility to equip students with questioning skills that support inquiry and critical thinking. This questioning or inquiry is central to learning and growing. People who are unable or unwilling to question have little or no defense against propaganda and are easily manipulated, persuaded and controlled. Critical questions enable us to invent new and better ways of doing things; they stimulate action. Surely critical inquiry has a place in the historical context when we consider perspective and bias in real-world contexts and the implications for the future.

To that end, I have chosen to narrow the focus of this paper to a historical inquiry context and the role critical inquiry might occupy there. I begin with a review of the current literature on historical inquiry focusing on the conditions necessary for its implementation and the role critical inquiry might play. The last part of this paper will use examples to illustrate and draw attention to the implications for educators when implementing historical and/or critical inquiry in the classroom.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

This review of the literature will be presented in four main sections. First, I begin with some basic background information on inquiry as the foundation for historical inquiry. Second is a brief description of historical inquiry and its importance as an instructional model to consider. Next, a number of common threads found throughout my investigation of historical inquiry will be discussed including the ideas of "community of inquiry", personal connection or relevance, construction of meaningful questions and the importance of scaffolding. I believe these to be foundational to meaningful historical inquiry. The final

section will explore the idea of "critical inquiry" and how it might relate or apply to the study of history.

<div align="center">*Inquiry*</div>

"Inquiry is the dynamic process of being open to wonder and

puzzlements and coming to know and understand the world."

<div align="right">(Galileo Educational Network, 2004
in Alberta Education, 2004, p. 1)</div>

Inquiry-based strategies take advantage of information rich environments by promoting a student's natural curiosity. Inquiry-based learning ranges from highly-structured directed inquiry to open-ended, free inquiry. In inquiry-based learning, students are encouraged to ask their own questions and seek their own answers (Steeves, 2005).

Focus on Inquiry (Alberta Education, 2004) defines inquiry as "a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge" (p. 1). Kuhlthau (2003) suggests that inquiry-based learning is an instructional approach that begins with engaging questions about a subject or topic being studied. Students are guided throughout the inquiry process by asking themselves:

- What do I know?
- What questions do I have?
- How do I find out?
- What did I learn? (Kuhlthau, 2003)

Inquiry "takes students out of the predigested format of the textbook and into the process of learning from a variety of sources to construct their own understandings" (Kuhlthau, 2003, p. 2). Students are encouraged to build on what they already know to come to a deeper understanding of the concepts and problems underlying the subject (Kuhlthau,

2003; Wilhelm, 2007). Inquiry is a constructivist approach where students learn by constructing their own understandings of experiences by building on what they already know to form a personal perspective (Alberta Education, 2004; Kuhlthau, 2003; Wilhelm, 2007). Students and teachers address similar content as the "regular" classroom but go far beyond "coverage" to achieve deeper understanding (Case, 2005; Wilhelm, 2007; Levstik & Barton, 2001; Steeves, 2005). Inquiry classrooms are animated and produce results.

Guided inquiry is a systematic approach to the development of inquiry skills essential to preparing students for problem solving and lifelong learning. Several models of guided inquiry exist today with many of the same characteristics. Focus on Inquiry (Alberta Education, 2004) is one such model. This non-linear model addresses both cognitive and affective dimensions of the inquiry process as it works through the phases of planning, retrieving, processing, creating, sharing, and evaluating. The reflecting phase is central to all phases of the process.

Through inquiry, students engage in the same kind of processes and dialogues that practitioners in a variety of disciplines do, and make use of the same tools as well. "They are inducted as apprentices into the ways experts know and do things" (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 10). With historical inquiry, students become apprentice historians and anthropologists and engage in authentic in-depth historical investigations using primary source materials. That is not to say that the primary purpose of historical inquiry is to turn children into mini-historians.

Why Historical Inquiry?

Many students and teachers who study history believe that all the answers are already known and there is only one true story. Such is the case with the European version of story of Columbus and his "discovery" of America. These students find the study of history boring

and too directed. History is not tidy. It contains conflicting narratives; the European version of the story of Columbus would be very different from that told by the native peoples he encountered upon arrival. Not all the answers are known. Understanding takes active thinking and may even involve controversy. This is the kind of history that students want to inquire about, discover and make their own.

Levstik and Smith (1996) suggest that the challenge of engaging children in historical inquiry is more complex than teaching generic research skills. It is using inquiry to answer questions and solve problems. Historical inquiry is "doing history" – where students "frame questions, gather data from primary and secondary resources, organize and interpret it, then share it with various audiences" (Levstik & Barton, 2001, p. xi). Steeves (2005) notes that in effective history learning students "do history" and explore the process of constructing historical accounts to derive their own understandings of past events. In this way students are encouraged to build their own narratives. In-depth inquiry invites students to critique myths, rewrite stories and develop multiple accounts of events. It asks them to develop their own interpretation instead of simply memorizing someone else's. As Steeves (2005) acknowledges, they must be able to justify these conclusions or interpretations with evidence.

There are many reasons to involve students in genuine historical inquiry. Foster and Padgett (1999) state that "students who are engaged in constructing historical accounts, have the opportunity to develop perspectives, attributes and critical thinking skills required of informed citizens in a democratic society" (p. 2). This is especially true when genuine inquiry requires students to pose meaningful questions, to select and examine historical evidence, to appreciate historical context, to evaluate divergent perspectives and to reach, tentative but logical conclusions and explanations (Fosters and Padgett, 1999; Steeves, 2005). Historical

inquiry can help students understand that there is usually more than one "true" story of the past. von Heyking (2004) believes that for children to do this they need to understand that history is a form of inquiry and that "historians draw inferences based on evidence, some inferences are better than others, some evidence is more credible" (p. 5). Simply put, historical inquiry engages students in the development of historical thinking.

A Community of Inquiry

A common theme found throughout the literature is the importance of the creation of a "community of inquiry" or "culture of inquiry" in helping students to think historically (Alberta Education, 2004; Grant & VanSledright, 2001; Kahn, Fisher & Pitt, 1994; Levstik & Smith, 1996; Levstik & Barton, 2001; Steeves, 2005; VanSledright, 2002). Wells and Chiang-Wells in Levstik and Smith (1996) argue that "communities of inquiry develop when the goal of learning is not simply to acquire knowledge and skills, but to use knowledge and skills to move beyond the culture to solve new problems" (p. 88). Steeves (2005), along with Levstik and Smith (1996), note that historical inquiry is not learned in isolation but in interaction where students have frequent opportunities to observe others doing the same kind of work that is expected of them. Collaboration with peers enhances the likelihood of successful learning through inquiry.

Levstik and Barton (2001) describe a community of inquiry as one in which "individuals jointly pursue a problem or question, share sources of information, share standards for evaluating that information, build and critique interpretations, and reflect on their findings" (p. 191). To accomplish this, they suggest that teachers can capitalize on children's natural enthusiasm for learning by making their classrooms places where students explore important and meaningful questions. The process of asking these meaningful

questions, finding information, drawing conclusions and reflecting on possible solutions to these questions is known as inquiry. The opportunity to see their peers and teachers engaged in these processes is a central to the construction of a "community of inquiry".

In Levstik and Smith's (1996) study of historical inquiry in a grade three classroom, the teacher's primary goal was to build a community of historical inquiry based on the belief that "historical thinking is richer in community than in isolation" (p. 90). Students in this class acted as "apprenticeship" historical inquirers and were presented with a variety of tasks that involved them in different question setting, hypothesizing, data gathering, analysis and communication activities using a wide variety of resources and strategies. They were provided with a rich environment of primary and secondary sources using photographs, maps and documents and were encouraged to engage in conversation and carefully structured debate. Dehea, the teacher, discovered that building a community of historical inquiry presented many challenges for her students as these new experiences ran "counter to many children's wisdom of practice" who, when frustrated, wanted to fall back on old ways of doing research (p. 110). "Not only do student apprentices have to learn new behaviors and practices but they had to abandon old ones which they were successful with in the past" in more traditional classrooms (p. 110). At times, Dehea had to cajole them into trying new practices. Even at this young age, students relied on traditional classroom structures where research was little more than collecting and verifying facts and explanations and critical thought were neither encouraged nor required. Through perseverance and support, Dehea was able to establish a community of historical inquiry in which her young students began their long apprenticeship.

Grant and VanSledright (2001) devote an entire chapter of their book to the importance of classroom environment and the creation of their version of a community of

inquiry, the "genuine community". A genuine community differs from the more traditional classrooms where teachers do most of the talking, students work quietly in their seats and conversation consists of question and answer between teacher and students. Traditional classrooms emphasize "hard work, efficiency, deference to authority and external awards" (p. 188). In contrast, genuine classroom communities offer a greater balance between teacher talk and student talk and who controls the conversation. Students are given the opportunity and encouraged to air and debate their views. An assortment of whole-group, small-group, partner and individual activities make up the instructional day. These genuine communities reflect values that promote respect for ideas, people, inquiry, argument and evidence. Teachers in these classrooms promote the values of sharing, cooperation, consideration and participation rather than competition. These classroom environments support inquiry and the inquiry process with their commitment to building on students' background knowledge and questions, providing multiple resources and strategies to find answers and evidence, and the opportunity to share discoveries, understandings and even misunderstandings (Grant & VanSledright, 2001; Levstik & Smith, 1996).

In his study of fifth graders "practicing history in the classroom," VanSledright (2002a; 2002b) invites his students to enter a "community of historical inquiry". Indeed, he defines historical inquiry in terms of the practices of professional historians. Within this community, students are provided with a rich environment of primary and secondary sources including photographs, maps and documents. Historical thinking skills are developed and strengthened as students take on the role of "detectives" and investigate evidence, encounter conflicting interpretations, look for further evidence and reconstruct new understandings. Students are encouraged to identify the nature of historical documents, judge the validity,

reliability and perspective of sources; and attempt to build evidence-based historical interpretations. Although his students experience some difficulties with such an approach, VanSledright (2002a) concludes that the gains outweigh the challenges. These learning opportunities transfer to real life, preparing students to look critically at the evidence behind the types of claims they might encounter in all aspects of their lives.

Personal Connection and Relevancy

Much of the literature reinforces the constructivist principle of beginning with "where students are" and creating a personal connection (Barton in Dulberg, 2005; Foster & Padgett, 1999; Levstik & Barton, 2001; Levstik & Smith, 1996; von Heyking, 2004). "Inquiry-based learning begins with the inquirers' interest in or curiosity about a topic" (Alberta Education, 2004, p. 11). Historical investigations of questions relevant and meaningful to children are most likely to lead to more sophisticated historical understandings. To understand information, not simply retell it, students must connect it to their previous understanding. Teachers must first find out what students know and decide how to build on that knowledge (Alberta Education, 2004).

The many historical inquiry case studies detailed throughout Levstik and Barton's (2001) book illustrate the importance of finding that personal connection and personalizing history. When engaging in historical inquiry, Levstik and Barton (2001), suggest we need to start with our own diverse social histories – "the story of who we are as interpreted through the experiences of social living, family stories, pictures and artifacts" (p. 2). Rebecca, a teacher in one of the case studies, used this entry into developing her students' understanding of the motivations and consequences of immigration. She began with what her students already knew, why their families immigrated. By making a list of the motivations found for

families within their classroom, students had a starting point that they already understood and could use for comparison with motivations of other immigrants. von Heyking (2004) supports this idea and argues that "children need to engage in historical inquiries within the context of their family history or other familiar surroundings in order to gain first-hand experience with the interpretation of evidence" (p. 6). Interviews with parents, grandparents and other relatives are a source of data or information to develop historical thinking skills and provide that important personal connection. Another way to connect history to what students already know is by focusing on the everyday lives of people in the past – a subject children understand best. (Levstik & Barton, 2001).

Barton in Dulberg (2005) noticed that students used their "personal connections" to interpret and find a "way into" historical photographs that had familiar and unfamiliar elements. Their connections allowed them to "build bridges" to the scene depicted in the photograph. Through skillful questioning and instruction, a teacher can build upon these personal connections and teach students to make observations, comparisons and predictions that might not otherwise have been possible. These connections provide the bridge to more distant and abstract applications.

Role of the Teacher - Scaffolding and Modeling

A common theme that arises in the literature is the importance of scaffolding children's forays into historical inquiry (Alberta Education, 2004; Levstik & Barton, 2001; Levstik & Smith, 1996; VanSledright, 2002a; Wilhelm, 2007). Few students have the skills necessary to handle inquiry on their own. This often requires the teacher to model the behaviors of the inquirer and provide instruction and guidance. "The ultimate goal of

scaffolding is to transfer control from teacher to student by enabling students to plan and monitor their own learning – metacognition" (Levstik & Barton, 2001, p. 15).

Levstik and Barton (2001) emphasize the importance of scaffolding, modeling, using probing questions and providing critical feedback as students take on the role of apprentice historical inquirers. "Students learn more from inquiry when teachers give them experience developing questions, identifying resources and planning presentations than when they are just sent to the library and told to "do research" (p. 15). Teachers must encourage students' interest in accomplishing tasks, actively support and encourage them as they work through the process and break down tasks into manageable components when the need arises. In the context of historical inquiry students need to see teachers model the process, "grappling with historical questions, collecting information, making generalizations and so on" (p. 15). It is recommended that teachers work closely with students as they try out new strategies, and use "probing questions" to help them learn to apply historical skills. Timely critical feedback (formative assessment) is necessary for students to know and understand if they are on the right track. Graphic organizers can also play a key role in providing the necessary structure.

Levstik and Smith (1996) describe how Dehea, the teacher, moved her students forward through the historical inquiry on their community. "Dehea worked along with them, modeling the processes she wanted them to learn, sharing her work as they did theirs, gradually turning over more and more responsibility to the students" (p. 97). Dehea recognized that note-taking from text was a challenge for her students. She scaffolded the process for them by having them make careful observation about pictures. Students were encouraged to make inferences based on these observations and then provide evidence to support their inferences. Dehea then had the students work through the process using a film.

She modeled the process and recorded the information she gained from the film on a graphic organizer. The students became accustomed to determining key facts and ideas and adept at recording these ideas in their own words before applying the skill to written text. In this way, Dehea provided her "apprentices" with a variety of strategies or processes and the opportunities to practice them.

Powerful Questions

Meaningful questions are at the heart of historical inquiry (Alberta Education, 2004; Foster & Padgett, 1999; Levstik & Barton, 2001; Levstik & Smith, 1996; Steeves, 2005). Wilhelm (2007) suggests that powerful guiding questions are what drive and organize all human motivation, all disciplines, all research and all knowledge building. Communities of inquiry do not develop around learning processes but around the investigation of questions or problems that students and teachers perceive as worthwhile or worthy of exploration (Levstik and Barton, 2002; Steeves, 2005).

The students in Levstik and Smith's (1996) study struggled with the creation of questions that did not have single answers. They were familiar with questions that already had answers – "answers teachers knew and they were supposed to find out" and had difficulty moving beyond these (p. 101). Their early questions were fact-based on often focused on "ridiculous" details. To move the students to develop questions requiring higher level thought, Dehea encouraged her students to question everything. By asking questions, students began to wonder about what they actually did know and what they really thought they knew and finally what they truly wanted to find out. The teacher provided rich experiences to build a background for question generation. These included making connections to students' lives and interests, exploration of resources and rich classroom discussion. Students were then

ready to generate good questions. This whole process took time and much perseverance on the part of the teacher.

Foster and Padgett (1999) offer many practical classroom considerations for engaging students in meaningful historical inquiry. Among these are suggestions for helping students devise researchable questions. Like Levstik and Smith (1996), they believe students need some background knowledge and familiarity with a topic to design good, authentic questions. Teachers can encourage students to brainstorm what they know and offer time and opportunities for dialogue and exploration of the topic through literature, primary sources, websites etc. Foster and Padgett (1999) believe that by focusing on a question students are less likely to "regurgitate someone else's interpretation of events…" (p. 4). By scaffolding and modeling, teachers can help students consider the scope of their questions and the extent to which the questions invite the use of a variety of historical sources and evidence.

The "Critical" Piece

Critical inquiry is a more recent dimension of inquiry. It moves beyond inquiry-based curricula and "focuses on larger systems of meaning and connects the personal with the political" (Laman, et al., 2006, p. 203). Students are actively engaged as they explore "real world", "edgy" and debatable issues.

Oberg (2007) states that critical inquiry is both a learning goal and an approach to learning. She describes critical inquiry as a bringing together of the concepts of guided inquiry, media literacy and critical literacy where students are required and encouraged to take a "critical stance". Much of the new Alberta curricula asks that students develop a critical stance and this certainly true of the new Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies (Alberta Education, 2005).

Critical inquiry works to explore differences, fostering openness to newcomers, new approaches and new ideas. It is based on the exploration of multiple perspectives instead of just the established viewpoints and ways of doing things (Wilhelm, 2004). By including all perspectives in our instruction or exploration, we give our students the tools "to fight marginalization of all kinds in school and in the world (Wilhelm, 2004).

The new Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies provides a real opportunity to advocate for the inclusion of critical inquiry and demonstrate the importance of multiple perspectives. As stated in its vision, the new Social Studies Program of Studies, "meets the needs and reflects the nature of 21st century learners" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). Citizenship and identity are the key concepts infused throughout the new curriculum. The program reflects the multiple perspectives that make up and contribute to the Canada of today. "It fosters the building of a society that is pluralistic, bilingual, multicultural, inclusive and democratic" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). The program emphasizes the importance of "diversity and respect for differences as well as the need for social cohesion and the effective functioning of society" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). This content provides multiple opportunities for higher-level thinking – critical inquiry.

Case's (2005) "embedded tools" approach describes critical inquiry as going beyond the content covered by information-retrieval questions by inviting students to use and make sense of, to think critically about, the topic. Critical inquiries or challenges allow students to learn in relevant contexts and challenge their understanding of the subject matter. For Case (2007), the term *critical* indicates that the inquiries focus on "big picture" questions or issues that require critical judgment. The term *tools* identifies the many different intellectual resources needed to think through a critical inquiry. These tools; introduced as they are

required to complete the critical challenges; include background information, criteria, habits of mind, thinking strategies, and concepts (Case, 2007).

Historical and critical inquiry have much in common with the inquiry model as it is used in many other contexts. The common threads or criteria for successful historical inquiry identified in the literature are very much in line with those identified for inquiry in the broader sense. How might these criteria be met in the classroom? What does "historical inquiry" look like in the classroom context? How might "critical inquiry" be infused in the process? These questions and more concerning the implementation of historical and critical inquiry will be discussed in the final section of this paper.

In closing, although there is a rich body of professional literature on the topic of historical inquiry, the body of research literature is quite small. The research literature on critical inquiry is even more difficult to find possibly because it is a relatively recent focus in the area of inquiry-based learning. Further research in these fields may provide a more solid understanding of the important role each might play in educating students for the 21st century.

Implications for Educators

What implications do the common threads found in the literature on historical inquiry have for classroom teachers and teacher-librarians? I believe these ideas can inform and influence teacher practice in a number of ways. Most certainly, they would result in powerful changes to my earlier historical research projects described in the introduction of this paper.

In my discussion of these implications, I will look at the common elements for successful historical inquiry identified in the literature review and explore how each might be supported or implemented in a classroom setting, weaving in examples from my professional

practice. Although I look at each characteristic individually, they are never found in isolation and cannot stand alone. In actual practice, each supports and works in concert with the others.

Communities of Inquiry

"Communities of inquiry" require careful planning and time on the teacher's part to build the foundation of mutual trust and respect so critical for success. These "communities" are found in classrooms where students have access to a rich variety of primary and secondary sources; are encouraged to ask questions, explore, and take intellectual risks; where discussion and respectful debate are encouraged and celebrated, - classrooms where each member has value and a voice. Creating these highly effective classroom environments should be the primary goal for educators intent on making history come alive and relevant for their students. The first step in creating these nurturing environments is the building of socialization and communication skills – skills that allow students to talk amongst themselves, listen and respect other's ideas and opinions. Providing opportunities for students to work collaboratively, first in pairs and then in larger groups, is one strategy a teacher might use to create such a culture.

In my capacity as "Focus on Inquiry" project consultant, I have recently worked with a "school-wide" example of historical inquiry that effectively meets the criteria for a "community of inquiry". This small, rural elementary school is celebrating its 50th anniversary in its current building. The present-day school replaced a two-room structure built twenty years prior, which replaced a one-room log structure originally built in 1878. Each grade in the school has taken on an aspect of school and community life 50, 70 and 130 years ago as historical inquiry. These inquiries are designed to address several cross-curricular outcomes and develop age-appropriate historical thinking skills at each grade level. Certainly each

classroom worked at building its own "community of inquiry" but more significant were the efforts of the entire school-wide community in fostering and celebrating such a culture. Each week a historical object, artifact or photograph was placed on display at the entrance to the school to pique curiosity and stimulate questions. In classrooms, students were encouraged to talk amongst themselves, and to listen respectfully to others' ideas and opinions. These conversations were used to create a classroom climate and culture that encouraged students to work together collaboratively.

All the while, teachers modeled social skills and the use of appropriate question forms, focusing on the five W's of who, what, when, where, and why. Initially teachers modeled making predictions or hypothesizing as to what an object might be or have been used for based on evidence gathered through observation and investigation but required students to do this on their own as time went on. Together, students and teachers discussed possible resources they might tap for information that might uncover answers. A variety of graphic organizers were used to organize thoughts – what I see, what I know, what I want to know and where I might go to find out. The entire school population took on the role of historical "detectives" in search of clues to solve the mystery. The conversation generated by these simple displays was powerful, younger students shared ideas and questions with older students. The school was "abuzz" with inquiry! Outside of the school, parents and grandparents were queried for clues to help answer questions. The school was indeed a "community of inquiry".

Certainly a school-wide focus is a tremendous support and motivator for historical inquiry but this is not always possible or even practical. Classroom communities can be established using many of the same strategies. A greater challenge exists at the junior and

senior high levels where students and teachers interact for a single subject, often on a less than daily basis. Students may spend much of their day(s) with teachers and in classrooms using more traditional instructional models. Changing gears to a more constructivist, inquiry based classroom is a challenge for those teachers looking to try something new. Setting the stage early in the year, clearly stating and modeling expectations and providing an environment where risk-taking and creative and critical thinking is honoured is essential.

Personal Connection and Relevancy

Teachers must address the knowledge students bring with them to school to make that personal connection and make learning relevant. All inquiry should begin with this prior knowledge, especially with younger students operating at more concrete levels of understanding. Historical inquiry should begin with the familiar. It should start with the students' knowledge and understanding of self or family and move to community before moving to the unknown or more abstract (Levstik & Barton, 2001; Levstik & Smith, 1996; von Heyking, 2004). When inquiry is teacher-initiated, as is often the case when meeting curricular-mandated outcomes, that personal connection or background knowledge may not exist. Teachers might build the necessary background knowledge and create a connection by encouraging students to explore and study photographs, artifacts, and journals. Primary resources such as guest speakers, fieldtrips and secondary resources such as films and excerpts from historical fiction can provide that needed "hook" or engagement. Teachers can encourage rich and interesting discussion around these experiences to build background knowledge and lay the foundations for further investigation.

Primary resources are powerful tools to create a connection because they provide a first-hand experience of the past. Fieldtrips, hands-on artifacts, interviews, historical

photographs and documents all provide first-hand experience with the interpretation of evidence that leads to the construction of knowledge and understanding (Dulberg, 2005; VanSledright, 2002a; von Heyking, 2004). Dulberg (2005) states that "photographs put a human face on historical events and circumstances, helping students reach beyond their personal realm of experience to distant times and the experiences of people from the past" (p. 527). The students in the school-wide historical inquiry example introduced earlier used historical photographs and "hands-on" artifacts extensively in their study to ask questions, gather information and make inferences about school and community life long ago. Their personal "school" connection to the people and objects in the photographs provided the "way into" the photographs and the past (Dulberg, 2005). Teachers guided students through structured observation and questioning to motivate inquiry and analysis and taught students to make observations, comparisons and predictions based on evidence. Even very young students learned from historical photographs in this way when taught to look for significant "clues" or evidence in the pictures.

Levstik and Pappas's research (in Dulberg, 2005) with elementary school aged children confirmed the use of historical fiction to be effective in creating the necessary context for further historical examination and discussion. The familiar form of a story and identification with ordinary characters are two ways historical fiction "begins where the child is" (Dulberg, 2005). Through the lives of characters in the story, students are transported outside of their often limited or sheltered realms of experience to other places and points in time. Interest in the lives of these characters, often children like themselves, is the hook or spark that engages students to seek and interpret information or explain what the world was like through the eyes of children long ago (Dulberg, 2005).

A novel like *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis can be used to activate student interest in a topic far-removed from their reality or experience. This story of a young girl living in Afghanistan under Taliban rule is the connection or 'hook' that draws students in and stimulates inquiry questions on the realities of war or Canada's involvement in such a far-away locale.

von Heyking (2004) suggests young children "need to engage in historical inquiries within the context of their own family history or other familiar surroundings in order to gain first-hand interpretation of evidence" (p. 6). Grade one students involved in the school-wide historical inquiry project example, investigated toys commonly used in the past, comparing them to those used by children today. Students began their inquiry by sharing their own favorite toys and their reasons for choosing them; and began their investigation into the past by surveying their parents and grandparents about their favorite toys as children and what made them memorable. Together the class discussed these results and developed criteria of what made a toy a "favorite". A fieldtrip to a local museum containing many artifacts and photographs of their community in the past provided them with primary resources and information about toys children played with in the past. Students studied these primary resources to see if their previously developed criteria applied.

<p align="center">*Scaffolding and Modeling*</p>

With historical inquiry, teaching means scaffolding. Teachers must first help students develop and maintain interest in a topic. They must provide the necessary support as students work through tasks, breaking them down into smaller parts and teaching small and isolated skills when necessary. Probing questions can move students along and help them apply the skills they learn to their own inquiries. Critical feedback should be provided to students

throughout the inquiry process. Ongoing formative assessment practices and student reflections might provide insight into areas where students are struggling. Above all, teachers must remember that the goal of all this scaffolding is that students will take over the process themselves. Wilhelm (2007) suggests a progression that has the teacher begin by modeling or working *for* students, demonstrating as students watch; gradually moving to more of a mentoring role where the teacher works *with* students; and finally to a monitoring role where the work is done *by* the students as the teacher assesses and helps as needed.

As described previously, a teacher might begin by purposefully planning and sequencing activities that include observation and questioning and model how they work. Students can then try out their own observing and questioning skills, and reflect on what they are doing.

Powerful Questions

The process of asking a series of questions is the first step in finding answers. Questioning is the basis from which inquiry continues. It is at the heart of the inquiry process regardless of the setting or discipline studied. Throughout the questioning process described in the school-wide historical project described above, each question led to an action which in turn led to the use of the other process skills, including asking more questions. Inquiry was not a linear process.

The construction of meaningful questions to guide inquiry takes time but the time is worth it. Equally important to raising good questions is the process of selecting questions that might be followed with fruitful investigations. Students need time to explore a topic using many of the same resources mentioned above to create background knowledge. Alberta Education (2004) *Focus on Inquiry* recommends introducing the inquiry project early on in a

unit of study to allow students time to build the necessary background knowledge to reflect on and develop quality questions. This early introduction may provide some relevancy to the content studied in class and provide students with a focus for their learning.

Question design begins with a teacher's unit or project planning and the essential or "big idea" question that will drive individual inquiries. Wilhelm (2007) condensed the work of several researches about the effectiveness of asking essential questions down to a few criteria useful in guiding "historical inquiry". These criteria state that an essential question:

- honors students' "reality" principle. It addresses their point of view and need for inquiry to be interesting and relevant in their terms.

- addresses the "heart of the discipline". Essential knowledge will be required to answer it.

- possesses emotive force, intellectual bite or edginess. It invites students into ongoing conversations and debates about real-world disciplinary issues.

- is open-ended, possible to contend, arguable. It must be complex enough to house multiple perspectives and possible answers.

- is concise and clearly stated

- is linked to data. There are available resources to use in the pursuit of answers

- may lead to new questions asked by the students (This is how topical research is extended into critical inquiries.). p. 44

An example of such a question might be one designed as an over-arching focus for a social studies theme on the clashing of world views using the context of the Spanish and Aztec cultures. The essential question was *How do we know what we think we know?* For this project, these young students took on the role of apprentice anthropologists using primary

resources, Aztec codices, to determine or create their own interpretations of Aztec culture. Students developed questions and looked for answers supported by evidence in the "primary resources" they studied. At the conclusion of this investigation, they were asked to consider possible "biases" that might have influenced their interpretation of the evidence. It soon become clear to these students that all historical interpretation is influenced by bias to some degree, intentionally and unintentionally, and that even so called "primary resources" are just someone's interpretation. For example, Cortes' letter home to the King of Spain may contain a great deal of first-hand information but it may also have been written for a very self-serving purpose, embellishing or deliberately distorting and even omitting events to support such a purpose. As a result of this inquiry students hopefully discovered that the "authentic" multiple perspectives and interpretations of key historical events are influenced by many factors and that so called "first-hand" interpretations of these events are often colored by bias. A healthy skepticism regarding much of what is classified as "history" is a good thing. This skepticism can and should be extended and applied to any source of information be it a school textbook, an Internet website or a so called "primary" document.

The "Critical" Piece

Critical inquiry is fostered through the big picture questions, questions that require students to beyond the content covered by information-retrieval questions. The grade five students in the historical inquiry example studied various uses of the land in the community over time. Their inquiry revealed a very early use by the Papaschase native band. These people were moved off of the land by early settlers to the area. Examples that of critical questions used to guide this inquiry were "How did the building of the early community change the land?" "Was the treatment of the Papaschase fair?" Recent legal proceedings on

behalf of this band have been in the news bringing "real-life" context to the study of these early peoples. Multiple perspectives of the many inhabitants of the land over time were detailed in a "storybook" that traced a fictional artifact (a stone used as a very early hammer) through time to present day.

"Critical inquiry" should provide opportunities for students to think critically about content and take appropriate action (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; National Council for the Social Studies, 1993). An opportunity for this type of "action" presented itself in the school-wide historical inquiry. Throughout the process, students and staff collected an impressive record of the past in photographs, artifacts and actual interviews. A grade five class recorded substantial footage of interviews with a number of community members recalling stories of the past experienced or passed on from ancestors. The school was faced with the issue of what to do with such a collection. Much brainstorming and problem solving occurred as various suggestions and ideas were investigated. Students at the school were eager to leave their own "historical" legacy for the community and students of the future. Co-incidentally the school and the community suffered from the lack of a skating shelter to compliment the boarded outdoor rink erected on school property each winter. The students determined they might solve both problems at once. The decision was made to investigate the construction of a permanent building to house a "community" museum and act as a skating shelter in the winter months. A group of students, with assistance from adult community members, are presently investigating fund-raising and grant possibilities that would make their dream a reality. This "historical" inquiry has indeed had some very present and real-world meaning for the staff and students of this school.

Roadblocks to Historical Inquiry

Airasian and Walsh (1997) stress the issue of time as a very real obstacle for a teacher implementing constructivist instructional models like inquiry-based learning. Teachers and students will need time to learn and practice how to work and learn in this new learning environment. Students will need time to learn new ways to perform and handle the responsibility for their own learning. Teachers will need time to learn how to create an environment that enables students to construct meaning and time to negotiate a balance between their own involvement and non-involvement in the learning process. Time will also determine the depth and breadth of student investigation into a topic. More time will lead to much richer and deeper constructions but the trade-off is less content covered. A grade six teacher reacting to the pressures of Provincial Achievement Tests may not trust inquiry-based instructional techniques to adequately prepare students and resort to more direct teaching methods. More time will be needed for authentic assessment, as the teacher will have to respond to a greater variety of constructions, in greater depth and detail than more traditional assessment practices demand.

VanSledright (2002a) identified time as the biggest roadblock to effective use of historical inquiry. Reflecting back on his historical inquiry experience he writes of being "haunted by a sense that I was not covering the content quickly enough" and "by the specter of high-stakes tests that my students were required to take" (p. 1108). Teachers who lack confidence in their knowledge of, or experience, with subject matter will bow to the pressure of covering content and stick to textbook or lecture based instruction.

Historical inquiry need not always be as time intensive as many believe it to be. Smaller inquiry activities can provide opportunities for teachers to scaffold instruction and

ensure students have the skills and strategies necessary for larger inquiry projects. Students might generate questions and collect data from one or two resources to share in class discussion. They can critically study historical photographs or artifacts, generate questions, and make inferences based on evidence found. On another occasion, students might develop interesting and thoughtful questions for a guest speaker. They might take notes from a film or video clip to provide evidence to support a perspective. These are all meaningful inquiry activities that allow students to develop and practice important skills and strategies that support historical thinking. All students should have the opportunity to apply these skills and strategies to more sustained, in-depth historical inquiry that allows them to "create" history for themselves.

The time to complete inquiry-based activities and projects is only one of the "time" issues with the potential to sidetrack or hamper successful historical inquiry. The teacher-time required for planning and preparation is another. Many of the lead-teachers in our district "Focus on Inquiry" project have remarked on the luxury of having time to collaborate on project design and implementation. These lead-teachers assist their colleagues by locating and gathering resources and materials to support inquiry activities and projects. They have come to see their role as an integral part of the process and are apprehensive as to the sustainability of these new instructional practices when their time and support is gone. Yes, classroom teachers might see value in inquiry-based learning and have increased skill in using such a model, but without the opportunity to share and build on one another's ideas and best practices, the likelihood for lasting change is greatly diminished. This reality reinforces for me the important role teacher-librarians can and should play in planning and supporting instruction in schools.

Another rather daunting obstacle to this model of constructivist teaching and learning is a teacher's lack of subject area expertise. Richardson (2003) questions if this expertise is a reasonable expectation for elementary teachers responsible for a number of different subject areas. A deep understanding of social studies and the related disciplines or strands is necessary for a teacher to interpret how well students understand the material, to develop activities that support students in their exploration of concepts and to provide the necessary scaffolding to support the construction of meaning or clear up any misconceptions. A grade six teacher, implementing the new Alberta social studies program of studies, would require a deep understanding of the concepts and fundamental principles of democracy and the historical models found in Ancient Athens and the Iroquois Confederacy to understand and be very clear of what is appropriate evidence of student understanding.

Lack of subject matter expertise is not the only "expertise" issue that might "derail" successful inquiry. Many classroom teachers are unfamiliar with the process skills necessary for inquiry-based learning and lack expertise in providing students with what they require at various phases of the inquiry process. Lead-teachers in our "Inquiry" project, in schools with no teacher-librarians, recognize this as a serious disadvantage as they attempt to mentor and support the teachers they work with. They themselves have little familiarity with information-literacy skills and feel unqualified to provide necessary instruction to address the gaps. Those schools with teacher-librarian time are making extensive use of that expertise and in many cases have asked local administration to increase time to meet the demands of staff and students. This is just another example of the important role teacher-librarians can play in supporting historical inquiry and all inquiry-based learning in our schools!

Conclusions and Reflections

To meet the outcomes of current social studies curricula we must provide our students with meaningful opportunities for "doing history". Involvement in historical inquiry leads students to become "creators" of history and to discover the power, potential and excitement that the study of the past can offer. I hope further research into the area of historical inquiry will encourage and inform the development of communities of historical inquiry that provide students with the tools necessary to support their full participation in the larger communities to which they belong.

While there are many challenges to implementing historical inquiry in the social studies classroom, I believe the opportunities and advantages far outnumber them. Students today have a vast number of primary and secondary resources at their finger-tips; information on anything is but a "mouse-click" away. Instead, we must move to an educational model where students are *empowered* - learn how to access, evaluate, and ethically manage information; are *engaged* - in meaningful, relevant, real-world contexts; are *extended* – through tasks requiring critical and creative thought. While I agree with Dewey that "education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Glassman, 2001), these are the skills and attitudes students will need to comprehend and appreciate global issues and solve problems of the future.

To adequately prepare students for the 21st century, educators must provide a learning environment that allows students to draw upon their own experiences and perspectives and construct meaning through active inquiry to develop the necessary skills for active and responsible citizenship (Alberta Education, 2005) – skills that will help them become active, independent life-long learners.

I suggest that inquiry plays an important role in providing students with these meaningful learning experiences and preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century. To ignore these opportunities does a disservice to our students and to the future of our Canadian democratic society and the larger global community.

I would further suggest that teacher-librarians play a critical role in the successful implementation of the new inquiry-infused curricula. At present, few Alberta schools benefit from such expertise. Governing institutions, school jurisdictions and local educational leaders must take a long, hard look at the gap that exists between the structures in place and those that *should* be in place to effectively educate and prepare students for the future.

What's Next?

My journey with *Inquiry* is far from over. Historical inquiry will remain a focus for our district "Focus on Inquiry" project and for my own professional school-based work as we continue to roll out the new social studies program of studies with more grade levels. My research has certainly provided some important criteria to look for and encourage in the schools and classrooms involved in the project. Although I have seen real gains made over the past two years, "Critical Inquiry" continues to be an area teachers and students struggle with. The third year of our project may provide just the opportunity needed to build on "inquiry" foundations established in the first two years, nudging us all closer to the higher levels of thinking and expectations required for true "critical" inquiry.

The new Alberta mathematics program of studies is scheduled for implementation in the early grades in the upcoming year. Inquiry plays a central role in this new curriculum as well…hmmm, mathematical inquiry…where do we begin?

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