Ever since Jack Granatstein asked *Who Killed Canadian History?* the corpse has complicated the homicide investigation by showing troublesome signs of life. Consequently, the alleged perpetrators of the evil deed may get off with lesser charges, or possibly a hung jury.

Undaunted, the Dominion Institute regularly pronounces Canadians woefully ignorant of our past, as evident from an inability to answer simple questions posed in their quizzes. Our national newspapers, as well as those that serve fragments of the nation that apparently exist beyond Toronto, and our media conglomerates, public and private, vie with one another to report the grisly results of our woeful neglect of our history, as well as to tend the wounds with help from distinguished experts. We are frequently reminded of what we do not know, with the implication that this lacuna will ultimately lead to our demise as a nation, if not some personal calamity. Without necessarily substituting Pollyanna for Clio as inspiration for what follows, me thinks these folk doth protest too much.

On the eve of another national conference on the teaching of history, it may be appropriate to consider some signs of life, as well as lingering afflictions. At the local, regional and national level, Canadians appear to be interested in history, whether this interest is expressed by television viewership for specials and series, sales of books, attendance at museums and events, research in genealogy, or responses to opinion polls. The government of Canada has responded to this popular mood with an "initiative" that has thus far yielded a national portrait gallery and a "Canada History Centre." Meanwhile, an expanded Canadian War Museum is under construction and a redefined Library and Archives of Canada is being elaborated. Projects associated with the preservation and celebration of diverse aspects of our past are underway across the country, often sustained by enthusiastic volunteers.

Another consistent finding in surveys is that Canadians apparently favour more teaching of Canadian history in our schools. These results are encouraging, though such polls rarely ask respondents to choose what would be dropped from the curriculum to make way for additional hours of historical education or what funds would be allocated to provide the resources necessary to sustain this remedial effort. There is also a blithe tendency to ignore provincial responsibility for education, particularly when suggestions for national standards for the teaching of history and civics are contemplated.

Beyond these complications in the process of translating good intentions into good deeds, there remain the multiple problems associated with the definition of "history" and consequently with the question of how it should be taught and learned, whether in the classroom or elsewhere.

For some commentators and policy-makers, "history" may be equated with wonderfully nebulous concepts such as individual or collective memory, heritage and commemoration – or simply with an understanding of the past so as to provide "lessons" for the present or future. For teachers and students of history, challenges and skills associated with methodology, including identification, investigation and evaluation of sources, likely are more vital features of historical knowledge than familiarity with key facts. In other words, there are differences about the desired outcome, which may not be verifiable in a national opinion poll.

As the contributors to this magazine attest, motivation and purpose for contemplating our past vary considerably with background and circumstances. What would make sense as a focus or pedagogical tool in one setting in this diverse country would be nonsensical in another.

In fact, the varied subjects that are investigated and taught as "history" may be the best evidence that the victim may have survived those numerous assaults.

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