NOUS SOMMES ICI/ WE ARE HERE: ENRICHING QUEBEC'S CULTURAL MEMORY THROUGH THE LIFE STORIES OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT As part of the work of preserving historical memory in Quebec and Canada and of better understanding the long-term repercussions of human rights violations, a team of both university and community-based researchers collaborated in a large oral history project entitled the Life Stories of Montrealers. Displaced by War, Genocide, and Other Human Rights Violations. The video project recorded life story interviews, from 2007 to 2012, with approximately 500 Montrealers with experiences of mass violence and displacement. This article describes the objectives of the Education working group, including intervening into exclusionary narratives of who is Quebecois and challenging misconceptions of immigrants and refugees to the province; supporting teachers in the work of human rights education; and, creating a space for oral history in Quebec classrooms. The article also discusses the curriculum, entitled *We Are Here* in English and *Nous Sommes Ici* in French, created by the Education working group in relation to the Quebec Education Program. This program, being integrated into schools at the time of the project, offered many openings for the materials tied to both cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies. *We Are Here/Nous Sommes Ici* consist of prefatory materials that prepare teachers to discuss human rights education and life stories interviews, as well as five curricular units for secondary schools. All of the units begin with an activity in which students listen to one or more of the digital stories created out of the project interviews. In "What a Story!: Life Stories and Digital Storytelling", designed for use in English Language Arts, the students listen to and discover the narrative structure of a digital story from a genocide and then create a new digital story based on a 30-minute excerpt from an interview with another survivor. The second LES, "Dialogue Time: Interviewing and Building a Collective Timeline" (Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum), has students interview people from their own communities, and then create a collective timeline based on the interviews. In the third LES designed for the History and Citizenship curriculum, "Mapping the Elsewhere Here", students listen to a series of digital stories from the project, map these stories onto visual cartographic representations of the city which they create, and then write and map some of their own narratives. In the fourth LES, "Learning about the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda through the Graphic Novel and Interview", students read excerpts from a graphic narrative about Rwanda and then create an additional page for the graphic narrative, where they present their position on the issue of military intervention and humanitarian assistance. In the fifth LES, "Between the Tracks: Creating an Audio Guide", designed for English Language Arts, the students listen to an audio guide whose objective is to commemorate in the streets of Montreal the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda. They then create their own audio guide through a writing exercise. The curriculum guides help students and teachers engage thoughtfully with digital versions of the life stories of human rights violations.

RÉSUMÉ Dans le cadre d'efforts de préservation de la mémoire historique au Québec et au Canada et afin de faciliter la compréhension des répercussions à long terme des violations des droits de la personne, une équipe formée de chercheurs universitaires et communautaires a réalisé un projet d'histoire orale de grande envergure intitulé *Histoires de vie des Montréalais déplacés par la guerre, le génocide et autres violations des droits de la personne*. Entre 2007 et 2013, des chercheurs ont filmé des entrevues auprès d'environ 500 Montréalais qui ont vécu des expériences de violence collective ou de déplacement forcé. Cet article décrit les objectifs du groupe de travail Histoires de vie en éducation, tels qu'intervenir dans les discours d'exclusion à l'identité québécoise et poser un regard critique sur les préjugés à propos des immigrants et des réfugiés de la province, encourager les enseignants à enseigner à propos des droits de la personne et créer un espace propice à l'histoire orale dans les salles de classe du Québec. Cet article discute également du programme d'études intitulé *We Are Here/Nous sommes ici* créé par le groupe de travail Histoires de vie en éducation en lien avec le Programme de formation de l'école québécoise. Ce programme, qui était en processus d'intégration dans les écoles lorsque le projet a été réalisé, permet l'incorporation de plusieurs éléments liés aux compétences transversales et disciplinaires. *We Are Here/Nous sommes ici* contient des textes préliminaires qui préparent les enseignants à aborder l'enseignement des droits de la personne et à discuter des entrevues sur les histoires de vie, ainsi que cinq unités pédagogiques pour l'école secondaire, des situations d'enseignement apprentissage (SAE). Toutes les unités commencent par une activité à travers laquelle les élèves écoutent une ou plusieurs histoires qui ont été numérisées à partir des entrevues menées durant ce projet. Dans *Toute une histoire : Créer un récit numérique*, qui a été conçu pour être utilisé dans le cadre d'un cours de français, les élèves écoutent et se familiarisent avec la structure narrative d'un récit numérique d'un survivant de génocide, puis ils créent une nouvelle histoire numérique basée sur un entrevue de 30 minutes avec un autre survivant. Lors de la deuxième SAE, *Le temps du dialogue : interviewer et créer une ligne de temps* (Éthique et culture religieuse), les élèves passent en entrevue des gens de leurs propres communautés et ils créent une ligne de temps à partir des entrevues réalisées. À la troisième SAE, *L'ailleurs ici : cartographier les histoires de vie*, qui a été conçue pour le cours Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté, les élèves écoutent une série d'histoires numériques du projet, ils situent ces histoires sur des représentations visuelles de la ville qu'ils créent eux-mêmes et ils rédigent leurs propres récits et les situent sur leurs cartes. À la quatrième SAE, *Le génocide des Tutsi du Rwanda à travers le récit graphique et l'entrevue*, les élèves lisent des extraits d'un récit/roman graphique sur le Rwanda et puis ils créent une planche supplémentaire à ajouter au roman graphique, où ils prennent position sur la question de l'intervention militaire et de l'aide humanitaire. Lors de la cinquième SAE, *Entre les pistes : élaborer un audioguide*, qui a été conçu pour le cours de français, les élèves écoutent un audioguide dont l'objectif est de commémorer le génocide des Tutsi du Rwanda dans les rues de Montréal. Les élèves créent ensuite leur propre guide audio par un exercice de rédaction. Le programme d'études encourage les élèves et les enseignants à mener une réflexion approfondie à partir des versions numériques des histoires de vie d'individus ayant vécu des violations des droits de la personne.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the work of preserving historical memory in Quebec and Canada and of better understanding the long-term repercussions of human rights violations, a team of both university and community-based researchers in the Life Stories of Montrealers[1] project video recorded life story interviews from 2007 to 2012 with approximately 500 Montrealers with experiences of mass violence and displacement. Members of the survivor communities were key partners in both the research and the diffusion, fundamentally shaping the project's philosophy, activities and outcomes. Project researchers were organised into a number of working groups, four based in specific cultural communities (Rwandan, Haitian, Cambodian, and Holocaust Survivor) and three others that work across cultures using collective storytelling techniques focused on diffusion (Refugee Youth, Oral History and Performance, Education and Life Stories).

As Steven High (2013), the director of the Montreal Life Stories project, notes,

> *"A significant proportion of Montreal's diverse immigrant population is composed of people displaced by mass violence, ranging from the Holocaust to war and atrocity crime in Rwanda, Cambodia, the Congo, Latin America, and Haiti."* (p. 73).

Montreal was once the home to the third largest community of Holocaust survivors in the world; a number of these established Canada's only Holocaust museum, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, one of the Montreal Life Stories project partners. Another community partner in Montreal was Page-Rwanda, formed by the relatives and friends of victims of the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda. Rwandans, like Haitians before them, as well as Cambodians, have migrated to Quebec in numbers disproportionate to the rest of

Canada due to immigration policies favoring applicants from French-speaking countries.

With Emmanuelle Sonntag, I co-chaired the project's Education and Life Stories working group. One of the group's principle accomplishments was developing a bilingual educational package called *We are Here (Nous sommes ici)* containing five Learning and Evaluation Situations (LES), the curricular units in the Quebec Education Program. The units are designed for "cycle two" secondary school, where the students are generally 14 to 16 years old. Each LES is connected to a particular subject area and develops subject-specific as well as cross-curricular competencies. We Are Here can be accessed at www.lifestoriesmontreal.ca/curriculum.

When the Education working group set itself the task of creating pedagogic materials for students, it had three principle objectives:

1) The first dovetails with the recommendation from the Bouchard Taylor Commission[2] that Quebec should work to foster a richer and more inclusive collective cultural memory. The commission was struck in 2008 in response to a popular (and media-fostered) sense of cultural crisis in which central tenets of Quebec collective identity were imagined as under attack by demands for 'accommodation' by various groups outside the dominant majority of French, (culturally if not religiously) Catholic, white francophones. The commission fell under immediate critique for confirming some people's sense that Quebec society was being violated by outsiders demanding accommodation, so that the concept of accommodation shifted from being about legal policies and practices to immigrants themselves, and cultural, racial and religious difference. Despite the problems with the very idea of such a commission, the "strain on Quebec's social fabric" (Seidle, 2009, 98) produced by the media's focus on racist comments made during the citizen's forums, and the ways the commission itself participated in heightening the sense of crisis it was intended to subdue (Mahrouse, 2010), the final report by Bouchard and Taylor has in some ways enriched public debates about integration and accommodation. For instance, it made clear the media's role in fostering the sense of crisis and argued that Quebec needs to take seriously the poverty and underemployment that are the real barriers to integration for newcomers. Also evident was that a good deal of the suspicion and misunderstanding of (more recent) immigrant populations came from the "regions" of Quebec which have historically experienced very little immigration.

The report also spoke of the need to enrich Quebec's sense of collective cultural memory, expanding understandings of who can be *Québécois*, through an oral history project that would gather the stories of immigrants and refugees to Quebec; implied was that the constructs of us and them that emerged in media and commission discourses, and what they demonstrated about a lack of understanding of and ability to engage with social difference, could be challenged by the sharing of new stories not traditionally part of the Quebec national imaginary. The individual narrative could fight the culture of anxiety fuelling stereotypes and prejudice by giving a name, face, and story to the anonymous other. Upon publication of the commission's report, the Life Stories project sent out a press release announcing that such a storytelling initiative was already underway.

2) The second objective was to offer students an understanding of the concepts and experience of human rights and of their violations, here and elsewhere. We wanted to awaken students to the social preconditions for crimes against humanity, including genocide, and their long-term effects. Fostering student learning about human rights necessarily involves supporting teachers; a nationwide survey of teacher interest in and knowledge of human rights education administered by the Canadian Teacher's Federation in 2013 found a disjunction: while over 90% of teachers agreed that human rights education was important, only 25% had any professional development in this area (www.ctf-fce.ca/Research-Library/HumanRightsEducation_WEB.pdf). Developing teaching materials about human rights, tied to Quebec curricular competencies, could help fill the gap in teacher expertise in this province. Aware that teachers might be missing some of the foundational knowledge required to teach human rights education and about the role life stories might play in the process, *We Are Here/Nous sommes ici* includes introductory materials about human rights violations, displacement and migration, and the life stories genre and process.

3) The third objective was to explore and promote the pedagogic possibilities of oral history in the classroom (Whitman 2004), in the context of Quebec provincial curricular guidelines and otherwise. In the process of materials development, we found the (at that time) new Quebec Education Programme, a competency-based curriculum gradually being introduced into Quebec schools at the time of the Life Stories project, to be very receptive to uses of life stories. For instance, life stories enabled us to connect with a number of cross-curricular competencies, including: "Uses information" and "Uses Information and Communication Technologies", as students explore differences between oral and written discourses, and experiment with different forms of representing oral histories such as digital storytelling and audio guides; "Exercises critical judgement," as students explore the subjective nature of the life story, learning to put these in historical context; and, "Cooperates with others," as students work in teams to engage and respond to the various life stories.

A number of objectives and competencies of the Quebec Educational Program also complemented our commitment to expanding notions of who can be Quebecois and introducing human rights education to students. One of the Broad Areas of Learning, meant to be integrated across the curriculum, is "Citizenship and Community Life", including the "adoption of

a culture of peace" and "participation, cooperation, and solidarity", topics very well suited to human rights education. As well, the new Ethics and Religious Cultures program emphasizes ethical explorations as well as dialogue, both integral components of human rights education and necessary to interrogate exclusionary narratives of who is Quebecois. The "History and Citizenship Education" connects contemporary issues to their histories, and the "Contemporary World" social studies program ask students to take positions on contemporary world issues such as genocides.

The Learning and Evaluation Situations all ask students to engage with the life stories through a close and careful viewing of the video interviews, to respond to them in groups and individually through different medium, and to reflect on their own analytic and creative processes. The units encourage dialogue, awareness, and understanding across communities, and attempt to foster self-reflection among students on questions of culture, identity, and power relations. In order to facilitate the use of the interviews, students mostly work with "digital stories" which are videos edited from the interviews by the subject and an editor. These tend to be under 10 minutes and bring together video, images, sound, and text.

As part of the project of disrupting exclusive historical and contemporary public discourses of who can be Quebecois, teaching about human rights violation, and exploring oral history, we encourage students to listen with care to the stories of people who might have very different life trajectories from them; this means helping students listen to difficult and unsettling stories of trauma and displacement. Elsewhere, Sonntag and I have described at length the pedagogy of listening that we developed in order to support this type of engagement (Low and Sonntag, 2012). For instance, we have prioritized listening in all of our curricular materials. We provide teachers with conceptual materials about listening in order to help them facilitate the close listening activities that begin every unit. We also foster active engagement with the stories, which takes different forms in each unit.

Each Learning and Evaluation Situation begins with an activity in which students listen to one or more of the digital stories created out of the project interviews. Our first Learning and Evaluation Situation (LES) is designed for use in English Language Arts and is entitled 'What a Story!: Life Stories and Digital Storytelling'. In it, the students listen to a digital story from a Holocaust survivor (or in French, a Tutsi whose family experienced the genocide in Rwanda). They listen carefully to the interview, mapping out key information but also thinking narratively in terms of structure, thematic, and other story elements, and then work in small groups to to edit the larger tale into a shorter account which might also be considered as a public use of the story. Through the process, the students are asked to act as witness to the singularity of another's tale, but then to also grapple with questions about shared significance, to become part of the chain of witnessing and testifying themselves about the dizzying blends of the worst and sometimes best aspects of human nature which can characterize survivors' stories. They develop editing skills, and critically reflect upon the choices made in the process. The second LES, 'Dialogue Time: Interviewing and Building a Collective Timeline' (Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum), has students listen to a documentary entitled *I was there*, featuring segments from interviews with a Haitian woman, a Cambodian woman, a Chilean woman, and a woman who survived the Holocaust. After reflecting on the practice and ethics of interviewing, the students interview people from their own communities, and then create a collective timeline based on the interviews. In the third LES designed for the History and Citizenship curriculum, 'Mapping the Elsewhere Here', students listen to a series of digital stories from the project, and then experiment with different ways of visually mapping key words and phrases onto a representation of Montreal, creating an alternate cartography of the city composed of the stories of its immigrants and refugees. They then inscribe some of their own experiences onto the map, exploring ties between identity and place, themselves and others. In the fourth LES, 'Learning about the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda through the Graphic Novel and Interview', students read excerpts from a graphic narrative about Rwanda by Rupert Bazambanza and watch and listen to a segment from the video interview with the artist. After doing some research, they create an additional page for the graphic narrative, where they present their position on the issue of military intervention and humanitarian assistance, a theme in the Contemporary World curriculum. This LES emphasizes multimodal way of expressing meaning, including the interaction between text, image, audio and video content. In the fifth LES, 'Between the Tracks: The Creation of an Audio Guide', designed for English Language Arts, the students listen to an audio guide whose objective is to commemorate in the streets of Montreal the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda. They practise listening exercises while reflecting on their abilities as listeners. They then create their own audio guide through a writing exercise. The audio guide is geo-tagged, locating the students as storied and interpretive beings in Montreal and in relation to the stories of others.

These materials are designed to help both students and teachers gain richer understandings of concepts and experiences of human rights violations, and of what it might mean to have witnessed a genocide, to be displaced by war, or to arrive someplace new as a refugee or immigrant. Their dissemination has included presentations to classrooms of future teachers, as well as professional development workshops through the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre; ideally, more of this work will be done in the future with Quebec teachers in regions outside of Montreal, where misconceptions about immigrants and refugees to the province seem to be flourishing. Life stories seem to have significant potential as teaching tools, bringing history to life and putting a more human face to debates on questions of accommo-

dation, cultural, religious, and linguistic difference, and social marginalization. However, teachers need support in knowing how best to use them, as Maryse Potvin and I found in a comparative study in which we both used life stories and other first-person accounts to teach about intercultural education to classrooms of teacher education students (see the report, "Le regard des étudiants en formation des maîtres" at www.lifestoriesmontreal.ca/en/life-stories-in-education). As we continue to share the *We Are Here/Nous sommes ici* curricular guides, we envisage students and teachers learning something about the nature of story-making and telling in their own lives as well as in those of others; this can help people rethink what is known of home in order to create new narratives of what it might mean to be Quebeçois in changing times.

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