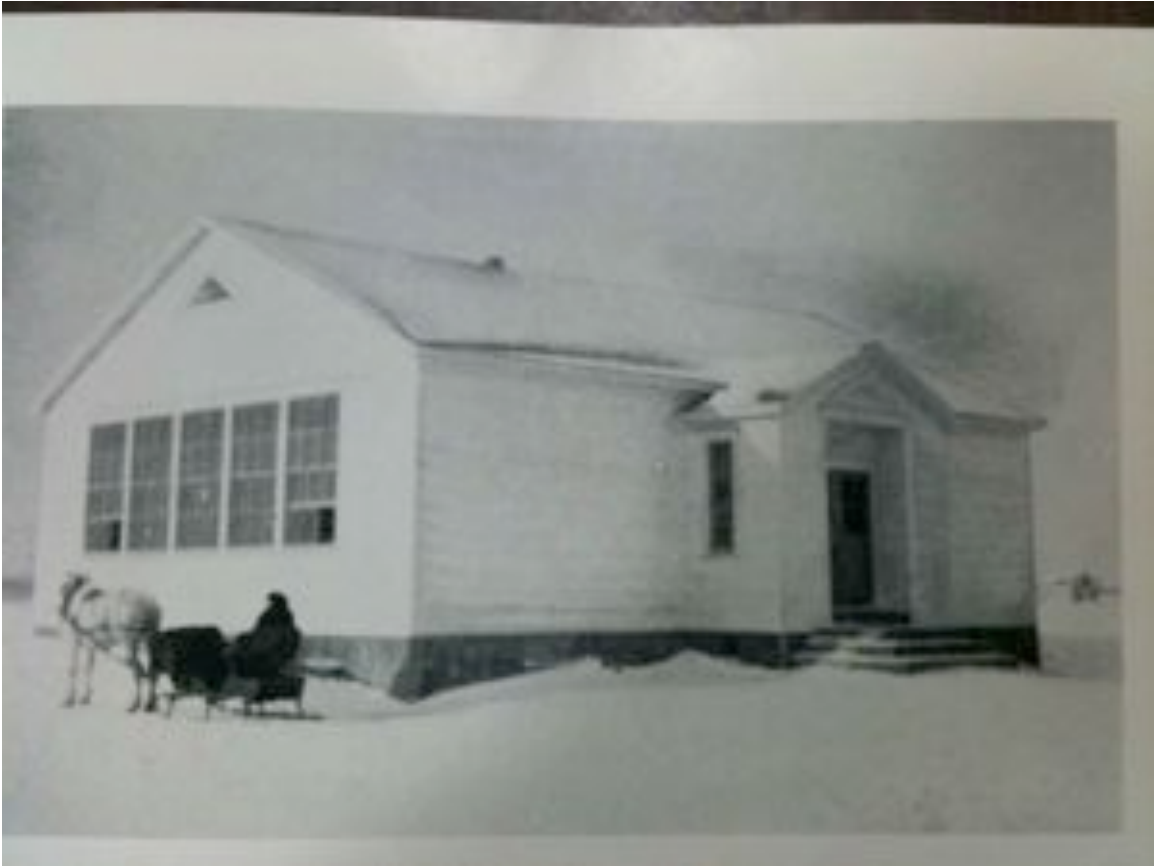


Social Studies Education and the Context of Public Schooling in New Brunswick, 1950-1959



Hypothesis

During the 1950s, Canada was still in the process of self-discovery as it tried to define itself independently from Great Britain. The preceding decade saw the end of The Second World War, and Canada was beginning to define herself as an influential middle power in the following years. And as The Cold War began, Canadians sought to identify themselves as strong, democratic, and free, as opposed to the Communist Soviets. Closer to home, politicians were debating how to foster a stronger sense of national unity. A special committee was formed in 1950 to consider whether Canada ought to use a national textbook, and the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was appointed in 1949 to consider the status of Canadian arts. Both of these federal movements intended to strengthen and define the Canadian nation, which may have had a trickling effect into the provinces. There was a movement in New Brunswick toward the end of the 1950s is to include more local history and stories to existing programmes of study in order to encourage more pride and awareness of matters close to home. Coinciding with the local history movement, parents and educators alike were concerned as larger schools were being constructed. A concern for community was raised, as children were unlikely to learn local history if they were sent to larger schools further from home. We believe that the teaching of Social Studies in New Brunswick would have been influenced by these various circumstances, with the result that the topics of interest in the early 1950s would be different from the topics in the late 1950s. The

earlier years would focus more on traditional Western European history and the link between Canada and Great Britain, while the later years may see a movement towards Canadian history and an exploration of what “Canadian” means.

Discussion of Sources

1. Primary Sources

At the University of New Brunswick Archives and the New Brunswick Provincial Archives, we explored the following resources:

Brittain, J.W. (1949). “Social Studies”. *Intermediate Programme of Studies for New Brunswick Schools*.

- An experimental curriculum introduced in the 1949-1950 school year.

Brown, George W. (1942) *Building the Canadian Nation*. J.M Dent & Sons Ltd.

- This textbook provided insight as to the subject matter being taught from grades 7 to 9.

CEA Kellogg Project in Educational Leadership. (1955). *Report of Proceedings of a Conference on Basic Problems in Education*. University of New Brunswick.

Department of Education. (1957). *A Report on Current Problems in Education in New Brunswick*. University of New Brunswick.

- These documents provided insight on some of the interesting and open discussions regarding perceived problems in education during this time.

Department of Education. (1958). *Tentative Outline for Discussion Purposes: Objectives of Education 1958-1959*.

Department of Education. (1958) *Minutes of Special Committee on Objectives of Education, October*

- These documents show what the purpose for education was at the end of the decade. They are significant as one may see how social studies fits within the overall education plan in the province.

Department of Education (1956) *Sub-Committee appointed to consider the grade placement of High School subjects and matters pertaining to High School subjects, April*

- This document shows what topics were considered to be of value in the Social Studies context

Department of Education (1950) *Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes, March*

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- These meeting minutes show the ongoing debate concerning what topics should be covered in provincial curricula, including Social Studies and related topics.

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- These documents provided important information regarding the departmental requirements for teachers and students. They provided not only details concerning particular grade levels, but also a philosophical foundation for the department's aims.

Emma Smith, David Muzzey and Minnie Lloyd. (1946, 1949, 1952).
World History. 1st and 2nd Ed. Ginn and Company

- This textbook provided insight as to the subject matter being taught from grades 10 to 12.

The Forum of New Brunswick Education (1950-1959).

- These articles showed us current trends and notable events in education throughout the province during the 1950s.

Taylor, Claude D. (1957). *A Manual of Civics and Citizenship*. Province of New Brunswick.

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2. Secondary Sources

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 Ken Osborne. 2002 “Canadian Historians and National History: A 1950 History”
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3. Images and Media

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Context of Education in New Brunswick between 1950-1959



For New Brunswick, the decade of the 1950s was a time marked by the beginnings of change in the province. Increases in the population beginning in the 1940s placed a great

demand on the province to expand the education system. Increases in population meant increased enrollments and the government was forced to construct new schools in the both the rural and urban areas. In many circumstances, larger schools with multiple classrooms were built to accommodate more students. Many were to be transported to and from these schools.

Coinciding with the increase in student enrollment was a proportional increase in the enrollment of new teachers. By the late 50's, there was a significant increase in the number of teachers graduating from the Teacher's College in Fredericton. Further, there were remarkable and revolutionary changes taking place in regard to the subject matter of schools, the courses offered, the services provided, and the role that the schools would play in the community.

With this growth and expansion in New Brunswick education, there were concerns expressed that forcing children to attend schools that were not in their community would not be beneficial to their development as citizens and products of their community (*The Forum of New Brunswick Education*, October 1955). As a response to this, initiatives were launched to promote the importance of the community and to include the community in the decision-making process of schools. As was discussed at the *CEA Kellogg Conference on Basic Problems in Education* in 1955, "the public should be fully informed about all phases of the school, the good things and the bad. The people of the community should interpret the school and should know what they are trying to do" (3). It was further discussed in regard to promoting positive school-community relations that schools should

...have [*Sic*] displays in school or store windows, have [*Sic*] visitors days, have [*Sic*] the school participate in community events, have [*Sic*] school visits to community points of interest and the use of community resource people to improve instruction in the school (3).

These concerns regarding the community were further echoed in the following years with the introduction of a new textbook in schools entitled, *A Manual for Civics and Citizenship*. This textbook was introduced not only in response to sentiments of the



importance of community, but also in response to the increasing perception of the threat of communism and the intense rhetoric of McCarthyism in the 1940's and 1950's throughout the United States. The textbook was designed to provide pupils with a clear understanding of the democratic principles of Canadian society in order to engrain qualities and perspectives that would make them productive and patriotic citizens, endowed with a firm belief in the importance of democratic values.

Elementary

There was a motion in 1958 for a committee to be created to examine the social studies program from grades one to six. This motion was passed, suggesting that there was interest in rethinking the teaching of elementary social studies. While the intermediate program (grades seven, eight, and nine) saw a new social studies curriculum early in the decade, the elementary curriculum followed later. This motion came from the suggestions that "Social Studies in Grades 3 and 4 on Egypt, Babylonia, Rome, etc. be discontinued and more study be put on Maritime Provinces." Moreover, there was interest in sponsoring "the writing of a child's history and geography of New Brunswick, suitably worded for use with the elementary school pupil." Thus by 1958, there was a sense that elementary students needed improved Social Studies education, with a more localized focus. This is consistent with the general feeling in Canada that students should learn about the history of Canada in order to develop a sense of national identity.

Intermediate

In 1949-1950, the Department of Education implemented an experimental curriculum for grades seven and eight. As this experiment took place at the beginning of our decade of interest, it serves as a suitable starting point to see what topics were covered in these grades.

The grade seven course was composed of six topics:

1. The Extent to Which Environment has Influenced Man in the Past
2. The Natural Factors which have Influenced and still Influence Man in his Life on this Earth
3. Regional Geography Showing the Various Climate and Vegetation



Regions of the World

4. A Geographical and Historical Study of the British Empire
5. An “Air Age” Survey of the World with Some Emphasis Being Placed upon the Location of Important Centres of Population and Natural Features
6. Post-Confederation History of Canada

Geography and History seem to be the dominant disciplines within this program of study. Students consider topics such as Wind Belts, Climate, and Ocean Currents, as well as topics in both British and Canadian history. It was also expected that students should “learn where and how to acquire information; they must develop a judgment as to what is relevant” (33). This rings of critical thinking, a skill that is still pushed as a goal of education today.

Here is a sample activity that was suggested to familiarize students with the location of various places in the world:

We wish to fly from Moncton to Sydney, Australia We enter the plane at Moncton, the railway centre of the Maritime Provinces. (We had spent a few days at Moncton and had seen the “Bore”. The Hopewell Rocks, the National Park site, Swifts Packing Plant, the Magnetic Hill and had shopped at Eatons.) We flew over the Gulf of St. Lawrence, over Newfoundland (we saw tiny vessels fishing on the Grand Banks) and then over the Atlantic Ocean—the Westerly winds blew steadily and helped our progress—we landed at Lisbon in Portugal—Lisbon is on a fine harbor and trades with most of the world—we stayed a few hours at Lisbon and then embarked for Cairo in Egypt... (37)

This imaginary trip demonstrates the idea that it was important for students to be familiar with other areas of the world, but in a fairly limited sense. There was no emphasis on the different cultures the students would encounter; instead, they were taught about the different types of vegetation and climates around the world. It seems as though the sociocultural component of many current social studies curricula in New Brunswick was not as present in the 1950s.

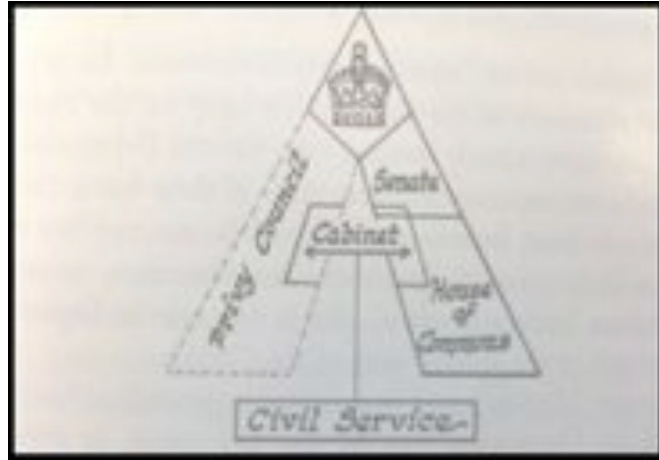
In contrast, the grade eight social studies program had units that considered more social topics, but they were still Western cultures that were studied. Students would consider:

1. Development of British People and Institutions
2. Industrial Revolution and its Social, Political and Economic Effects
3. Development of Modern Nations and their Conflicts
4. The United States of America (40)

Topics in Part 1 such as “How the English Race was Built up” and “The English Advance Toward Democracy” (41) denote an Anglo-centric program that was heavily influenced by Great Britain. It seems that Part 4 was to be reserved mainly for the grade nine level as indicated by the *Outline of Programme of Studies for High Schools* (1949-50) in directing teachers to “p. 46-54 of the *Intermediate Programme of Studies*” (6). Although it is entitled “The United States of America,” the focus was primarily on Canadian history. The *Intermediate Programme of Studies* (1949-50) recommended the

use of George W. Brown's *Building the Canadian Nation*. Teachers were expected to use this text as they explored:

1. The Boundaries and Geography of Canada as a Nation and How These Boundaries Developed
2. The Governmental Structure of Canada
3. Canadian International Relations
4. The Natural Geography of Canada
5. The Canadian economy
6. Canadian-American relations
7. The Canadian People
8. The Geographical, Economic and Social Composition of New Brunswick (45-57)



The recommended textbook would serve as an adequate source of information as it covers in significant depth, the history of Canada since the arrival of the Europeans. Further, the text includes a significant amount of geographical information for the various parts of Canada at various points throughout history. But it seems that it would be a challenge for teachers to cover Part 4 in the manner conceived in the *Intermediate Programme of Studies* (1949-50) as Brown's book places an unmistakable emphasis on the colonial history of Canada and the United States and the tensions between the First Peoples, Britain and France. Further, the book is written from a perspective far removed from the daily realities understood by New Brunswick students. Brown emphasizes the settlement of the West a great deal, which would be quite difficult for students to relate to. But by utilizing varying sections of the book, it seems that aside from the section on New Brunswick, teachers would be able to cover the suggested material using this resource.

Throughout the 1950's, the intermediate years were viewed as extremely important for forming an individual endowed with a strong sense of citizenship. As is printed in the introductory statement of the social studies section of the *Intermediate Programme of Studies* in 1949-50 released by Education Minister J.W. Brittain, "the ultimate objective of the course in Social Studies in the Intermediate School is to educate for good citizenship, and in particular to train our young people so that they will be both willing and able to effect an improvement in the social environment of our province" (30). This same introductory statement is carried through all of the *Intermediate Programme of Studies* documents of the 1950s.

There seemed to be a clear understanding of what teaching for citizenship entailed. It was recognized that the skills required for good citizenship were to be obtained through not only the acquisition of knowledge or information, but also through the ability to put to use their knowledge base to make a contribution and improvement to society. These broader implications for proper citizenship training were recognized in



the following Education Minister's statement that

The acquiring of knowledge is an essential outcome of the social of the Social Studies course, but knowledge will be worthless unless the pupils have developed the ability and willingness to use this knowledge for the good of the society in which they live. Thus the acquiring of knowledge of knowledge cannot be considered the ultimate objective of the course. Although factual examinations will be necessary, they cannot be considered completely satisfactory instruments by which to measure pupil progress, since they cannot measure attitudes and desirable characteristics which have been fostered and developed by the course" (1955, 42).

Clearly then, there was a formal recognition of the necessity of providing students with a foundational understanding of their society so that students would be able to make a significant and recognizable contribution to their community, province and country.

High School

At the high school level, the emphasis was placed on learning history and geography. With the exception of the grade nine course which was included in the *Outline of Programme of studies for High Schools* yet consistently referred back to the

Intermediate Programme of Studies, high school students were expected to learn about world history and geography. By the end of the decade, the high school programme's focus shifted towards the study of current events and civics and citizenship.

At the beginning of the decade for grades ten through twelve (with the exception of the years prior to 1951-52 when grade twelve was considered as the freshman year course for university), there did not seem to be a clear vision or direction for teachers beyond the recommendation a specific text be used. It was indicated in the *Outline of Programme of Studies for High Schools* (1949-1950) that students were required to work from the textbook *World History* (1946) by Emma Smith, David Muzzey and Minnie

Lloyd. The text covers the early civilizations, Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, Imperialism and Nationalism, and the First and Second World Wars.

Teachers were given very little direction in regard to how students were to learn this material. It seems quite plausible that students may have simply been required to memorize the history of Western civilization. There were no requirements for Canadian history beyond the recommendations for grade 9. It was not until the latter half of the decade that a clear vision or



direction was developed for the high school levels.

By 1952-1953, a statement was added in the social studies section of the *Outline of Programme of Studies for High Schools*. The statement acknowledges the necessity of examining the important events occurring on the international stage during this time. As is stated, "matriculation candidates will be expected to know some of the current history including the activities of the United Nations, UNESCO and NATO" (27).

Further, it is clear that the rhetoric and widespread concerns over the looming threat of Communism had reached New Brunswick and were influencing educational policy. It was recommended that teachers examine the "drift of the world into the two camps since 1945" (27), and that they "outline the acts of aggression of Russia and her satellites" (27). A clear, negative portrayal of Russia is outlined in the *Programme*. The statement moves on to mention Russia's "contempt of Christianity [*Sic*] and human rights" (27).

Clearly, the Programme is attempting to indoctrinate students into a one-sided western democratic understanding of the world. As the *Programme* states,

Every effort should be made to further inculcate and strengthen belief in our way of life and form of government, despite their known imperfections, so that our

young people will thoroughly understand and appreciate what they must stand up for in the years to come (27).

By the late 1950's the combination of anti-communist sentiments and the increasing demands from the community for students to be educated for active citizenship and to become productive members of their community, led to the introduction of a new text book released by the New Brunswick Education Minister Claude Taylor entitled, *A Manual for Civics and Citizenship* (1957). The manual was released in two parts for all grades, Part One for Grades one through six and Part Two for grades seven through twelve. The objective of the manual was to foster a strong sense of citizenship among New Brunswick youth. As the foreword states,



The worth of our heritage of free government and free institutions must be known to be appreciated. The increasing danger in which the free countries of the world find themselves makes it more and more urgent that their internal strength be increased by the improved attitude and increased knowledge of the inhabitants of those countries. Citizens of free countries must be taught to know and appreciate the value of free institutions, in order that they may be preserved for future generations (iii).

This book marks a significant change in the way students would learn about their society, country, province and community. The textbook emphasized the concepts of democracy and structure of the Canadian governmental system. The book was structured as follows:

Part 1

1. The Queen of Canada
2. Basic Concepts of Democracy
3. Citizenship at Home and School (Grades 1 and 2)
4. Citizenship in the Community (Grades 3 and 4)
5. Government in New Brunswick (Grades 5 and 6)

Part 2

1. The Queen of Canada
2. Basic Concepts of Democracy
3. Foundations of Parliamentary Government (Grade 7)
4. Government in Canada (Grade 8)
5. Canada and External Affairs (Grade 9)
6. Canada and World Trade (Grade 10)
7. Government in Canada (Grade 11)
8. United Nations, NATO, Columbo Plan (Grade 12)

The manual places significant emphasis on Canadian citizenship and an understanding of the Canadian governmental system. The contents of the manual are noticeably similar to what one might expect to see in a social studies textbook in contemporary society which often place a similar emphasis on understanding Canadian government, society, and what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

Broader Social Context Between 1950-1959

A) In New Brunswick

In the 1950s, changes occurred within the native residential schools. These schools were operating as both school and work, where students spent half the day learning in the classroom and the other half spent developing vocational skills. Money was a concern, and student labour was intended to ease the expenses of operating these schools. Later in the decade, both funding and class time increased (“Residential Schools”).

It was during the 1950s that native children integrated into provincial schools. According to a late 1940s review of Aboriginal education, students were failing repeatedly and few were graduating beyond elementary school. The previous half-day



system was scrapped, and the federal government worked with the provinces to move students into the public schools. Thereafter, native students would attend provincial elementary and secondary schools, and teachers at residential schools would be certified by the province and teach

provincial curriculum. It was a time of hope and expectation (“Residential Schools”).

B) In Canada

The Second World War ended in 1945, and the push for national unity was perhaps resulting from tension between Quebec and the other provinces about Canada’s involvement in the war. Although French-English tensions are part of the reason for Canadian Confederation in the first place, in the 1940s the Senate called upon Canadian historians to identify the essential historical facts that all Canadians must know in order to fix the national identity (Osborne, 2002). Although a special committee was formed in 1950 to determine whether Canada should have a national history textbook, it was decided that this would be too difficult to manage. Thus despite being within the interests of provincial authorities, education came under federal scrutiny. The committee suggested that “reasonable understanding” should be the purpose of Canadian history teaching. They recommended that textbooks provide a “reasonably broad, national point

of view” (CNEA, 1945: 12). Lionel Groulx, a Quebec opponent to the idea of a national history textbook, made a distinction between history and education. The historian was to be scientific, while the teacher was to instill citizenship. We see traces of this same sentiment in New Brunswick, where social studies curriculum began to focus more on effective citizenship rather than history alone. The purpose of teaching topics in Canadian history was, for New Brunswick, to nurture effective citizenship.

C) In World

Within the global context, Social Studies teaching would have been influenced by the Korean War, which saw Canadian troops deployed to assist United Nations operations in Korea. On August 7, 1950, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent announced the rebuilding of Canada’s armed forces and his plans for Canada to carry out UN obligations. There was perhaps a relationship between a new emphasis on effective citizenship teaching for students and Canada’s blossoming interest in multilateralism and international affairs.

By the late 1950’s there was a movement toward building a national consciousness in students, thereby teaching citizenship skills and understandings that students would take into their adult life to become productive and patriotic members of society. Intertwined with the reasoning of this shift toward a national consciousness were the political realities of the international scene. The world wars had earned Canada a spot on the international stage and our recent contributions to the formation of the UN had made an impact on Canada’s self-perceived image in international politics. Also though however, the intensification in the battle against the communist threat both in the physical and rhetorical sense, were having an impact on Canadian society and in turn, on Canadian social and citizenship education.

Relation or Significance of Study for Education in New Brunswick Today

Current educators would benefit from understanding the context of social studies curricula because it helps identify the underlying purpose of why we teach what they teach. This pursuit enables us to understand why some topics are deemed important enough to teach, and that this decision is based on what is happening outside the classroom. What we teach also reflects larger social mores and concerns. Today there is an increased emphasis on



understanding other cultures, which reflects the multicultural status of Canadian society. Today, social studies curricula do not undergo as many frequent revisions as they did in the 1950s, which suggests that we are experiencing a period with relatively few fundamental shifts in purpose. Some of the high school courses have not been revised in nearly twenty years, while the middle school and elementary courses have been modified within the past ten years. We can take this difference as a sign of different times; there is less emphasis on producing effective citizens, and much more attention is given to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills. This may be the result of living in relatively peaceful times, with the Cold War being a distant memory. There are of course many other similarities and differences that we could explore along this theme in an exploration of curricular influences. Knowing what factors influenced education in the 1950s would help us recognize which factors have led to what we are teaching today, which in turn reveals much about our society's interests.

Another idea that is significant for education today is how similar the notions of best practice are. Throughout the programmes of study, there are suggested activities that require a synthesis of knowledge. Teachers were not asking their students to memorize isolated facts; attempts were made to make learning more meaningful through engaging learners with stories, open-ended questions, and topics that directly related to the world around them. Some principles of effective pedagogy seem to stand the test of time, which should discredit the idea that we are in an entirely new age with new methods. While technology has certainly altered much of what takes place in the classroom, some underlying principles remain much the same as they were in the 1950s: let us make lifelong learners of our students; let us foster effective citizenship by empowering them with the ability to think critically; let us test their understanding and not their memorization skills.

The final point we will raise is that we can learn much from the concerns educators voiced with respect to the opening of new, larger schools. There seems to be an undeniable relationship between school and community, and educators have a vested interest in strengthening this bond. Whether the decision is made to close several small schools and send them to a large consolidated school, or it is determined that it would make financial sense to close an aging school and build a new one, it affects more than the students and the teachers. Schools are at the heart of their communities, and educators have reason to be concerned with drastic changes. The relationship between school and community is a social study in itself.

Conclusions

Social studies education in the province of New Brunswick reflected the nationwide interest in identity. As Canadians were seeking to define themselves in a global context, so too were New Brunswick residents interested in maintaining and further developing a sense of community. The larger schools certainly affected this feeling, as parents worried that their children would not learn about their local communities. Perhaps as a solution, social studies education came to focus on New Brunswick and Canadian topics in history instead of strictly adhering to traditional British narratives. Moreover, there was a movement towards fostering the ideal citizen, someone who valued Western democratic principles and distrusted Communism.

Increasingly it was recognized that the schools would play a larger part in the development of students into productive citizens.



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