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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers:

I would think that virtually all of the students in high school today were born after the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. A few of their birthdays may date back to the time of the *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* reforms but it is most likely that the Cold War which defined most of the preceding 40 years or so is a large chunk of history that they are now learning in class through textbooks, news documentaries, and book and film fictional reworkings. In the same way that those of my generation struggle to understand what World War II must have felt like for those who lived through it, imagine a history teacher's challenge in conveying the iron grip that "Cold War" psychology had on our daily lives .

The Cold War was a combat war of a different kind. Democracy and Communism fought this war in every arena they could find — scientifically, economically, culturally, and on the battlefield — usually on third party turf, and always by proxy. Whether it was the space race, Vietnam, Cuba, the Middle East, Africa, the Olympics, or hockey — a win by either side, demonstrated their superiority. The recent death of chess master,



[Bobby Fischer](#) reminded me of

one of the most celebrated battles of the Cold War. While the two 'superpowers' piled up weaponry in order to maintain top spot in the arms race, the 1972 match-up of American, Bobby Fischer, and reigning Soviet champion, Boris Spassky, was to "settle it" once and for all. It provided high drama but was hardly a defining moment, as the Cold War raged on for 15 more years. [Interestingly, after the Cold War ended, chess championed the cause of man against machine, taking on IBM's *Big Blue*.]

What our children learn about the past in and out of the classroom is important. CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the work of teachers by providing access to free classroom resources. Visit us at [www.4edu.ca](http://www.4edu.ca).

[Your thoughts are welcome.](#)

[Editor's Note — Correction: In last week's letter the word "wreak" was misspelled. Thanks to Neil Marr for writing in. My apologies! - MK]

## Teaching History the Excellent Way

This year, with the support of Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, **Canada's National History Society** combined three signature programs into a history extravaganza in Ottawa. Guests at Rideau Hall and the Library and Archives Canada Preservation Centre celebrated recipients of both the **Pierre Berton Award** and the **Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching History**. The two-day event featured a first-ever, standing-room-only, **National Forum on**



**Canadian History** in collaboration with Carlton University. Academics, students, administrators, writers, documentarians and educators mixed with History Society Board members and sponsors for a decidedly thought-provoking and career nurturing event. [see photo and excerpt from Governor General's remarks below]

The Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History were established in 1996 by the **History Society**. Every year, the awards recognize teachers from elementary and secondary schools who have inspired and challenged students about Canadian history, be it in the field of social studies, economics, political studies, contemporary studies or geography.

The 2007 recipients were honoured for their creative and innovative teaching strategies, which included recording original folksongs; creating public bus stop advertisements; participating in a youth forum on the topic of the African Diaspora; staging the retrieval of William Lyon MacKenzie; building one's own school archives; and inviting historical figures back into the classroom with mythical "passports to the past".

In addition to being awarded \$2,500 and a gold medal, each recipient's school received a \$1,000 cash award. For submission details, biographies and description of the Awards' events, click [here](#).

## 2008 Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History — Apply Today!

Canada's National History Society is pleased to announce a call for nominations for the 13<sup>th</sup> Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. History and Social Studies educators are urged to submit their unique teaching approaches to the program. Deadline for Submissions: **April 25, 2008**.

**Rules:** <http://www.historysociety.ca/gga.asp?subsection=rule>  
**Form:** <http://www.historysociety.ca/gga.asp?subsection=nom>

**Back row (l to r):** Pierre Berton Award recipient, Brian McKenna; Governor General's Awards recipients, John MacPhail, Susan Haynes, Monique Martin and David Watkins. **Front row (l to r):** Governor General's Awards recipient Rose Fine-Meyer; History Society Board Member, Charlotte Gray; Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean; History Society President and CEO Deborah Morrison; Governor General's Awards recipient, Rhonda Draper. [Photo credit: MCpl Serge Gouin, Rideau Hall]



**Remarks delivered by Her Excellency, the Right Honourable, Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, on the occasion of the presentation of the Governor General's Awards For Excellence in Teaching Canadian History on Nov. 2, 2007: [excerpt]**

"I firmly believe that it is essential for young people to trace what has happened in history, the same way they might trace the course of a river to find the ocean. An ocean of countless experiences, infinite knowledge, multiple questions, signs, and memories that all irrigate our lives and make them richer and more productive. The women and men we are honouring today invite young people to take this trip back in time, a trip that is so essential to understanding who they are and where they live. To understand their place in the world and how they are responsible for changing it for the better.

From the moment we realize that we are a part of history—that we are not just witnessing it, but playing a role in it as well—we understand that each and every one of us has the power to change its course. That is why it is so important to take an interest in history, to understand its consequences, and to continually ask questions about it. Famous people are not the only ones who make history. Each and every one of us makes our own contribution, in our own way. We are links in one giant human chain. And by passing on our collective and complete memory to the youth of Canada, you—as history teachers—are giving them the opportunity to add their own link to that chain, a chain that connects us all, over borders and generations." [To read the full speech, [click here.](#)]

**Website** of the week

**Canada's National History Society's website** is home to a variety of history-based [educational resources](#), [outreach programs](#), activities and contests for all ages. In addition to administering the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History, the History Society offers classroom ready lesson plans and web resources. [Lesson plans](#) can be sourced by grade level, by themes and by eras. Download articles from current and past issues of the **History Society's** publications — [The Beaver](#), Canada's History Magazine, and [Kayak](#), the history magazine for kids. Teachers are invited to [subscribe](#) to [KIT](#) (Kayak Information for Teachers) and [BITE](#) (Beaver Information for Teachers).



■ **SNEAK PREVIEW!** To mark Quebec's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the History Society has commissioned a spectacular illustration and timeline of Champlain's Habitation. The poster (pictured, *right*) will be mailed to Canadian schools as an invitation to be involved in the Awards. Aligned lesson plans will be available at [historysociety.ca/edu.asp](http://historysociety.ca/edu.asp) after February 28, 2008. Posters arrive in mailboxes March, 2008.



■ The History Society is also accepting applications for the 2008 [Hbc Local History Grant Program](#) (up to \$1,000 per classroom). Grants will be awarded over 4 review periods in 2008. The first submission deadline for review is Feb. 1, 2008.

[Source: [historysociety.ca](http://historysociety.ca)]

**Education News & Related Articles**

[History for the people; The field of 'public history' gains ground in Canada](#) — Treena Hein, *University Affairs*, November 2007

"It was last May, says Paul Litt, when he felt the unmistakable shift. A professor of history at Carleton University, Dr. Litt was an organizer of the 2007 annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association held in Saskatoon as part of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The theme of Congress, "Bridging Communities: Making public knowledge; Making knowledge public," was well-suited to his field of interest, known as public history. The field has been gaining attention in recent years, and indeed many of the history sessions touched on the topic. Dr. Litt has also been involved with the newly resurrected CHA Committee on Public History, which joins 14 other committees on topics such as women's history and labour history.... Dr. Litt believes part of the reason for this change is the general public's seemingly insatiable appetite for all things historical, from Ken Burns to Pierre Berton, from A&E's Biography franchise, to Mark Starowicz's Canada: A People's History. The scope of public history is certainly large. The University of Western Ontario, which has offered an MA in the field for more than 20 years, describes the field, on its website, as "history ... experienced by and interpreted for the public."

[Bobby Fischer, 64: Former chess champion](#) – Gudjon Helgason, The Associated Press, *TheStar.com*, Obituary, January 18, 2008

"Bobby Fischer, the reclusive American chess master who became a Cold War icon when he dethroned the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky as world champion in 1972, has died. He was 64. Born in Chicago, and raised in Brooklyn, Robert James Fischer was a U.S. chess champion at 14 and a grand master at 15. He beat Spassky in a series of games in Reykjavik to claim America's 1<sup>st</sup> world chess championship in more than a century. The event had tremendous symbolic importance, pitting the intensely individualistic young American against a product portrayed in the western media as a grim and soulless Soviet Union."

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