

Everything Old is New Again: Photo Analysis and Meaning

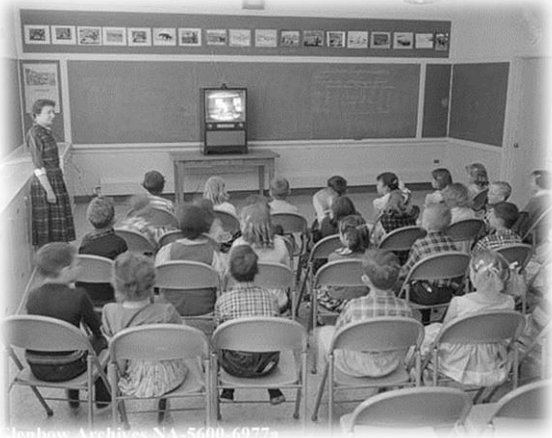
Engaging in a dialogue with these photos, I found I wanted to speak with Jack De Lorme about the context in which he created them. I wasn't able to track down Mr. De Lorme, although I found a rather intriguing video of man of the same name and age skiing down a hillside in Calgary, and had to content myself with the information I could collect from the Glenbow Museum's website and from the photographs themselves.

Jack De Lorme was an award winning photographer who worked for the Calgary Albertan from 1953 to 1957 when both of these images were taken. According to the Glenbow Museum's webpage "Calgary in the 1950's", De Lorme's "pictures provide an invaluable historical record of... the way Calgarians saw themselves and their city... His work reflects editorial priorities that are themselves revealing" (Glenbow Museum, 2012a).

I also reviewed the webpage "The Television Revolution" (Glenbow Museum, 2012f) which reported that television arrived in Calgary in September 1954 about eighteen months before De Lorme took his photographs of Canada's second classroom experiment with television. I immediately wondered why the event was called an experiment and what was the outcome of the first experiment? I think the webpage hints at the answer while providing a context for the creation of the photographs.

Television was not entirely welcomed with open arms in Canada. Moralists worried about the content, educators about the distraction for children and the prospect of mass illiteracy, and nationalists about American culture beamed directly into living rooms. Other commentators saw it as a wonderful new tool for the dissemination of information. (Glenbow Museum, 2012f)

I considered this information and started my analysis of De Lorme's photographs.

			<p>Image No: NA-5600-6977a Title: Television in schools, Calgary, Alberta. Date: April 1956 Photographer/Illustrator: De Lorme, Jack, Calgary, Alberta. Remarks: Cropped version published in The Albertan, April 26, page 3. In the second classroom experiment with television in Canada, grades two and three students at Melville Scott Elementary School watch "Adventures in Speech" on television. Teacher Ruth Hickle stands at left. Subject(s): Television / Melville Scott Elementary School, Calgary, Alberta / Calgary, Alberta – Schools (Glenbow Museum, 2012b) Additional Caption: Canada's second classroom experiment with television, 1956 (Glenbow Museum, 2012c)</p>		
Observation		Possible Interpretation and Significance		Potential Meaning	
TV on table at front of		TV is the focus of this lesson.			

classroom.		
TV switched on.		
No teacher's desk visible.	I expected the desk to be at the front of the room.	TV and programming replace teacher as the focus for learning and the primary learning agent.
Photos on the walls do not seem related to the topic. There are no materials on the counter.		TV is the main medium for this lesson.
Teacher is standing to one side and with her face turned to students.	Teacher is looking for student reactions.	Teacher is making observations to report as results of the experiment.
28+ students sitting in rows of chairs facing front of room and television; no student desks.	There is an expectation students will sit and watch, no other materials are needed and no other activities are planned.	Students do not interact with teacher, television or each other.
Most students facing forward.	Not all students are watching the television.	This activity/type of learning may not be effective for all students.
Captions contain the descriptors: "Canada" and "second experiment".	This is an experiment. Something pretty significant and important is going on that is important to all of Canada.	This is an experiment. Is this innovative? Is this controversial?



Image No: NA-5600-6977c
Title: Television in schools, Calgary, Alberta.
Date: April 1956
Photographer/Illustrator: De Lorme, Jack, Calgary, Alberta.
Remarks: Cropped version published in The Albertan, April 26, page 3.
 In the second classroom experiment with television in Canada, absorbed students at Melville Scott Elementary School watch "How Does Your Garden Grow" on television.
Subject(s): **Television** / Melville Scott Elementary School, Calgary, Alberta / Calgary, Alberta – Schools (Glenbow Museum, 2012d)
Additional Caption: Melville Scott student watch "How Does Your Garden Grow" with rapt attention, 1956 (Glenbow Museum, 2012e)

Observation	Possible Interpretation and Significance	Potential Meaning
Photo is similar to the first.		This event was significant enough to warrant coverage by the Calgary Albertan in a story with photographs.
Students are different.	Another staging of the	Need to replicate the

	television experiment.	experiment and gather more data/support
2 students near the camera have hands clasped.	A fascinating show? Reacting to a scene from the gardening show? Or being well behaved for the camera?	
Walls are bare. Difficult to see what was written on the blackboards.		TV is the main medium for this lesson.
One person looking through doorway.	This person, who is not wearing a coat and may be a school employee, is not included in the lesson but wanted to observe it or the work of the photographer.	This experiment and its media coverage are important enough to stop work and check out what is happening.
One person with coat watching from the back of room	This person is not a regular staff member and came to watch the experiment and what was going on	This event was pretty significant.
Captions contain the descriptions: “rapt attention” and “absorbed students”	These may be original captions or later additions.	The outcome of the experiment was favourable for students? The outcome will be reported as positive for student?

And here is the narrative I developed to construct meaning from the photographs:

It is 1956...

Television has just been introduced and a teacher, Ruth Hickle, is interested in its potential as a new educational medium. This interest is not without controversy. Will the technology benefit children? Will it hurt them? Will they become more passive or more aggressive? Will they become illiterate? What will become of hands-on learning? Will televisions replace teachers? Nonplussed by the controversy, the furtive looks of her colleagues and the doubt-filled observation of a concerned parent at the back of the room, Ruth Hickle forges ahead in her experiment with television. Mindful of the controversy, she monitors her students' responses and reactions and rallies positive media support for her innovative project.

It is 2012...

iPads have just been introduced and a teacher, Don Adams, is interested in their potential as a new educational medium. This interest is not without controversy. Will the technology benefit children? Will it hurt them? Will they become more passive or more aggressive? Will they become illiterate? What will become of hands-on learning? Will iPads replace teachers? Nonplussed by the controversy, the furtive looks of his colleagues and the doubt-filled

observation of a concerned parent at the back of the room, Don Adams forges ahead in his experiment with iPads. Mindful of the controversy, he monitors his students' responses and reactions and rallies positive media support for his innovative project.

I may have taken some liberties when ascribing roles and motivations to some of the individuals in these photos but my narrative incorporates the content of the photos and reflects the context in which they were taken. My personal reaction to and connection with the photos is also represented in this story. I am reminded of the old adage of history repeating itself. Certainly the nature of human motivations and interactions and our love/hate relationship with technology runs in consistent patterns and cycles. These photos capture a moment in these patterns and cycles; patterns and cycles that began when the first Neanderthal suggested using a sharp stick for hunting and continue to the present day.

References

Glenbow Museum. (2012a). *Calgary in the 1950's*. Retrieved from http://www.glenbow.org/50s/intro_eng.htm

Glenbow Museum. (2012b). *Image no: NA-5600-6977a*. Retrieved from Archive Photographs Search Results.

Glenbow Museum. (2012c). *Image no: NA-5600-6977a*. Retrieved from http://www.glenbow.org/50s/tv_eng3.htm

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Glenbow Museum. (2012e). *Image no: NA-5600-6977c*. Retrieved from http://www.glenbow.org/50s/tv_eng4.htm

Glenbow Museum. (2012f). *The television revolution*. Retrieved from http://www.glenbow.org/50s/tv_eng.htm