

Learning, Reflecting, and Looking Ahead: Nova Scotia Social Studies Educators in Whitehorse

by Wendy Driscoll & Dean Marchand, Social Studies Teachers Association of Nova Scotia

What shapes the way we see the world, and how does that shape the way we teach? What responsibility do we have to help students understand their place in an increasingly interconnected world? These questions were at the heart of a gathering of Social Studies educators in Whitehorse, Yukon this summer.

Hosted by the Northern Council for Global Cooperation (NCGC) and the Social Studies Educators Network of Canada (SSENC), the conference began at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, where Elder Mark Wedge of the Carcross Tagish First Nation led us through a journey called the Sacred Red Road. Through storytelling, reflection, and visuals, participants were invited to consider the relationships between identity, place, and purpose, and how these shape the way we see ourselves and our work with students. Starting in this reflective space offered an intentional pause from our usual roles as educators and set the tone for the days of learning and reflection that followed.

Tracey Wallace and Athulya Joseph of NCGC guided us

through questions about the assumptions and perspectives that shape our teaching. We explored how our worldviews influence what we see and understand, how historical experiences and inherited ways of knowing continue to shape the present, and how we can approach difficult and potentially divisive conversations in the classroom.

Kevin Lopuck of SSENC helped us consider what is on our plates, both literally and figuratively, what teaching Social Studies asks of us, what the work can take out of us, and the emotional weight of trying to help our students navigate and improve the world around them. A reflective river walk rounded out the conference and gave us physical and mental space to consider how these ideas might influence our teaching practice.

The Social Studies Educators Network of Canada is a national organization whose mission is to advocate and build capacity for high-quality social studies education by facilitating networking between educators and engaging with partners across Canada.

It is made up of Social Studies teachers' associations from every province and territory, including the Social Studies Teachers Association of Nova Scotia, which has been part of SSENC since its inception.

Being together in Whitehorse was a rare opportunity, and we were determined to make the most of it. The NCGC conference brought us there, and the two days that followed gave us the chance to turn that shared experience inward, gathering as SSENC for our Annual General Meeting and working groups. We continued the conversation by reflecting on what had resonated with us and how those insights could inform SSENC's work and our



SSENC directors in Whitehorse.

vision for the future of Social Studies education in Canada.

Outings to Miles Canyon, walks along the Yukon River and fish ladder, even a visit to the famous Takhini Hot Spring balanced our days of deep thinking and hard work with recreation and fresh air.

Partnering with organizations like the Northern Council for Global Cooperation and connecting with educators who share our commitment to Social Studies is one of the things that makes this work so rewarding. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn together in Whitehorse and to bring those conversations back to our students, learning spaces, colleagues and school communities. We leave with new questions, new connections, and renewed energy for the work ahead.

For more information visit Social Studies Educators Network of Canada [Social Studies Educators Network of Canada](https://www.ssenccressc.ca) and Northern Council for Global Cooperation [Northern Council for Global Cooperation](https://www.ncgc.ca). You can also reach out to Wendy at secretary@ssencressc.ca and/or Dean at NSSSTA@ssencressc.ca

Wendy Driscoll has been an educator in Nova Scotia for over 30 years and currently teaches Grades 7 Social Studies and Language Arts in Dartmouth. She served as an executive member of the Social Studies Teachers Association of Nova Scotia for many years and was the recipient of its inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award in 2025. Wendy has served on national educator advisory councils for Elections Canada and the Library of Parliament and is currently the secretary of the Social Studies Educators Network of Canada.

Dean Marchand is an educator in Nova Scotia, teaching multi-subjects from grades Primary through 12. He graduated from St. Francis Xavier University in 2003. Dean is the current President of the Social Studies Teachers Association of Nova Scotia and has also been involved in various capacities with the SSTA as well as roles within the Nova Scotia Teachers union. He represents Nova Scotia on the Social Studies Educators Network of Canada.



Educators reflecting during the conference



Dean Marchand and Wendy Driscoll.