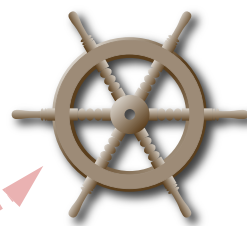


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Social Studies Teachers Association: Navigating & communicating 50 years & beyond



by Wendy Driscoll, SSTA President

I was talking recently with my Grade 9 class about the death of my grandmother who was 96-years-old. A resident of Nova Scotia for most of her life, she was also a teacher for 37 years in our province. We were talking about the many changes that someone that age sees in his or her lifetime. My students were baffled by the thought of her early life without TV, internet, even a phone in the house; and the style of her early classrooms as both a student and a teacher. Reflecting on how things change is something teachers may find ourselves doing a lot in our careers, with Social Studies teachers perhaps among the lead “reflectors.”

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the Social Studies Teachers Association (SSTA) and such a milestone gives us an occasion not only to reflect, but also to look ahead. This professional development feature *Charting Your Course* is perhaps a good place to do this. The navigational imagery is sure to appeal to geography teachers. Navigation is about using what you know to find out new things, to find direction, and to steer. This is what teaching Social Studies and the work of the SSTA is all about.

We teach in an age where our teaching tools, our navigational instruments if you will, continue to evolve, but the mandate of the SSTA remains the same. We exist to “improve professional practice by increasing member knowledge and understanding.” Incorporated in 1963 with 89 members, the SSTA has grown to about 400 members across Nova Scotia. A volunteer executive of eight teachers from different areas of the province plan, encourage, and communicate professional development to our teacher members. What this looks like and how we do it changes as the navigational tools change. The SSTA endeavours to help our members chart their course in two ways: through professional development and through communication among members.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers from elementary, to middle, to high school, in all areas of Social Studies can take advantage of professional development both in and out of our province. These opportunities help teachers learn new skills, improve their practice, make connections, and renew their enthusiasm for education. For example, teachers can take advantage of the *Forests Worth Knowing Atlantic Teachers Tour* or the *EDGeo workshops for teachers* held annually in summer. During July of this year, the *Historical Thinking Project* is also hosting a summer



Past SSTA executive members. Back: Allan King, Max Moulton, and Don Clarke. Front: Bill Fougere, John Stone, Carmon Stone, and Owen Ferguson.

institute in Nova Scotia at Pier 21. Provincial teachers are encouraged to attend the *Teacher Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy* in Ottawa every autumn. Internationally, there are also many PD opportunities including the Keizai Koho Centre in Japan, and through the Goethe Institute in Germany. Of course, one of the most meaningful national/international PD opportunities is offered for teachers at the Juno Beach Centre in France in August. Information on and links to these and other PD opportunities, as well as funding and grants, is available on our website www.ssta.nstu.ca.

Like most professional associations of the NSTU, October Conference is a major focus for much of the year. About 500 Social Studies teachers attend the SSTA Annual Conference where they learn from guests and each other. Plans are already underway for the 2013 conference which will be held October 25, 2013 at Lockview High School in Fall River. We'll be doing some extra special activities to commemorate our anniversary including contests for students and some special guests.

COMMUNICATION

In this age of instant and plentiful communication, there is no reason *not* to stay in touch with other Social Studies and classroom teachers across Nova Scotia and beyond. This year, communication with our members is a renewed focus of the SSTA as we commemorate our 50th. We hope that members continue to share their success with each other and with us. In addition to our website and email, members can access the SSTA via Facebook (search our whole name, not our acronym) and Twitter. Being able to reach our membership with a quick message about news, registration deadlines, or PD opportunities in the most efficient and effective way, is one of our goals. The SSTA also offers a fellowship grant for teachers to enhance curriculum and a bursary for BEd students, and works closely with other organizations such as D250 Trust to promote grants and awards for special teacher and student projects. As busy people, Social Studies teachers need to take every opportunity to connect with each other, learn from other teachers and share plans and ideas. New teachers especially need not navigate alone!

Chart your course with us at www.ssta.nstu.ca. Like us on Facebook “Social Studies Teachers Association of Nova Scotia”, or follow us on Twitter @NSSSTA *Happy Navigating and Happy Birthday!*



Putting together conference kits.

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