



CSN | RÉC Early Years to Present, 2005 to 2025

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The Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) traces its origins to an April 2005 meeting at the University of Ottawa. A group of faculty and graduate students from different Canadian Studies programs across the country gathered at the university's Institute of Canadian Studies to discuss the want and need for a new way to ensure yearly meetings to examine, discuss, and explore teaching and research interests and common issues. Prior to 2002, Canadian Studies faculty and students had met at the annual Congress (formerly called the "Learneds") in conference sessions and events organized by the Association for Canadian Studies

(ACS). During this time as well, Canadian Studies program administrators (chairs, heads, directors) had the opportunity to discuss administrative concerns and strategies. After 2002, with the ACS no longer meeting at the annual Congress, Canadian Studies faculty and students began to discuss alternatives for ongoing intellectual and administrative contact and exchange.

The April 2005 meeting was a positive, productive, and practically-minded one. An annual meeting for university Canadian Studies program faculty and students would be restored through the collective efforts of Canadian Studies programs taking turns as host. A flexible five-year plan was outlined, with the first meeting to take place at Trent University in fall 2005 and at Carleton University in 2006. As partners in the joint Trent-Carleton doctoral program in Canadian Studies, the idea to hold the first two meetings at Trent and Carleton ensured graduate student participation from the outset. Subsequent meetings would take place in conjunction with workshops, symposia, conferences or other events that the host Canadian Studies program would organize. With this approach, faculty and students could make use of research support funds to defray travel costs. Equally practical was the decision to operate with a simple steering committee structure. A web portal through the University of Ottawa's Institute for Canadian Studies website offered a means for communicating throughout the year and across the country.

Plans initiated at the April 2005 meeting of Canadian Studies faculty and students in Ottawa took on added importance in 2007 when the ACS withdrew from the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS). This meant that Canadian students could no longer access ICCS programs, including scholarships.

In November 2008, a meeting at Carleton University's School of Canadian Studies refueled the 2005 plans. Colleagues and students proceeded with renewed commitment and energy to establish a scholarly organization for Canadian Studies faculty and students at the university level. Discussion continued at the February 2009 conference at Mount Allison, "Canadian Studies: The State of the Art." By the end of the conference, and now operating under the name Canadian Studies Canadian Network (CSCN), a revitalized steering committee was asked to



investigate a constitution and mission statement to be discussed at Trent University in November 2009. The CSCN was invited to send an observer to the ICCS's Annual General Meeting in May 2009. Representing the Network, I reported on CSCN's development to the international Canadianist assembly, which expressed its interest in and support for CSCN's activities. These efforts came to fruition at CSCN's November 2009 meeting. Great strides were made to formalize the Network, which is now incorporated as Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes.

In 2010, CSN | RÉC formalized its constitution, developed an official administrative structure, determined a fee structure, and designed and launched a free-standing website offering information and sources about Canadian Studies inside and outside Canada. In May 2010, Colin Coates represented the CSN | RÉC at the annual ICCS meeting and conveyed the Network's intention to become an associate member of ICCS. This was accomplished in 2011 through the efforts of the CSN | RÉC's first Executive, elected in November 2010 at Brock University's annual "Two Days of Canada" conference. The CSN | RÉC met annually for years, in keeping with its constitution and its commitment to the interdisciplinary study of Canada through academic conferences and publications.

Colin Coates, Glendon College, York University (2010-2014)



Shortly after my return to Canada in 2004 to a position in Canadian Studies at Glendon College, I learned that York University would host the 2006 Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences. I wrote to the Association for Canadian Studies | Association d'études canadiennes (ACS | AÉC) to suggest that I could help organise their annual conference within the Congress. I knew that the ACS | AÉC had met within Congress in the past. My approach was dismissed out of hand, and I realised that something was wrong.

The ACS | AÉC had stopped functioning as a group representing scholars teaching and researching in Canadian Studies within Canada, even though the association maintained other activities. I had previously spent nine years teaching at the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh, working closely with the British Association for Canadian Studies, and I was aware of the role of the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC), the umbrella group for Canadian Studies activity around the world. When the ACS | AÉC cancelled its membership, there was no longer a Canadian Studies representative body involved in the ICCS | CIÉC. This seemed ironic and unworkable.

Facing this lack of scholarly support, a group of professors and students involved in Canadian Studies programs held a series of meetings to find a way forward (see Figure 1). We concluded on the necessity of establishing a new scholarly association for Canadian Studies in Canada. Trent University became the CSN | RÉC institutional home, that is, the mailing address, for the association, and Frost Centre director, Julia Harrison, played a key role in finding administrative help as we navigated the complexities of establishing a not-for-profit organisation. Lynda



Mannik, a former Trent University and York University graduate student, thought through many details and contributed a fine artistic sensibility to our branding. In 2012, Karli Whitmore joined to run the the CSN | RÉC website, a role she has kept until her retirement in 2026. The job postings that Karli maintained represent a key contribution of our association to the professional development of our members.

Figure 1: Planning Meetings, Pre-CSN | RÉC

2005: Trent University (discussion vs. conference)
2005: University of Ottawa (discussion vs. conference)
2008: Carleton University
2009: Mount Allison University
2009: Trent University (planning, with some presentations)
2010: Brock University (first official Network meeting)

We drafted a constitution for the CSN | RÉC, and we worked closely with the ICCS | CIÉC. We were warmly welcomed into the association, and in 2011, we became full members. From the start, we wanted to establish a bilingual organisation, even while we recognised that most of the programs described as ‘Canadian Studies’ were located in English-language institutions.

In the early years of the CSN | RÉC, we wanted to stress our scholarly role. We therefore joined forces with some of the centres of Canadian Studies across the country, holding our annual meeting as part of their thematic conferences, some of which were part of their annual cycle of activities, but others that helped to expand the disciplinary and geographical reach of our association (see Figure 2). We chose to remain outside of the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences, in part for financial reasons, but also because our multi-disciplinary nature made it difficult to meet in the context of Congress. Already, for many members who planned to attend their own disciplinary meetings, adding another conference at the same time would stretch their attendance at Congress. The CSN | RÉC did not have the capacity to run its own annual conferences, and we relied on the local centres to host us.

Figure 2: Conference History

2011: Glendon College, York University
2012: University of British Columbia
2013: Saint Mary’s University–Mount Allison University
2014: University of Prince Edward Island
2015: McGill University
2016: Carleton University
2017: York University
2018: St-Boniface University
2019: Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (in Montréal)



Canadian Studies programs across the country face the challenge of attracting majors to our programs. Typically, our courses attract a range of students from other disciplines, but universities tend to privilege programs that have large numbers of majors. We realised that the fact that ‘Canadian Studies’ was not listed as a ‘teachable’ subject reduced our ability to attract students, despite the obvious relevance to provincial elementary- and secondary-level curricula. We engaged in early discussions to find a way to register ‘Canadian Studies’ as a distinct teachable subject in Ontario, but the long timeline unfortunately discouraged us from pursuing this option.

The CSN | RÉC has continued to evolve in the context of the reduction of the focus on ‘Canadian Studies’ teaching in many universities, and the federal government’s wrong-headed decision in 2012 to eliminate the “Understanding Canada | Comprendre le Canada” program for international Canadianists. This program aimed to increase academic attention to the study of Canada outside the country and therefore was never central to our activities. The cancellation of the program affected morale for Canadianists around the world, and subsequent governments have not restored similar funding opportunities.

Jane Koustas, Brock University (2014-2016)



It was a pleasure and an honour to serve as the President of the Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d’études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) from 2014 to 2016. I was most fortunate to have followed outstanding presidents and to have been supported by an excellent executive. I interpreted my role as a promoter, community builder and network developer in my capacity as a representative for Canadian Studies on the local, national and international stages.

On the local scene, particularly in my home university, I perceived the need to increase awareness of the tremendous contribution that the study of Canada makes to the knowledge and research fabric of the university and to the students’ education. On this point, I will add that furthering the study of Canada is an easier task than promoting a centre or department labelled Canadian Studies as the latter is seen as in competition with other units. Courses offered by the Centre for Canadian Studies provide students with an interdisciplinary perspective on Canadian history and culture, politics, sociology and economics unavailable in discipline specific programmes. This selling point should be reinforced at all meetings and events within the university and wider community. By bringing together Canadianists from across the university to serve, for example, in the Brock University community, on the board or to participate in events such as the annual “Two Days of Canada” conference or Brock University’s own-going partnership with the State University of New York at Buffalo and with other nearby institutions on both sides of the border, the Centre creates networks and communities of scholars who, through discovering mutual research connections, form research hubs. Students benefit tremendously from all activities that involve students and scholars from other universities; they



understand the value of the study of Canada. The CSN | RÉC actively organizes and promotes these activities and, through networking, encourages them widely.

It is increasingly important to push for hiring across the university to further the study of Canada. When Canadianists, some of whom were hired during the incentives inspired by the *Simons' Report*, retire, they are commonly not replaced by scholars with a focus on Canada. Subjects such as Canadian history, literature, including Canadian literature in French, geography, politics are taught less regularly and frequently by part-time instructors who, while very competent, are not necessarily invited to contribute to the overall research fabric and programme development of the university. The CSN | RÉC has a role in pointing out and addressing this deficit.

While President, I had the privilege of leading the awards programme. This is an essential element in the outreach of the organization as the prizes provide students and senior and junior scholars with very valuable recognition. The awards also publicize the significant accomplishments of Canadianists and should be announced and celebrated at the recipients' universities and on the national and international front.

The CSN | RÉC website promotes the organization, connects the membership and serves as an excellent publicity tool demonstrating the strength and professionalism of the CSN | RÉC. As a delegate to the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC), the President of the CSN | RÉC has a tremendous opportunity to publicize the students' and colleagues' significant accomplishments, to update international colleagues on developments in research and teaching, and to build networks. The ICCS remains actively involved in securing government support and, as a nationally based delegate, the President of the CSN | RÉC can contribute to this effort.

As President, I was grateful for the opportunity to promote the study of Canada through managing the CSN | RÉC and, as well, by participating in a range of activities including academic conferences, membership on boards or evaluation committees for the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences for the ICCS | CIÉC, attendance at local and national events such as award ceremonies and research workshops and, in my own institution, Brock University, meetings, however contentious, dealing with the future of the study of Canada.

Andrea Beverley, Mount Allison University (2016-2018)



The founding members of the Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) were prescient to choose the nouns *network* and *réseau* to describe the group they created. My experience of CSN | RÉC was indeed one of being welcomed into national and international networks of kind people with overlapping scholarly pursuits. I first served as Vice-President (2015-2016), then President (2016-2018), and finally, Past-President (2018-2019). We held virtual board meetings (referring to them as “teleconferences” in that era



before ubiquitous online gatherings) and met in person at our Annual General Meeting. At this point, many of CSN | RÉC's core features were in place: regular email announcements, annual awards, tiered memberships, and administrative support.

While we were pleased with the wide reach of CSN | RÉC's mailing lists and memberships, we wanted to connect with new scholarly communities. We developed a postcard-sized promotional handout (bilingual, with a lovely autumnal colour palette, if I recall correctly) for distribution at any relevant conference or event. We also scheduled our 2018 Annual General Meeting in conjunction with the conference "La Francophonie de l'Ouest, d'hier à demain," to meet scholars working in French beyond Québec and the Maritimes. Held at Saint-Boniface University, this conference constituted an in-person encounter with the diversity of Francophone communities in Canada, well beyond my Acadian setting on the east coast. This is an example of how the topics that we discuss in our Canadian Studies classrooms and that are recurrent in broader Canadian cultural conversations – in this case, the diversity of *la Francophonie* – are lived out in the workings of organizations like CSN | RÉC. Beyond nation-state borders, CSN | RÉC was also the site through which I first encountered the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC). Collaborating with experts in Canadian Studies from all around the world is a rich, eye-opening experience that would benefit any Canada-based Canadianist.

An additional joy of serving as CSN | RÉC President was being given the task of delivering good news to our well-deserving prize winners and student funding recipients. I remember, for instance, contacting graduate students for whom CSN | RÉC funding meant that they could present their research at international, interdisciplinary conferences for the first time. I also recall celebrating when Brittany Luby was awarded the Best Doctoral Dissertation Prize for her thesis entitled, "Drowned: Anishinabek Economies and Resistance to Hydroelectric Development in the Winnipeg River Drainage Basin, 1873-1975," which then went on to win the Brian Long Best Doctoral Dissertation in Canadian Studies at the international level. The prizes and awards shine a spotlight on significant scholarly contributions that offer critical, innovative perspectives on this Northern part of Turtle Island. They make a difference to individual careers, certainly, but they also serve all the scholars who are alerted to these works when they are recognized and disseminated through CSN | RÉC.

When I joined the CSN | RÉC Board, I was still a pre-tenure, early career scholar and had only been part of a Canadian Studies program for a few years. Working with the other board members and the larger CSN | RÉC network was formative for me. I had the privilege of collaborating with many esteemed colleagues, including Jane Koustas, Kevin Spooner, Peter Thompson, Colin Coates, Renée Hulan, Eytayo Aloh, and many others. At my home institution, Mount Allison University, Christl Verduyn and Andrew Nurse provided exemplary mentorship. Now, more than ten years since I first became involved with CSN | RÉC, I continue to maintain an individual and institutional membership, and to click on the weekly links informing me of news and opportunities I would not otherwise encounter. I believe that this is the case for many people in this broad, interdisciplinary *network/réseau*.



Renée Hulan, Saint Mary's University (2018-2021)



When the colleagues led by Christl Verduyn chose the name Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) for the new association incorporated in 2010, the name signaled the importance of community to successful intellectual work and critical practice. After all, networks are made of people, and when I recall my time on the executive of the CSN | RÉC, it is with gratitude for the vital and unique talents each member contributed to the group: Andrea Beverly, Kevin Spooner, Jaime Yard, Pamela Sing, Dominic Hardy, Tony Tremblay, and Gemma Marr, and for Karli Whitmore, whose administrative skill makes the network operate smoothly.

As an Executive, we prioritized research, especially by new scholars and graduate students. A broad survey of graduate students and addition of spotlights on the website's 'Student Zone', both initiatives of graduate student representative, Gemma Marr, drew attention to student research. At Andrea Beverly's initiative, the CSN | RÉC hosted a session on research at the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC) meeting in Ottawa, an event that I was delighted to co-organize and chair. At the time, the ICCS estimated there were as many as 7,000 Canadian Studies researchers worldwide, and connecting with their association representatives was an uplifting experience for Canadian scholars facing perennial challenges. During my time on the CSN | RÉC Executive, there were challenges that included declines in membership; funding cutbacks, which lead to the slow hollowing out of institutions, including the ICCS | CIÉC; a crisis of accountability across universities and society; and the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to 2020, the CSN | RÉC had held its annual meeting at a Canadian Studies conference and aimed to meet in a different location each year. With declining membership in mind, and seeking to welcome more francophone members, Andrea Beverly and I travelled to Saint-Boniface where the annual general meeting was hosted in 2018, and in 2019, CSN | RÉC members gathered at the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States conference in Montreal.

In 2020, circumstances forced us online, and in the years to follow, virtual and hybrid meetings became a standard practice with both benefits and drawbacks. To address declining membership, we actively reached out to try to broaden the CSN | RÉC, and recognizing that much of the work on Canada and Québec happens in diverse disciplines, we looked to increase participation of researchers across programs by inviting colleagues in institutions without dedicated programs in Canadian and Québec Studies to serve on CSN | RÉC prize committees. This strategy highlighted the fact that, while programs continue to be closed or to evolve into new fields, excellent work on topics of concern to the many nations and identities represented by the Canadian state continues, and that this work should be recognized and celebrated.

There has never been a more urgent need to critically engage with the idea of Canada, and Canadian Studies within established programs and across others is where that engagement happens.



Pamela Sing, Campus St-Jean, University of Alberta (2021-2023)



I served as President of the Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) for the 2021-2023 term. I had retired from the Campus St-Jean, the French campus of the University of Alberta, in 2019, but having greatly enjoyed my experience as the 2015-2018 Director of the *Institut d'études canadiennes* housed at the Campus St-Jean, I decided to take the position of the CSN | RÉC's Vice-President for 2020-2021.

As the 2021-2023 President, I was most fortunate to work alongside Anthony Tremblay, of St. Thomas University, who was the Secretary-Treasurer. His judicious attention to detail and willingness to dialogue was indispensable to the organization's continued good health.

Together, we reluctantly, but effectively, addressed the spiny issue of an increasing financial deficit by proposing adjustments to the CSN | RÉC's membership rates, and in a second instance, to the financial stipends accompanying our numerous prizes.

Other than the abovementioned challenge of ensuring the future financial viability of the organization, I tended to the CSN | RÉC President's usual tasks, all of which are related to the organization's overarching goal: celebrating and encouraging interest and scholarship in Canadian Studies. I wish to highlight my work in relation to our many prizes designed to achieve that goal. My single most significant accomplishment concerned the composition of prize juries: I invited Francophone colleagues to sit on each of our prize juries. Most of them accepted my invitation, and the suggestion that they first become members of the CSN | RÉC. That one strategy increased the visibility of Francophones and Francophone studies within the organization, and encouraged the submission of scholarly studies in French, or at least on francophone questions, to our different prize categories. It was a first important step to ensuring the inclusiveness and diversity of a meaningfully *Canadian* organization. Moreover, the participation of Francophones on the juries saved us money, since they, and I, were able to ensure bilingual communications, which helped the organization reduce translation fees.

The CSN | RÉC President has customarily ensured that the recipients of our prizes for the Best Doctoral Dissertation and Best Book submit their works for the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC) Brian Long and Pierre Savard awards. Perhaps exceptionally, as Vice-President, then as President, I saw fit to edit, where required, their abstracts and letters. I also attended the ICCS | CIÉC annual meetings and reported on new developments to members of the CSN | RÉC.

In 2023, I went beyond these tasks: at the behest of the ICCS | CIÉC, I wrote a letter to the Canadian Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, about reinstating the "Understanding Canada | Comprendre le Canada" program. After submitting that letter, I became Past President, but the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade nevertheless invited me to appear at their 27 April 2023 meeting. At this occasion, I shared my views about how Canadian Studies programs, and culture and the arts, advance Canada's



interests around the world. While the government has yet to restore the Program, it is gratifying to note the Senate committee's interest in the CSN | RÉC's perspective.

Chantal Richard, University of New Brunswick (2023-2025)



I joined the Board of the Canadian Studies Network | Réseau d'études canadiennes (CSN | RÉC) as Vice-President in November 2022, under the presidency of Pamela Sing. Her collegiality and support were instrumental during this transition, particularly as I assumed the role of President in March 2023, a position I held for a two-year term.

During my presidency, I convened two Annual General Meetings and participated virtually in the Annual General Meetings of the International Council for Canadian Studies | Conseil international des études canadiennes (ICCS | CIÉC), held each June. In my role as the CSN | RÉC representative to the ICCS | CIÉC, I served twice on the adjudication committees for the Governor General's International Award for Canadian Studies. I also submitted annual nominations on behalf of CSN | RÉC for both the Governor General's International Award and the Pierre Savard Award.

A central component of my responsibilities involved overseeing the administration of CSN | RÉC's prize competitions. This included coordinating the formation of juries, supervising adjudication processes, and conferring awards in the following categories: Best Book, Best Edited Collection, Best Article, Best Doctoral Dissertation, and Best Master's or Undergraduate Paper. Within the constraints of a limited budget, several modest but meaningful reforms to the prize structure were implemented. Monetary awards for non-student categories were discontinued, allowing for an increase in financial support for student awards. In addition, formal certificates were introduced and distributed to all recipients, providing a symbolic yet cost-effective form of recognition.

Further adjustments were made to enhance equity and accessibility. In response to the relative underrepresentation of French-language scholarship, and to address the growing volume of submissions, the Best Book and Best Edited Collection categories were divided by language. This change not only facilitated a more equitable evaluation process, but also alleviated the burden on jurors, for whom bilingual proficiency had previously been a prerequisite. Finally, a special recognition category was introduced to acknowledge submissions that meaningfully engage with the principles and calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

In June 2024, I contributed to the broader scholarly community by evaluating twenty-five conference proposals for the "Réseau de la recherche sur la francophonie canadienne" Summer Conference. I also chaired a panel at the 2024 International Canadian Studies Summit, held virtually on June 10, 2024, and jointly organized by the ICCS | CIÉC and the Robarts Centre at York University. Although my tenure as Vice-President and subsequently President of CSN | RÉC was relatively brief, it afforded numerous rewarding opportunities. These included



engaging with colleagues from diverse international contexts, gaining insight into innovative research on Canada, and contributing to a vibrant scholarly network dedicated to advancing understanding of Canada's complex and evolving social, cultural, and political landscapes.