

Editor's Foreword

Fifty years ago a partnership was born: the Ontario and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Societies joined forces to form a Joint Committee committed to writing a national history and collaborating with the newly established Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC Canada); the Joint Committee would quickly evolve into a full fledged national society: the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC). Subsequently the three-volume *Mennonites in Canada* history series was launched, creating a national Canadian identity by interpreting this history from 1786 to 1970. To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of MHSC this issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* continues the work of the *Mennonites in Canada* series and seeks to break the ground on interpreting the history of Mennonites in Canada since 1970. Most of the papers in the first part of this issue were first presented at the 'A People of Diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970' history conference held at the University of Winnipeg on November 15-17, 2018.

The first of these papers, by Marlene Epp, the author of *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*, an MHSC-sponsored publication, served as the conference's keynote address. Focusing not only on women, a much overlooked subject in the earlier iteration of the *Mennonites in Canada* series, Epp introduces an innovative methodology by suggesting that the cookbook, the most widely 'read' of any Mennonite text, can be used as metaphor and indeed lens through which changes in the Canadian Mennonite community since 1970 can be considered.

Four short reflective pieces follow. The first of these works is an autobiographical account by T. D. Regehr, both as an early member of MHSC and then as author of volume three of the *Mennonites in Canada* series. The three following pieces take us to the dynamic edges of a newly diverse Canadian Mennonite communi-

ty. They introduce works by Irma Fast Dueck on her work documenting LGBTQ+ stories in Mennonite Church Canada, Paul Lam on the British Columbia Chinese-Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches, and Barbara Draper on changes in fashion and teaching among the youth of the 'plain people' Markum-Waterloo Mennonite community in which she grew up.

These pieces are followed by a dozen peer-reviewed papers that explore the wide diversity that has come to constitute the story of Mennonites in Canada since 1970. We begin with a paper by Sam Steiner, a former president of MHSC, which outlines the history of the society. He traces the society from the time that it was conceived as a cultural instrument of MCC Canada, through the completion of the three-volume series. He also highlights the creation of MHSC's Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) and the innovative Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites (DVCM) program. This program, as was the *Mennonites in Canada* series, was also funded by MCC Canada.

The next three papers, each a focused case study, take us into the cultural and social corners of the Canadian Mennonite community since 1970 by considering questions of indigeneity, gender, and class. Daniel Sims weaves an intricate portrait of a nexus of the Ingenika Tsay Keh Nay in northern British Columbia, their search for ancestral land, and the advocacy of a Mennonite missionary at odds with settler colonialism. Lucille Marr, another former MHSC president, introduces a small, but dynamic cadre of evangelical women within a similarly small, but dynamic seven-church Mennonite community in Quebec and argues that the roles of these women have simply been overlooked in the history of Mennonites in *la belle province*. In her evocative piece, Janis Thiessen reminds us that this period also held a sharp, class-based discourse as young radicals, like Simon Fraser University student John Braun, armed with a Canada Council grant, set out on a North American tour to rouse support for the so-called "Radical Mennonite Union."

Three nationally focused works, that in a sense expand on the case studies above, follow. Lauren Harder-Gissing, the current MHSC president, using a variety of archival sources, examines multiple ways in which a small but significant cadre of Canadian Mennonites became social activists in the last decades of the century. Then Carol Penner, mining the pages of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* and various iterations of *The Canadian Mennonite*, argues that how women were featured in these media corresponded to the ways their respective Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church denominations accepted them into ministerial

roles. In yet another national survey, Bruce Guenther introduces a decided shift in Canada, now not from Bible School to College as in his earlier work, but from the Bible College into the University, that is, both into the 'Mennonite' university *per se* and into integrated programing in the public university.

The final five papers are again more regional in focus, and now with a focus on ethnicity and class within an evolving, but dominant middle class culture of Canada. In her paper, Robyn Sneath introduces one aspect of the massive migration of Low German speaking migrants from Mexico to Canada with a specific focus on the divergent educational and class-based aspirations within one family in one community, Winkler, in southern Manitoba. Zacharie Leclair takes us back to Quebec and considers how an initial, 'radical' evangelical impulse within Catholic Quebec evolved into a settled, middle class evangelicalism that struggled to maintain its religious edge within a rapidly secularizing part of Canada. Brian Froese explores the ways evangelical missions came face-to-face with new ways of seeing the duty of transformation in British Columbia. Jodey Nurse's study of Old Order Mennonite dairy farmers in Ontario highlights their struggle with an increasingly intrusive government seeking to both regulate the food industry with technological demands and preserve the family farm with a legally binding quota system.

Two of these regionally specific papers consider how an ethnic identity was reinvented and performed in Manitoba. Jeremy Wiebe argues that the 1974 centennial of the first migration of Mennonites to Manitoba introduced both a desire of the disparate Mennonite groups in Manitoba to work together in this celebration, but also a desire to 'perform' an identity that linked imagined Mennonite attributes with the values of middle class Canada. Jenna Klassen then highlights the way the descendants of another Mennonite migration to Manitoba, that of the *Russländer* who arrived in the 1920s, 'reinvented' an ethnic identity as they donated specific artifacts brought to Canada by their parents and grandparents to the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba in the years after 1970.

The 'Regular Research Paper' section takes us from the near past into previous centuries. It ponders two crucially important theological and cultural constructions in the history of Anabaptism: the concepts of '*Privilegium*' and 'Gospel of all Creatures.' Both interpret the ways Anabaptists lived out their faith within broader realms. In the first instance, James Urry returns to his first foray into Mennonite history, nineteenth century Mennonites in Russia, and provides a genealogy of the *Privilegium*, the Charter

of Privileges that shaped the very social foundation of the Russian sojourn. But he argues that the Privilegium also evolved over time, moving between religious and political realms, challenged by forces both internal and external to the Mennonite community. In the second paper, Maxwell Kennel reinterprets sixteenth century Anabaptist radical, Hans Hut's 'Gospel of all Creatures' theology and argues that this theology offered a cosmology that effectively challenged the Christian dichotomy of church and world, a religious understanding that is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was in the sixteenth.

As usual, we conclude the volume with some twenty book reviews in both literature and history, a section that signals the continuing rich scholarship of mostly North American-based Mennonite writers and scholars. I want to acknowledge here the leadership of Rob Zacharias (also the Associate Editor of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*) and Brian Froese, our two book review editors. I also acknowledge with profound gratitude the untiring work of our copyeditors, Muriel Smith and Hans Werner, and their commitment to excellence. Then, I salute, as always, the work of our managing editor, Andrea Dyck, and her exacting and imaginative work in layout, and our financial manager, Sandy Tolman, who oversees our subscription list. Finally, a note of gratitude to the editorial committee which meets twice a year and offers counsel to the editorial team.

Please enjoy, ponder, appreciate, critique, imagine.

Royden Loewen, editor