Introduction

This conference asks you to remember the history of MCC Canada. You may have helped assemble Christmas bundles for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to share with needy children in a distant war-torn country. You may remember mealtime discussions about MCC and Vietnam, the Middle East, and a simmering Cold War. You may remember serving overseas somewhere as a young adult. These are Esther Epp-Tiessen’s memories and those that guided her thinking as she set out to write the history of MCC Canada.

Her account is that of an insider/outsider observer: insider, as long term worker for MCC Canada; outsider, as author working under the auspices of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. It is an insider book in its reliance on MCC Canada documents, interviews with MCC workers, and Mennonite periodicals. But it is an outsider account in its independent and critical analysis of the organization and movement.

This conference begins with the launching of Esther’s book, Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History. It then proceeds to responses to this book, analyzing it, and pondering how it relates to a wider story of faith and charity in Canada, and MCC as a global movement.

The story of MCC in Canada is one of people coming together because of a shared history, identity and mission. That history, rooted in the Anabaptist movement, emphasizes a commitment to the way of Christ, to nonviolence, to service to the poor, and to justice. But it is also a story of people debating what this challenge means. MCC Canada reflects the varied church groups that own this organization, as well as the diversity of volunteers and vocations seeking to address suffering wherever it is found.

This conference celebrates MCC Canada’s fiftieth anniversary in 2013, but the story begins well before December 13, 1963, certainly as far back as 1920. It is also more than just an account of MCC Canada for this story includes provincial MCCs, the binational (U.S. and Canada) level of MCC, and the global ministry of MCC. It is thus the story of both “MCC Canada” and “MCC in Canada.”

And it is a story that unfolds over time. It is a story of a shifting foci of service over the decades, of vibrant personalities, of changing vocabularies, of new ways of seeing the world’s social needs. It is a decade-by-decade story, one reflecting distinct phases: birth, growth, maturation, decline, and then, rebirth or re-invention.

At this conference we ponder, critique and celebrate a story of caring for one another and for others, for communities worldwide, and for our earth. It is a story inspired by faith and commitment.

The Program

Friday, December 13, 2013
7:30 p.m. (Evening Session)

MCC IN CANADA: A BOOK LAUNCH
Chair and Conference Introduction: Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg
Esther Epp-Tiessen, Winnipeg, keynote address, “Writing the Story of MCC in Canada”
Book Signing and Reception to follow

Saturday, December 14, 2013
(Morning Session)

MCC CANADA IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT
8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.:
Part I: Dynamics at the Centre
Chair: Korey Dyck, Mennonite Heritage Centre  
Lucille Marr, McGill University,  
“Gender and Generation in the MCC Story”  
T.D. Regehr, University of Calgary,  
“Canadian Mennonite Identity and MCC”

3:00-4:30  
Part II: Programs  
Chair: Jennifer Duerksen, Steinbach Christian High School  
Restorative Justice – Wayne Northey, Agassiz, BC  
Canadian Foodgrains Bank – John Wieler, Winnipeg  
Voluntary Service – Hardy Groening, Winnipeg  
MCC Ottawa Office – William Janzen, Ottawa

PONDERING THE FUTURE  
AND COLLECTING THE VOICES  
4:30 – 5 p.m.  
Chair: Dora Dueck, Winnipeg  
Stefan Epp-Koop, Winnipeg,  
“Envisioning MCC in Canada in 2038”  
Acknowledgements – the Committee

9:45-10:15 Coffee

10:15-12:00 p.m.  
Part II: Broadening the Story  
Chair: Jane Barter Moulaison, University of Winnipeg  
Alain Epp Weaver, Mennonite Central Committee, Akron,  
“MCC Canada and the Global Community”  
Paul Bramadat, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria,  
“Religion and the ‘Common Good’ in Canada”

12:00-1:00 LUNCH

Saturday, December 14, 2013  
(Afternoon Session)

STORIES:  
SURPRISES, SETBACKS AND SUCCESSES

1:00-2:30  
Part I: People  
Chair: Peter Epp, Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna  
Indigenous people – Rick Cober Bauman, Shakespeare, ON  
Women – Eileen Klassen Hamm, Saskatoon  
Refugees – Marijke Olson, Abbotsford  
Low German Mennonites – Mary Friesen, Winnipeg

2:30-3:00 Coffee

Conference Details:  
Special Recognition:  
The conference organizing committee gratefully recognizes Ken Reddig, former executive director of MCC Manitoba, who first proposed the idea of a 50th anniversary history of MCC Canada and offered leadership to the Steering Committee that conceptualized the book.

History Book Steering Committee:  

History Book Readers Committee:  
Stefan Epp-Koop, Lucille Marr, Ken Reddig, Ted Regehr.

History Conference Planning Committee:  
Stefan Epp-Koop, Esther Epp-Tiessen, Royden Loewen, Pamela Peters-Pries.

Lodging:  
Suggested lodging is at Holiday Inn, Colony Street, Winnipeg. Phone 204-786-7011 and ask for special Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg rates.

Parking:  
Park at any one of a dozen Impac parking lots around the University, at the ANX parkade off of Colony, or the Hudson’s Bay Parkade. Street parking on both Friday night and on Saturdays is possible as well.

Food:  
Eat at any one of a dozen restaurants within a block or two of the University or at one of the University’s five restaurants: Stella’s, Elements, Riddell Hall Cafeteria, Starbucks, etc.

Funding:  
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The Book:  
by Esther Epp-Tiessen, Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History published by Canadian Mennonite University Press.