

MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA
Minutes of Board Meeting
CMU, Winnipeg, MB
January 19, 2024

PRESENT: 20

Jake Buhler, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
Gary Dyck, Mennonite Heritage Village
Aileen Friesen, University of Winnipeg
Bert Friesen, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Genealogy Committee
Brian Froese, Canadian Mennonite University
Bruce Guenther, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada Executive member
Katie Harder, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Laureen Harder-Gissing, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
Jon Isaak, Canadian Mennonite Brethren Studies
Linda Klassen, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada secretary
Ed Krahn, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg
Henry Paetkau, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
John Reddekopp, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
Alf Redekopp, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Church Canada
Richard Thiessen, Mennonite Heritage Museum
Brent Wiebe, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Jeremy Wiebe, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, treasurer
Victor Wiebe, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan

1. **Welcome** – Conrad Stoesz opened the meeting at 2:50pm.

2. **Approval of agenda**

– add to #5 - Russlaender Documentary committee.

The agenda was accepted as presented with the noted change.

3. **Minutes** - Linda Klassen reviewed the minutes from January 20, 2023 M: Linda Klassen, S: Ben Nobbs-Thiessen to accept the minutes as presented. **CARRIED**

4. **Business arising**: there was no new business.

5. **Approval of committee Roster**:

a. 1922 Migration Commemoration Committee: Jeremy Wiebe (co-chair),
Andrea Klassen (co-chair), Dick Braun, Leonard Doell, Aileen Friesen, Conrad Stoesz.

- b. A People of Diversity Committee (book project): Ben Nobbs-Thiessen (chair), Jeremy Wiebe, Laureen Harder-Gissing, Brian Froese, Lucille Marr, Conrad Stoesz, Bruce Guenther.
- c. Archives Committee: Laureen Harder-Gissing (chair), Dave Neufeldt, Conrad Stoesz, Jon Isaak, Dick Braun, Linda Klassen. A Quebec representative will be invited.
- d. Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites: Ben Nobbs-Thiessen (chair) Brian Froese, Lucille Marr, Leonard Doell, Laureen Harder-Gissing, Jeremy Wiebe, Bruce Guenther, Ruth Plett.
- e. Genealogy Committee: Bert Friesen reported that this committee is closing but will need a representative for the new Mennonite Genealogy Inc.
- f. MAID Management Committee: Conrad Stoesz (chair) Laureen Harder-Gissing, Alf Redekopp, Hannah Keeney, John Thiesen.
- g. MHSC GAMEO Committee: Laureen Harder-Gissing (chair), Bert Friesen, Richard Thiessen, Aileen Friesen, Alf Redekopp.
- h. Russlaender Centenary committee: Henry Paetkau (chair), Ingrid Moehlmann (vice-chair), Richard Thiessen, Katie Harder, Gary Friesen, Jake Buhler, Aileen Friesen, Luke Martin, Darryl Loewen, Cheryl Isaac, Harold Thiessen.
- i. Russlaender Documentary Committee: Aileen Friesen, Conrad Stoesz, Richard Thiessen, Jeremy Wiebe, Dave Y. Neufeld (Ontario).
- i. Website Committee: Andrew Klassen Brown (chair), Jeremy Wiebe.

6. **Award of Excellence**: Ken Reddig has been nominated for the 2024 Award of Excellence and the executive committee has approved it. Conrad read the citation. **Motion to approve the nomination**: Laureen Harder-Gissing, S: Jon Isaak. **CARRIED**.

7. **New Business:**

- a. Genealogy Committee: from a Canadian perspective, the work of this committee has been completed. It was suggested that we should become part of Mennonite Genealogy Inc. and make a nominal financial donation to confirm the partnership.
- b. Grandma has been part of the California Historical Society, which is shutting down. The Grandma committee is creating a separate society called Mennonite Genealogy Inc. As Richard Thiessen will be on the board of this new committee it doesn't work to have a representative from MHSC.

Further discussion should continue tonight and with a decision to follow at the AGM.

8. **Financial Review**: Jeremy handed out the financial statements and reported that we are in a healthy position with no deficit remaining in the genealogy fund. Spending and revenue were in line with expectations. Donations were higher than budgeted due to additional Russlaender 100 Tour donations. Expenditures were higher than revenue due to Russlaender costs, but this was expected.

- DVCM received their funding after the cut off date of the financial statements. A large GST refund is due to the Russlaender 100 Tour.

- Annual General Meeting expenditures were recorded before reimbursements from the participating societies were received. Jeremy will make some edits to the statements for tomorrow's meeting.

- Amounts for the current meetings will be presented at the AGM. The Saskatchewan meetings in 2023 came in at \$13,700, which was \$1,000 less than budgeted.

9. **Nominating Committee:** Jon Isaak reported that all current executive committee members have agreed to another year of service.

10. **MHSC Meeting schedule:** the question was raised whether we should build in virtual meetings into our meeting schedule. Some reasons for this are the cost of the meetings as well as the environmental impact of travel. Feedback included the following questions and comments:

- there is little chemistry online but lots in person;
- should we meet in Winnipeg every year?
- we could alternate and have virtual meetings every other year;
- can we create hybrid meetings for those who can't come?
- we could build in a virtual meeting every 3 years, ie: Manitoba – Ontario – Virtual;
- we lose spontaneous ideas & conversations as well as informal issues of long-term development by going virtual;
- MHSC has a very wide mandate making a virtual meeting much harder to do. Virtual/hybrid meetings work for committees with a narrow mandate;
- field trips are a bonus!
- decision making is easier in person;
- there is lots of learning in person;
- we have three big societies and three small ones. Could we meet more often at the larger societies, and less often in the smaller ones? A redistribution of meetings would, for example, make it easier for Quebec to participate in meetings held in Ontario;
- there is a greater appreciation of the accomplishments and challenges of other societies;
- people see us as a group, an entity that can be seen and that is working, there are lots of connecting points;
- Chairing hybrid meeting is difficult. Meeting in person every year allows for better networking, catching up and a sense of purpose & identity;
- Cost is a factor;
- Creating a live stream or virtual option has value for some to participate partially, but it only works if you have the right equipment and the right set up in the room. It doesn't have the same social connectivity. A proper camera costs \$2,500. An "Owl" camera was offered as a loan for next year; we can try it and then evaluate it.
- It's difficult to get conversation going and to create chemistry in a virtual meeting;
- We should continue discussions in the future, but stay the course for now. We can try some of these things with smaller committees;
- Virtual meetings are being used more and more.

Q: Are fees collected by MHSC covering the cost of our meetings? A: Yes, unless its in an expensive location. The budget for our meetings is \$15,000. The cost of the 2023 meetings was \$13,700 in which was about \$1,000 under budget. Our 2024 meeting will be about \$11,000, less reimbursements.

11. **Other:**

a. Travel policy & guidelines: Jeremy reported that transportation, meals & lodging are covered by MHSC. He added the following paragraph to the guidelines:

“If a private vehicle is used, reimbursement will be provided at 80% of the Canada Revenue Agency’s ‘Reasonable per-kilometre allowance’. The amount charged for private vehicle use shall not exceed the lesser of the cost of vehicle rental plus estimated fuel cost or economy airfare.”

Membership fees have not changed in a long time.

Q: How would each society respond to higher rates? A: some responded negatively but many were positive about an increase.

- Membership fees are a recommendation, not a hard and fast rule.

b. Manitoba 150 anniversary: A fall conference is planned for early October by CTMS.

c. Reports:

Q: Can we put our report package on the website? It would be nice to have reports from previous years posted. Is there anything too personal? A: Perhaps we would write reports differently if they were going to be public. The website is the best way to preserve them for archival purposes. Copies are already held at Mennonite Heritage Archive. Richard posts all reports to the cloud.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by
Linda Klassen