



**Mennonite  
Historical  
Society of  
Canada**

NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 19, 2026

## **Mennonite Historical Society of Canada releases new documentary**

After taking a year to catch their collective breaths, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) began 2026 with the release of a new documentary, *The Russlaender Migration: From Revolution to Reflection*. It tells the story of the migration of Russian Mennonites to Canada in the 1920s and the cross-country train trip to commemorate this time 100 years later. The film, produced by Refuge 31 Films, and guided by the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies, contains footage from the train trip and events along the way, as well as historic photos and background stories from a variety of archives. It will be shown in various locations across Canada and later will also be available on YouTube. Funding was provided by the government of Canada and private funders.

The annual general meetings of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada were held in Winnipeg on January 23 and 24, 2026. Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> was filled with meetings and activities. The AGM was held on Saturday, the 24<sup>th</sup>. Provincial Mennonite historical societies and institutions shared about the work they are doing and the successes and challenges they experienced in the previous year.

Every year, MHSC presents the Award of Excellence to a person who has made significant contributions to the advancement of Canadian Mennonite history by way of research, writing, organization or the dissemination of Mennonite historical knowledge. This year the award was presented to Bert Friesen for his work as a genealogist, author, editor and contributor to provincial and national Mennonite historical societies. He expressed his gratitude for the award and said it was an honour to be recognized. He challenged members of the MHSC that more work needs to be done to provide access to historically significant records through digitization and deal with digital born records that the Mennonite community continues to create at a fast pace.

The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) is an important resource in preserving and sharing our Mennonite stories. Last year there were 386,000 visits to the website from around the world. In 2025, 41 new articles were created and 71 existing articles were edited.

The Mennonite Archival Information Database (MAID) is vital to the work of the Society. It supports Mennonite archives in managing information and providing public access to historically significant materials. At the end of 2025, there were 99,830 images and 317,299 descriptions of

photos and archival records. The database is made up of partners from Canada, the USA and Paraguay. In 2025 the project welcomed the 18th partner, the Hutterite Historical Association.

MHSC was first formed to write a history of Mennonites in Canada and three volumes were created, but the work continues. Brian Froese of Canadian Mennonite University and Laureen Harder-Gissing of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario are working on volume four focusing on the Mennonite experience in Canada 1970–2020.

On Friday morning attendees enjoyed a visit to the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. A number of local Mennonites were involved in the programmatic planning stages of the museum, which was built in a striking, post-modern style. The large variety of exhibits includes two important events in Mennonite History. *Canadian Journeys* has a feature about conscientious objectors during WWII, most of whom were Mennonite. The *Breaking the Silence* gallery includes the Holodomor, a government induced famine in Ukraine in 1932–33 that killed millions of Ukrainians, including Mennonites.

In the evening the group enjoyed a tour of the Mennonite Heritage Archive collections and a private viewing of the documentary *The Russlaender Migration: From Revolution to Reflection*.

Sitting at the board table and listening to the work that member organizations are doing, it's clear that there is a deep connection to our history. There is a strong commitment to collecting, preserving and sharing our stories. They are valuable and meaningful.

The executive committee of MHSC for 2026 includes Conrad Stoesz, president; Laureen Harder-Gissing, vice-president; Jeremy Wiebe, treasurer; Linda Klassen, secretary; and Bruce Guenther, fifth member.

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Front row: 2026 executive committee, Linda Klasssen, secretary; Laureen Harder-Gissing, vice-president; Conrad Stoesz, president; Jeremy Wiebe, treasurer; and Bruce Guenther, fifth member. Second row: Carina Gallardo, Jennifer Martens, Lucille Marr, Katie Harder, Bert Friesen, John Reddekopp, Brian Froese, Sara Dyck, and Troy Osborne. Third row: Robert Goertzen, Alf Redekopp, Dave Neufeldt, Jake Buhler, Ed Krahn, Rob Tiessen, Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, David Klippenstein, and Aileen Friesen.



Bert Friesen, award recipient, with MHSC president Conrad Stoesz.