

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada

News Release

2003 Year End

Global Mennonite History Project – MHSC heard an exciting report on the release of volume one, “Africa,” of the Global Mennonite History Project. This book was prepared and released for the Mennonite World Conference in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in August 2003. Four more volumes are planned, one for each of the other continents with major Mennonite churches. The North American volume will be written by a team of historians from Canada and United States for release in 2006. In preparation of this volume a conference of writers is planned October 2004, hosted by the University of Winnipeg, on the theme of “State of the Art of North American History.”

The Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (CMEO), which is sponsored by MHSC, is located at: www.mhsc.ca and is experiencing boundless popularity. The CMEO contains 2,371 articles, hundreds of pictures, dozens of full text documents, and currently receives over a thousand online visitors per day. This is 40% increase in use in 2003. One hundred new articles are expected to be added in 2004 and many others updated.

“Mennonites and Refugee Boat People” an upcoming conference, was the focus of the report by Ken Reddig of MCC Manitoba, as he updated the MHSC on Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites (DVCM). This conference, planned for October 2005, is the last major one sponsored by the Society and MCCC through DVCM. It is now 25 years since Mennonites first sponsored these Asian refugees and “Mennonites and Refugee Boat People” will focus on how both groups experienced and changed as a result of the interaction.

Marlene Epp is nearing completion of her DVCM writing project “History of Canadian Mennonite Women.” The Society heard how Marlene is expanding research into the role of Mennonite midwives, funeral workers and is interested in finding more stories featuring activities of women in Mennonite communities.

MHSC received reports on the archives, publications, genealogical seminars, tours of local sites, of its provincial member societies. Alberta's has a new archival facility with major collections of genealogical records and among other projects its members had an excursion to the Mennonite communities in

La Crete. British Columbia has added a microfilm room to its archives and is continuing a major project indexing Mennonite names listed in World War II German records from Russia. Manitoba is active in many areas from translating works from German to English, preparing a book on “Mennonites in Manitoba” and in supporting the proposed national Canadian Human Rights Museum planned for Winnipeg. The MHSC is seeking more information on this later venture. The Ontario provincial society is gathering stories of refugee immigrants and their struggles in a new land. It has also contributed significant materials to the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. In Saskatchewan the society is preparing for publication a book on the recently discovered 1967 map of Chortitza.

The Board of MHSC has expanded from four to five members is now: Dr. Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg as President; Vice-President Sam Steiner of Waterloo; Secretary, Victor Wiebe of Saskatoon; Treasurer, Laureen Harder-Gissing of Waterloo, and Member-at-large, Richard Thiessen of Abbotsford, B.C.

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