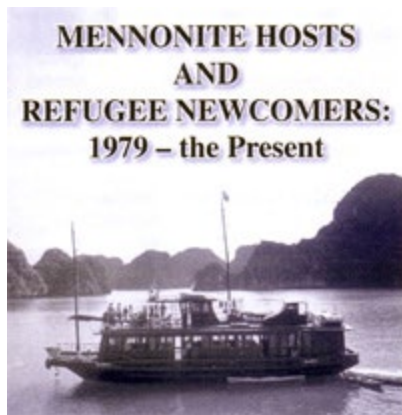


Mennonite Hosts and Refugee Newcomers: 1979 – the Present



Papers of this conference were published in the 2006 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

Twenty five years ago a crisis in Vietnam set in motion a massive migration of refugees that transformed the Mennonite church communities in Canada. Tens of thousands of southeast Asia refugees who came to known as Boat People fled the ravages of war and sought refuge in Canada.

Led by Mennonite Central Committee Canada and a unique agreement with the federal government, Mennonite churches across Canada responded enthusiastically. Hundreds of Mennonite families opened their doors to newcomers who had never experienced a northern climate, the English language and oftentimes Christianity. Still, many lasting friendships were made.

With the open response to these newcomers came a cultural shift within the Canadian Mennonite community. A new openness to non-Europeans developed. Refugee sponsorship now became an ongoing concern for many Mennonite churches. Closer working relationships with government agencies developed. Then, too, the ethnic composition of Mennonite churches began changing, as Chinese and Vietnamese Mennonite churches were born and more non-Europeans, from Africa and Central America in particular, began attending Mennonite churches.

Just what was the nature of these changes? How did they occur? Who were the major players? What were the relationships that were formed? What was the legacy of this moment in time?

These are some of the questions that a history conference, “Mennonite Hosts and Refugee Newcomers,” held Friday, September 30 and Saturday, October 1, 2005, sought to answer. The conference was supported by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and hosted by the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Program

September 30, 2005

Friday a.m. 8:30-10:00

Introducing the Conference

Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies

Background: Politics and Practice in Southeast Asia

Chair: Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe, Winnipeg

Ruth Buhler, Saskatoon, "Indochinese Refugees: Caught in the 1970s Struggle of the Superpowers"

Jake Buhler, Saskatoon, "Lao and Vietnamese Refugees: Via Phanat Kikhom to Canada"

Art DeFehr, Winnipeg, "Working the Land Bridge: Cambodian Refugees in Thailand"

Coffee: 10:00-10:30

Friday a.m.: 10:30-12:00

Background: Concepts of Sponsorship and Integration

Chair: Louise Giesbrecht, Winnipeg

Morton Beiser, Toronto, "Strangers No Longer: The 'Boat People's' First Ten Years in Canada."

Henry Neufeld, Delta, BC, "Displaced Persons, Boat People, Convention Refugees: Defining the Asylum Seeker"

Lunch: 12:00-1:00

Friday p.m.: 1:00-2:15

The British Columbia Experience:

Chair: Dave Giesbrecht, Abbotsford

Stephen Lee, Vancouver, "An Escape and an Entry: From Vietnam to Vancouver"

Mabel Paetkau, Abbotsford, "A Unique Experience: MCC and Refugee Co-ordination"

Coffee 2:15-2:45

Friday p.m.: 2:45-4:30

Manitoba's Laotian and Vietnamese Newcomers:

Chair: Ed Wiebe, Winnipeg

Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe, Winnipeg, "Laotian Refugees and Mennonites in Manitoba and BC"

Vinh Huynh, Winnipeg, "From Vietnam to Manitoba: A Sojourner's Reflections"

Andrea Dyck, Winnipeg, "The Vietnamese and Chinese Mennonite Churches in Winnipeg"

Friday p.m.: 7:00-9:00

Linking Ottawa and MCC

Welcome: Royden Loewen, Winnipeg

Chair: Ken Reddig, Winnipeg

Lloyd Axworthy, Winnipeg, "Refugees and Global Citizenship: Reflections"

William Janzen, Ottawa, "A History of the MCC-Ottawa Agreement"

John Wieler, Winnipeg, "Conceptualizing and Implementing an Historic Agreement"

Reception: Vietnamese Spring Rolls and Lao Coffee

October 1, 2005

Saturday a.m.: 8:30-10:00

Integration in Alberta and Saskatchewan:

Chair: Jim Gurnett, Edmonton

Chau Dang, Calgary, and Bill Thiessen, Abbotsford, "From Vietnam to Calgary: Reuniting a Family of 14"

Khaeksai Saycocie and TBA, Saskatoon, "The Osler Mennonite Housing Miracle"

Belma Podrug, Saskatoon, "A History of Global Gathering, Saskatoon"

Saturday Coffee: 10:00-10:30 Coffee/Cookies

Saturday a.m.: 10:30-12:00

Intercultural Dynamics in Ontario and Quebec:

Chair: Deo Namwira, Winnipeg

Daphne Winland, Toronto, "Revisiting a Case Study of Hmong Refugees and Ontario Mennonites"

Sarah-Anne Claassen, Winnipeg, "Creating Cultures: Laotian Refugees and Waterloo Mennonites"

Lucille Marr, Montreal, "'A Lonely Outpost': the Mennonites' Maison de l'Amite of Montreal"

Lunch: 12:00-1:00

Saturday p.m.: 1:00-2:15

Stories from the United States:

Chair: Dean Peachey, Winnipeg

Brian Froese, Winnipeg, "Vietnamese Refugees and the California Mennonite Brethren"
Heather Gibson, Philadelphia, "Familiar Patterns: Hmong Refugees and Pennsylvania Mennonites"

Coffee: 2:15-2:45

Saturday p.m.: 2:45-4:15

Mennonites and Newcomers from Other Places

Chair: Lilian Vagras, Resistencia, Argentina

Mukai Muza, Winnipeg, "African Refugees in Canada and Mennonite Organizations"
Eliakim Sibanda, Winnipeg, "Diaspora of Zimbabwe BIC Refugees and 'Relocates'"
Bonnie Loewen, Blumenort, "The De Pas Family Gardeners on a Blumenort Farm"

Saturday p.m.: 4:15-4:30

Collecting the Voices

Larry Kehler, Winnipeg: "Summary Statements and Observations"

Acknowledgements

Conference Planning Committee: Ionka Hristozova, Larry Kehler, Royden Loewen, Mukai Muza, Ken Reddig, Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe, Tim Wichert, Ed Wiebe