

Leaving Canada:

The Mennonite Migration to Mexico



A travelling exhibit by
Mennonite Heritage Village | Plett Foundation | Mennonite Historical Society of Canada

Exhibit Description



On March 1, 1922, a large group of Old Colony Mennonites gathered at the railway station in Plum Coulee, Manitoba, awaiting a train that would take them to Cuauhtémoc, a small town in northern Mexico. *Leaving Canada* tells the story of these Mennonites and the nearly eight thousand others who left Canada in the 1920s to start new lives in Mexico and Paraguay. Pushed into the unknown by the assimilation and betrayal they felt threatened them in Canada, this is the story of the lengths to which one community went to preserve its faith and culture.

Featuring artefacts from Mennonite Heritage Village's collection, historical photographs from public archives and private collections, and original interpretative content, *Leaving Canada* draws on the most current research on the topic of the 1920s emigration from Canada. It is crafted to the highest standard of professionalism and held to museum standards in research, content, interpretation, photography, and exhibit design.

Leaving Canada explores the history of an ethnoreligious community's determination to preserve its autonomy. It is a story about competing conceptions of religious freedom and of tensions between religious, linguistic, and educational rights on the one hand, and the obligations of citizenship on the other.

The exhibit is a collaboration of Mennonite Heritage Village, the Plett Foundation, and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

Exhibit Themes



Parting Ways

Explores the historical events and social contexts that led to this emigration from Canada, including Mennonite resistance to the changes in public schools legislation in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in 1916 and 1917

Life in Mexico

Highlights the economic, environmental, and cultural challenges of settlement in Mexico and the adaptation of traditional forms of Mennonite community life to this new setting

Legacy

Examines the transformation of Mennonite group identity in western Canada, the dispersion of Mennonites throughout Latin America, and the return migration of these “Kanadier” Mennonites to Canada, which continues today

Exhibit Details

- ❖ Interpretive content created by Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV), Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC), and the Plett Foundation, featuring historical research, archival photographs, and selected artefacts from MHV's collection
- ❖ Flexible exhibit configuration that can fit your space, including:
 - 4 free-standing exhibit stations (Introduction plus 3 exhibit themes), each including:
 - 1 crate (30" l x 30" w x 36" h) featuring removable graphic panels on all sides
 - 1 historical artefact ready to display in acrylic case on top of the crate
 - 1 freestanding pop-up panel featuring interpretive content
 - *Optional:* Up to 4 additional freestanding, pop-up panels featuring historical photos (approx. 37.5" wide each), which can be set up along walls or interspersed with the exhibit stations
- ❖ Easy set-up that can be completed with 2 people:
 - Crates equipped with lockable casters for easy transportation and simple installation
 - Crates double as exhibit stations and containers in which all the components for that station are stored during shipping for easy installation, re-packaging, and transportation
- ❖ Minimum space requirements:
 - Exhibit stations (4) require **36 square feet minimum** (9 square feet per station)
 - *Optional:* Additional freestanding pop-up panels require an extra **3 linear feet each**
 - Please note that these measurements do not include spacing between exhibit components
- ❖ Affordable, one-time exhibit hosting fee fit to meet your budget:
 - **\$250** for small, un-incorporated, or volunteer-run organizations (i.e., smaller museums, historical societies, or similar institutions run by volunteers)
 - **\$750** for medium to large, incorporated organizations run by paid staff (i.e., larger museums or similar institutions)
 - *In addition to the hosting fee, the hosting organization responsible for onward shipping costs and providing proof of insurance for the exhibit for the duration of its display*
- ❖ Additional programming will be available, including the following:
 - Public screening of *Conform: The Mennonite Migration to Mexico*, a new documentary produced by Refuge 31 Films in partnership with the Plett Foundation, to be released in 2022
 - Opportunities for public lectures, coordinated by MHSC and the Plett Foundation
- ❖ Available for bookings from January 2023 to December 2024

