Cookbook as Metaphor for A People of Diversity: Canadian Mennonites after 1970

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In his conclusion to volume three of *Mennonites in Canada*, historian T. D. Regehr speaks about the hard lesson that Canadian Mennonites faced in 1970, the closing year to his study. He states, "Mennonites' understanding of the Gospel was inevitably clothed in their own cultural, social, and ethnic garb."[1] Regehr was indirectly pointing to an explosion of diversity that would come to characterize Canadian Mennonites in the closing decades of the twentieth century and the opening of the twenty-first. Indeed, should a fourth volume on the history of Mennonites in Canada be written, its subtitle may well be "A People of Diversity," the title of the 2018 conference at which this essay was presented. The arguably over-used word 'diversity' acknowledges the many different stories that each Mennonite group, and indeed individual, tells by virtue of their very being. While Regehr uses the image of clothing, one can easily extend this to food recipes. Mennonites might use a shared recipe, but the end result might look and taste a little, or a lot, different, depending on the ingredients – the stories – put into the preparation.

Even more than the oft-used metaphors of a quilt with many pieces, or a tree with many branches, I think the cookbook is an apt metaphor for who Canadian Mennonites are. This is not only because of the frequent associations of Mennonites with food – which

are plentiful. Cookbooks are collections of individual recipes (the congregation or household perhaps), grouped into thematic sections (the subgroup perhaps) that at times seem randomly put together – pickled pigs feet together with curried lentils? – even though their titles may suggest cohesion and clarity of intent and purpose. Their contents evolve over time and in response to many external stimuli and influences, as well as the purpose of the cookbook's creator(s).

The *Canadian Mennonite Cookbook* is a good example of Mennonites post-1970. While it venerates 'Mennonite Recipes' (starting with white bread and *zwieback*[2]) in the first section, it quickly jumps to cheese soufflé, curried rice, and asparagus au gratin, all reflecting a Mennonite response to culinary modernism. Published in 1965, the collection was first issued as the *Altona Women's Institute Cookbook*; by 1980, the book was in its twenty-third printing and had sold over 125,000 copies. Over time, it incorporated metric measurements, the Canada Food Guide, and a small section on vegetables at the back.[3] Maybe this is all one needs to say about Mennonites post-1970: they started eating vegetables!

How does one reflect on the nature of Canadian Mennonites post-1970? The kind of 'where are Mennonites headed?' conversations prevalent in the 1970s, 1980s, and right up to the early 2000s, which revealed a yearning for certainty around identity, are becoming less frequent. A good example appeared in the final issue of the original *Canadian Mennonite* newspaper in 1971, which featured twelve authors reflecting on "Where We're At…."[4] The 'we' signified a sense that there was a collective Mennonite-ness that could be named, analyzed, and differentiated from the rest of the world. As if Mennonites were all 'at' the same place. Indeed, the first article addressed "our attitude to non-Mennonites" as if it was 'us against the world' and as if 'they' cared. That is the way I viewed the world growing up: there were Mennonites and non-Mennonites.

While literary critics and creative writers continue to reflect on identity issues (even if it is "after identity" as a recent collection edited by Robert Zacharias proposed[5]), historians and others seem reluctant to take this on, perhaps recognizing, rightly so, that a pan-Mennonite framework and indeed a core or essence is elusive, and perhaps useless. I am certainly not the first to put this forward.[6] The idea of talking about 'a' Mennonite identity seems passé. And it may be problematic, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah, in *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*. When thinking about creed, country, class, color and culture, Appiah writes, "we fall into an error of supposing that at the core of each identity

there is some deep similarity that binds people of that identity together. Not true, I say; not true over and over again."[7] Appiah suggests that we exaggerate our differences with others and our similarities with our own kind. We think of ourselves as part of monolithic tribes up against other tribes, whereas we each contain multitudes. Appiah's analysis is of course on a global scale but it feels like he is talking about early twenty-first century Mennonites. With regard to religion, he argues that it should be a verb, not a noun, used to describe "mutable practices and communities" – an activity, not a thing.[8] Again, perhaps a good description of Mennonites whose numerous subgroups, religious and cultural practices, and doctrinal interpretations are constantly evolving.

I will not lament the lack of a Mennonite core here, because I don't necessarily think this to be a bad thing. Indeed, the components of such a core are so often described from a dominant positionality and perspective that they must be called into question in any analysis that acknowledges difference and diverse identities. I propose that Mennonites are really a collection of very interesting stories – recipes perhaps – that reflect our multilayered beings as individuals or within families, as migratory or ethnic groups, as converts or colonizer. As writer Thomas King says: "The truth about stories is that that's all we are."[9] And in light of these unique stories, we are called mainly to be curious and compassionate – towards both teller and listener. Curiosity demands openness to new, sometimes transformative, knowledge and understanding, while compassion brings generosity, care, and inclusion to that knowledge.[10]

My own story is that of a white, wealthy, cisgender woman, whose Mennonite particularities and peculiarities derive in part from my Russlaender background (on both sides, I'm homogeneous in that sense).[11] My value system includes some principles and beliefs considered Anabaptist-Mennonite, but not all. I perform my Mennonite-ness (which I do a lot because my family, much of my schooling, and all of my professional life has been in a Mennonite context) in a manner that is mediated by my privilege, my whiteness, my gender, and yes by my love of *zwieback* and *vereneike*.[12] My story is thus a soup of ingredients. People like me are often the ones whose stories define the core, although in the past, my experience as a woman was not reflected in pronouncements on the essence of Mennonitism. By the turn of the twentieth century, the variety of stories multiplied significantly.

In what follows I will use cookbooks as a metaphor for the story-themes that I think signify who Canadian Mennonites are after 1970. I read cookbooks as textual artefacts that offer numerous

explicit and subtle signposts of identity.[13] And which tell stories with meaning that go well beyond the specific recipe followed. Canadian food historian Nathalie Cooke proposes that cookbooks "tell us the diverse stories of the lived history of a people."[14] Elizabeth Driver, who published a massive bibliography of Canadian cookbooks up to 1950, is even more comprehensive in the cookbook's meaning when she says, "No other category of book evokes such an emotional response across generations and genders and is freighted with so much cultural and historical meaning."[15] Reading cookbooks holistically and also between the lines reveals theological, social, and political ideas about the cookbook creator(s) and their historical environment.

We know that Mennonites produced, and continue to produce, lots of cookbooks. Indeed, the proliferation of generic and theme-based Mennonite cookbooks beginning in the 1960s parallels what some might bemoan as the fragmentation of Mennonites over the last fifty years. Others might celebrate the shifting sands of homogeneity. One could argue that Mennonite (and Amish) cookbooks have told the world much more about Mennonites than any other written work. In fact, in his book *The Naked Anabaptist*, Stuart Murray says that when he asked newcomers to Anabaptism, what books they had read that introduced them to the church, most listed *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder, and the *More with Less Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre.[16] I believe that the latter has probably sold many more copies than the former, and perhaps has had even more influence outside of Mennonite circles. An Ontario church leader just last year made a call in the *Canadian Mennonite* for "no more Mennonite cookbooks!" because they carry too much cultural baggage.[17] Such a call undermines the historic work of women, and overlooks the meaning – anthropological, sociological, and theological – that can be gleaned from all that lies between the sticky and tattered covers of a recipe collection. I propose that cookbooks, with their fluidity of orthodoxy (recipes evolve over time), along with their emphasis on commensality – eating and drinking together – offer a site for diverse stories that other ecclesial practices might not.

I will use so-called 'Mennonite cookbooks' as symbols and signposts of some key events and trends that tell us who Mennonites are becoming in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[18] The categories I am using point to the many identities from which Mennonite stories emerge. I will not attempt to cover all developments, but rather address those that I think to be most important when thinking about Mennonites during this era. My analysis defines Mennonite cookbooks as recipe collections

compiled or published by Mennonite individuals, churches, and organizations, and also recipe books that focus on food traditions which some Mennonite groups carry as part of their historic experience in varied times and places.

The Mennonite Story is One of Gender

If cookbooks have become of interest in recent years, it is in part because Mennonites are finally taking seriously the work and words of women. I have chosen the *Mennonite Treasury of Recipes*[19] to symbolize the emancipation of Mennonite women that we often connect with access to ordained ministry in this era, but means so much more. The *Treasury* was first issued in 1962 as a small fund-raising project with modest goals – the main compiler said the 3,000 copies printed would never sell.[20] Yet its success and vast reach illuminates both women's foundational work in the church and their business acumen. Reflective of its particular social era, the cookbook's individual recipe authors are named according to their husbands, as in "Mrs. John Rempel," or "Mrs. F. E. Reimer," while the single women contributors are labelled as "Miss." Later editions maintained the same naming system, thus there is irony in using this as a symbol of emancipation.

In the 1971 *Canadian Mennonite* issue noted above, Katie Funk Wiebe reflected on the topic "Where we're at in our attitude to women." In her bold way, Katie chastised the Mennonite church for emphasizing women's limitations and conditioning them to be silent and submissive. However, she did see a "faint glimmer of light at the end of a long tunnel." But first, Katie argued, we had to get past the "men's brains and women's hands" dichotomy in the church.[21] The feminist movement of the 1960s and onward was, I propose, the biggest social change factor in Mennonite families, communities, and churches in this era. And in large part, Mennonites were reactive, rather than proactive, in responding to this change. Women themselves, at least in so-called modern groups, while eager for gender discrimination to end, were often reluctant to use the language of women's liberation or feminism openly. Yet the bold 1973 statement by one woman in the *Mennonite Reporter* newspaper was just the tip of the iceberg: "Our strict enforcement that women keep silent in the church has left its mark on Mennonite women. Many are timid, lack self-assurance when among men and have little confidence in the value of their own thoughts and opinions. This is the natural consequence of generations of subtle suppression in the church which has been also frequently carried

over into the home."[22] The voices were not one. While many women, and men, allied themselves with this perspective, others highlighted the 'beauty of submission' and refused to be called women's libbers.

Yet the 1970s in particular saw new doors opening for women in church and public life and much debate about changes that were just beginning. The *Mennonite Reporter* newspaper began a column on Roles for Women and numerous articles and editorials appeared on the contentious issue of 'women in the church.' In my book on the history of Mennonite women in Canada, I suggest that 1979 was a pivotal year for women. In that year, Doris Weber became the first Mennonite woman to be ordained to ministry within her Stratford, Ontario congregation. As well, the first Mennonite was crowned Miss Canada that year – if not a feminist sign of emancipation, nevertheless a sign of modernization.[23] The famous (at least to women of my generation) MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) *Women's Concern's Report* began publication in 1973 and over its three-decade life offered a provocative site for the telling of women's stories on such topics as childrearing, education, careers, church work, and finances, and also domestic violence, abortion, incest, and pornography. When the Report ceased publication in 2004, the departing editor suggested that the Report was "less necessary" than in past years.[24] Yet, as we know, in the past decade the issues have largely turned from access to the pulpit, to abuse from the pulpit, as a #churchtoo movement of accountability shakes the Mennonite world.[25] We don't have a cookbook for that. But curiosity and compassion in story-telling are needed more than ever.

The Mennonite Story is a Queer One

If Mennonite women in Canada had an uphill struggle for rights in this era, then queer Mennonites were mountain climbing. A cookbook titled *Food for the Journey* was a gift to acknowledge a presentation that I did at a local Mennonite church. It was created by Mike and Thom, who love cooking, as a gift to attendees at their 2007 wedding.[26] This was perhaps the first same sex marriage in a Mennonite church in Canada. LGBTQ+ Mennonites in Canada have, over the past few decades, experienced acknowledgement, tolerance, forbearance (a veil for mere tolerance), inclusion – accompanied by denial, discrimination, exclusion and even hate. The histories of gender non-conforming Mennonites were not addressed in the first three volumes of the history of *Mennonites in*

Canada series, nor did it come up in the 1971 "Where We're At" series. Should a fourth volume on the history of Mennonites in Canada be written, the topic would and should be central.

Legal and constitutional breakthroughs in Canada – from the 1969 decriminalization of same-sex behavior to the protections provided by the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms – created an environment in which Mennonite churches could not avoid the agitation for rights by LGBTQ+ individuals in their midst. The reports, studies, statements, and debates that ensued, and continue, echoed the polarization around women in the ministry, though arguably to a much greater degree. Endless dialogue, and disagreements around process, biblical interpretation, and doctrine occurred and became mired in their own lack of curiosity and compassion for stories at the heart of the issue.

The idea that Mennonite identity was not just about – or even mainly about – the dialectic between religion and ethnicity, was thoughtfully put forward by Alicia Dueck in her 2012 book *Negotiating Sexual Identities: Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Perspectives on Being Mennonite*. Dueck locates "sex, gender, desire, and sexual practices" at the centre of Mennonite identity.[27] Because identity and belonging are so closely linked, the exclusion of one part of the whole thus defines the identity of the whole. Mennonite identity thus becomes defined by exclusion. One reader to the *Canadian Mennonite* magazine similarly asked, "I really cannot understand how the church can expect LGBTQ persons to remain in congregation … if their essential identities are on the table for discussion."[28] Dueck also offers the idea that queer Mennonites who feel themselves outside of the normative categories of Mennonite identity with regard to sexuality, nevertheless point to cultural aspects such as Mennonite food that maintain their sense of belonging as Mennonite.[29] Other LGBTQ+ Mennonites who maintain a relationship with the church do so in part because of its community/communal emphasis, that is often most evident 'at the table.'[30] More queer cookbooks are needed, I think.

In the mid-1990s my own small church congregation chose to become a publicly affirming congregation within the Supportive Communities Network of the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests, as BMC was called then. This was a new thing and we anxiously awaited some kind of disciplinary action from our regional conference – which never came, perhaps because we were too fringe to notice. We knew that gay-positive churches in the United States had been put out of fellowship, while in Canada the divisions and fragmentation over the issue was just beginning. As far as I know there was no particular

reaction to my congregation's stance, but across the country we saw churches leave their provincial or national conference body over issues of membership and authority. And LGBTQ+ Mennonites were barred from service in the churches and institutions that they loved.

Such stories are transformative because, as Alicia Dueck-Read proposes, "these individuals are re-creating the meaning of Mennonite by bringing forth a much-needed disruption to long-held and often silent ideals of gender and sexuality."[31] If gender and sexuality are recognized as central to Mennonite communal identities, and not just a personal or private issue, and if stories are received with curiosity and compassion, then the recipes in the cookbook exploded (and continue to do so) in number during this era.

The Mennonite Story is One of Multiplying Ethnicities

Alongside an increased recognition of gender minorities in Mennonite communities was a numerical growth in ethnic backgrounds and identities in churches and conference groups. *Be Present at Our Table* is a cookbook produced for the 150th anniversary of the Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ontario.[32] It includes a section titled "The Table of our Mennonite Past" with recipes from Swiss, Amish, and Russian traditions – the dominant historic ethnic ancestries of Mennonites in Waterloo Region. The second section is titled "The Table of Other Cultures." While this may seem to 'other' the others, it is nevertheless a nod to, not only the Mennonite appreciation for foods from other lands, but a recognition of the many ethnic backgrounds in most Mennonite churches by the 1980s and 1990s. A more recent example is *The Cookbook Project*, produced by two young women to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of their congregation, Niagara United Mennonite Church. Even more intentional in extending the Mennonite table, compilers Ellery Penner and Rachael Peters found commonality in the historic experiences of individuals in their congregation, noting in the preface, "We as a church body are a community heavily focused upon food. Many of us know the pangs of hunger as we journeyed as refugees from Russia, Vietnam, Iraq, Colombia, and other countries."[33] In the book's section on "Reflecting on Heritage" there is a recipe for spring rolls with peanut sauce, and a family story, by Dong Manh Do. Dong and his family fled Vietnam and was sponsored by Niagara United Mennonite when they arrived in Canada in 1979.

As for women, 1979 was a pivotal year for the ethnic face of Mennonites in Canada. That year saw 25,000 refugees resettled in Canada from southeast Asia – Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos – about a third of the total number that arrived in just three years. Mennonite Central Committee was at the core of the new private sponsorship program, and many Mennonite churches across Canada sponsored newcomer families.[34] Most of these Indochinese immigrants would not become members of the churches that sponsored them, but some did form new congregations within the Mennonite denomination. An example is the Hmong people from Laos, who formed the first Hmong Mennonite Church in Canada, in Kitchener. This continued in the 1980s and 1990s with Hispanic Mennonite communities forming out of immigrants from Central America. In 1979, Mennonites in Ontario worshipped for the first time in a language other than English or German. Today Mennonite Church Eastern Canada worships in up to fifteen different languages and dialects, including Hindi, Farsi, Chin, Punjabi, Korean, Eritrean, for example. This is true across Canada.

I have searched for printed cookbooks from new Canadian Mennonite communities, but have not yet found any. It could be that traditional foodways are still prepared by example and through oral tradition (as is often true for recent immigrants). This I found when I joined Laotian Mennonites in Kitchener for their annual gathering to prepare hundreds of dozens of spring rolls for the Mennonite Central Committee relief sale. I also experienced 'oral cookbooks' when I received a recipe for the Christmastime fritter *Anarsa* through deep verbal description while travelling in India to research Mennonite women and their foodways.[35] Or when I helped to purchase ingredients and prepare *beignet* (doughnuts) with Mennonite women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. If I did not find actual cookbooks, I did learn that cross-cultural curiosity and compassion is encouraged and enriched when diverse foods are shared.

A multiplicity of ethnicities makes for a richness in culture – be it language, dress, worship practices, foodways – that has made Mennonite relief sales for one much more interesting. In fact, at the sale I attend in New Hamburg, Ontario, the Laotian spring rolls and Hispanic *papusas* are likely to outsell the Swiss apple fritters and Dutch-Russian *rollkuchen*. But this has also created new theological and worship divides and divergence on social issues that present fresh conundrums around inclusion and exclusion. Including marginalized ethnic identities can mean excluding marginalized sexual identities, for example. No one has effectively

figured that out. But starting from a place of curious and compassionate story-listening seems crucial.

The Mennonite Story is One of Ideological Polarization

Two of my favourite cookbooks – *More-With-Less* and *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* – both of which I reference regularly, are perhaps metaphors for increasingly divergent ideological tones amongst Mennonites that we see during this era: one might describe it as left-wing versus right-wing thinking. Or social activism versus evangelical outreach. Or Deed versus Word. Although all of these labels are too polarized and simplistic and do not begin to reflect the fluidity of types that exist along a continuum.[36] These emphases are not mutually exclusive and sometimes exist in tense companionship. Ideological divergence, and sometimes polarization, increased amongst Canadian Mennonites after 1970. For example, the co-existence of both fierce opposition to the American war in Vietnam alongside an enamored attachment to pro-war evangelist Billy Graham during the 1970s is emblematic of the radically different understandings of who Mennonites should be politically which began to crystallize during this era.

On the one hand, we have *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, published in book form in 2011, following the success of an online blog by the same name. The title is viewed by some as problematic for the way in which it essentializes women's nature – some Mennonite women can't cook or don't want to. It offers recipes for cultural foods with an evangelical tone for a new eating era, with gluten-free options throughout. Visually beautiful in a coffee-table book style, the preface states, "though it is recipes for food that we share, we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is our inspiration to share the joy of hospitality."[37] The photo of the 'girls' shows them in a meadow with backs to the camera gazing to the mountains of British Columbia – and likely to God in the clouds above. The cookbook has an evangelical flavor that situates Jesus as savior at the centre. Scattered throughout are brief testimonies by the women, called "Bread for the Journey." Similarly, the online blog is viewed as a site where recipes are shared, but also where the authors can "freely share" their faith.[38]

Then there is the much earlier yet still very popular *More-With-Less Cookbook*, by Doris Janzen Longacre, published in 1976. Subtitled *Recipes and suggestions by Mennonites on how to eat better and consume less of the world's limited food resources*, the book was politically ahead of its time – and thus not without critics – in

responding to the food crisis of the 1970s. In particular, Longacre suggested that North Americans eat less meat, more grains and legumes, and thus reduce the amount of grain grown for meat production. A fortieth anniversary edition was published in 2016, at which point nearly a million copies had been sold. The compilation is not specifically Canadian, but was used probably more than any other 'Mennonite' cookbook from the 1970s onward. *More-With-Less* has been described as a social justice cookbook that is highly political in its call for sustainable eating practice.[39]

The increasing immersion of many Mennonite churches and individuals into a mainstream evangelical ethos – increasingly unattached from what might be considered Anabaptist-Mennonite distinctives – is thus another growing trend of the post-1970s era. This is reflected in an increasing number of churches in certain Mennonite subgroups that have chosen to eliminate the Mennonite descriptor from their congregational names, feeling that the historic label carries too much non-religious cultural meaning and thus is a barrier to inclusion of participants that lack historic Mennonite ethnicity. At the same time, other trends see individuals holding onto the Mennonite label only because of the peace and social justice emphasis. Again, curiosity and compassion is needed to embrace what might be viewed as polarities within the broad spectrum of Mennonite-ness.

The Mennonite Story is that of the Old Order

In many respects completely apart from, or perhaps a synthesis of, the above trends, is the reality of the 'old order.' By this I mean the broad spectrum of Mennonites that we might refer to as 'conservative' or 'traditional.' In his religious history of Mennonites in Ontario, Sam Steiner calls them "separatist conservatives," as opposed to "evangelical conservatives."[40] Their numbers and vitality are increasing, despite the odds we might think are against them. Isaac Horst, an Old Order (horse-and-buggy) Mennonite man in Ontario wrote extensively about the beliefs and practices of the Old Order.[41] He also compiled numerous cookbooks with quaint titles like *Just Loafin*, *Potato Potential*, and the *High, Healthy and Happy Cookbook*.[42] His first, *Conestogo Mennonite Cook Book*, published in 1981, gave a nod to the Year of the Disabled Person, since the typist of the manuscript was an old order woman with disabilities. Horst admits that he is not a cook, and even says that not all Mennonite women are good cooks either, hence the need for the recipe collection. The book is also a means to educate about

traditionalist Mennonite ways and beliefs: in a section on Mennonite Etiquette he said, "Basically there is no such thing."[43]

A more recent but growing canon of cookbooks are ones written by and for the transnational Low German-speaking Mennonites. *With Helen in the Kitchen* (*Met Helen en de Kjäakj*) is a good example. In 2007, Helen Funk, a Manitoba-based radio personality, published a collection of her radio recipes, aimed at Low German-speaking Mennonites in Canada and Latin America.[44] According to Funk, it is the only Low German language cookbook in the world.[45] I purchased it at a social service office in Aylmer, Ontario, where I learned that one purpose of the cookbook was to enhance literacy among Low German-speaking women. Used in Canada but published outside of the country are cookbooks that represent cultural and culinary hybridity in that they include Russian Mennonite and Mexican dishes. For example, in 2011, an entirely bilingual – German and Spanish – cookbook was printed in Mexico that again included a mix of Mexican, traditional Dutch-Russian Mennonite, and miscellaneous foods: the English translation is *Come Eat: with Mennonite women from Durango, Mexico*.[46]

The proliferation of cookbooks produced by non-modern Mennonite groups reflects where the relative growth in Mennonite population numbers occurred from the 1970s onwards. While church membership numbers in the large Canadian conference bodies have declined, depending on region, the number of conservatives continues to grow. This may be most true in my home province of Ontario, but I suspect a comparable pattern exists in other regions where conservatives live – Alberta, Manitoba, and now a growing number in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Ontario was perhaps the only province that did not see a gradual decline in Mennonite numbers in censuses taken in the latter twentieth century, and this can be attributed directly to population increases amongst conservatives. This is due to high birth rates, but also notable retention rates of youth, and also migration north of various Amish groups from the U.S. and Low German-speaking groups from Mexico and Central and South America. For example, four Old Order Mennonite groups in Ontario more than doubled in size (3,000 to 6,400) between 1967 and 2010, and this does not include children but rather baptized members.[47] Old Colony Church membership in Ontario increased from 1,300 in 1994 to 6,500 in 2012.[48] The tendency of conservative groups to spawn new forms and subgroups of traditionalism has also led to an increase in the number of 'kinds' of Mennonites – at least thirty in just Ontario and thus likely up to fifty across Canada.

I have recently spent more time in what is advertised as 'Mennonite country' in the townships north and west of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. While I think and teach about the diversity of the conservatives academically, interacting with them and their businesses has elicited new curiosity on my part about the growth and vibrancy of these folk. When I offer to a conservative individual that "I am Mennonite too" in conversation, I know that both of us feel we have little in common, as much as we might appreciate each other. Our theologies, our positions on social issues, are very different. We all eschew violence, but not necessarily the same types. We moderns tend not to include conservatives when we think about the conundrum of identity, but they are increasingly central to this. Royden Loewen describes the "anti-modern" way of life of the horse-and-buggy Mennonites as "genius" and offers that "story is a fundamental feature of the world."[49] Again, the curiosity and compassion that occurs when stories are told and listened to might be all that we have to bind the ties.

The Storytelling Continues

There are other intersectional markers of Mennonite selves that don't have obvious cookbooks as metaphor, socio-economic class being one of these. And there are of course cookbooks yet to be written. Here is a suggestion for just one title that might reflect new stories for the past fifty years: *Cooking up Apologies*. During the last half century, Mennonites in Canada began to turn outward from themselves, which of course means many different things for different groups. This included beginning to relinquish their own persecution narratives and apologizing for their role in persecution given out. In 1985, Mennonite Central Committee Canada apologized to Japanese-Canadians for their treatment during World War Two, including how some Mennonites benefitted from the loss of land of families who were interned during the war. In 1992, Mennonite Central Committee Canada apologized to the Aboriginal people of Canada for being silent in the face of cruel treatment and for the conquest of their land. It was a time when MCC led the way while denominational bodies lagged far behind. In her history of MCC Canada, Esther Epp-Tiessen describes the criticism of these apologies from churches and individuals who questioned MCC's right to speak collectively on behalf of Mennonites.[50] The disagreement over this – and likely also over the very recent 2017 apology of Mennonite Church Canada for its treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals – reflects the multiplicity of stories (or you can call it

fragmentation or polarization) that increasingly characterize Mennonites in Canada.

In late 2018, the Canadian federal government apologized for turning away a shipload of nine hundred Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in 1939. Up to a third of the passengers were killed when the ship was forced to return to Europe. Some Christian churches allied themselves with Canadian Jews to implore the government to accept these asylum-seekers. As far as I know, Mennonites were silent: advocacy for others was not common then, and anti-Semitism was strong in some Mennonite communities. Some voices are calling for Mennonites to apologize for their complicity (the nature and degree of which is contested) in the Holocaust.[51] While these debates can easily polarize, the motivation to learn about and question the past is in itself a positive thing. During the last half century, Mennonites in Canada began to reflect on their pasts with interest and energy, as indicated by the creation of a national and at least six provincial Mennonite historical societies. Sometimes the retrospective look is nostalgic but often it is critical, as seen particularly in the Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites series of conferences beginning in the late 1990s. Mennonites took some important steps to acknowledge mistakes of the past. This does not mean self-flagellation nor simplifying complex histories. It does mean showing non-judgmental curiosity and compassion about our varied and checkered pasts. Cookbooks may be the perfect venue to tell these other stories.

Trying to find cohesion in a narrative of Mennonites in Canada after the 1970s is not for the faint of heart. The story-recipes multiply exponentially over the past five decades. When multiple and diverse characteristics – of gender, ethnicity, belief and practice, ideology, (non)conformity – even more so perhaps than shared values, are at the core of Mennonitism, encapsulating identity in definitive statements is near impossible. This may not be a thing to lament, as uncertainty allows curiosity and compassion to permeate the telling and hearing of stories. The thirtieth anniversary lyrics of the *Indigo Girls* song "Closer to Fine" seems apropos as conclusion: "There's more than one answer to these questions pointing me in a crooked line. And the less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine."[52] When preparing a new recipe, one is never certain about the result, but more often than not, it turns out just fine.

Notes

1 T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 417.

2 *Zwieback* is a two-layered white wheat bun and is a traditional food of Mennonites with ancestry in Russia/Ukraine.

3 *Canadian Mennonite Cookbook* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, Ltd., 1965).

4 "Where We're At…," *Canadian Mennonite* 19, no. 8 (February 19, 1971).

5 Robert Zacharias, *After Identity: Mennonite Writing in North America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

6 See, for example, Royden Loewen, "The Poetics of Peoplehood: Ethnicity and Religion Among Canada's Mennonites," in Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, eds., *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 345-79.

7 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2018), xvi.

8 Ibid., 67.

9 Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Press, 2003), 2.

10 My thinking about curiosity is in part inspired by Cynthia Enloe, who suggests that "Being curious takes energy" and is an important antidote to the "uncuriosity" that props up power structures in families, communities, nations, and internationally. See Enloe's *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004). My thinking about compassion is inspired by the writings and work of scholar-activist Mary Jo Leddy whose ideas and actions arise largely from her work with refugees. See, for example, *The Other Face of God: When the Strangers Calls us Home* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).

11 Russlaender is the insider term applied to Mennonites who migrated from the Soviet Union to Canada in the 1920s. My four grandparents immigrated in 1924.

12 Traditional foods for many 'Russian' Mennonites.

13 For deeper analyses of Mennonite and other immigrant cookbooks, see my chapter and article: "More than 'Just' Recipes: Mennonite Cookbooks in Mid-Twentieth-Century North America," in Franca Iacovetta, Valerie Korinek, Marlene Epp, eds., *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 173-88; "Eating Across Borders: Reading Immigrant Cookbooks," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 96 (May 2015): 45-65.

14 Nathalie Cooke, "Canada's Food History Through Cookbooks," in Mustafa Koç, Jennifer Sumner, and Anthony Winson, eds., *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), 45.

15 Elizabeth Driver, *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1828-1949* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xvii.

16 Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 27.

17 David Martin, "What is the Spirit saying to our churches today?" *Canadian Mennonite* 21, 17 (September 6, 2017).

[18] This essay was written as an oral presentation with slides that showed cookbook covers; unfortunately these are not reproduced here.

[19] *The Mennonite Treasury of Recipes* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1962).

[20] Lydia Penner, "The Mennonite Treasury of Recipes, a Canadian Bestseller," in *Fifty Years Ebenezer Verein, 1936-1986* (Steinbach, MB: Ebenezer Verein, 1987), 53-4

[21] Katie Funk Wiebe, "Where We're At … In Our Attitude Towards Women," *Canadian Mennonite* 19, no. 8 (February 19, 1971): 9, 29.

[22] Mary Regehr Dueck, "The role of women (3): Young maidens dare not prophesy," *Mennonite Reporter* 3, 7 (April 2, 1973): 7.

[23] *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 275-6.

[24] Linda Gehman Peachey, "Vision for the Future in MCC U.S.," *MCC Women's Concerns Report* (November-December 2004).

[25] The hashtag #churchtoo is borrowed from the play of that name, created by *Theatre of the Beat*: http://theatreofthebeat.ca/churchtoo/ Accessed November 4, 2018.

[26] Michael Lee-Poy and Thomas Brown, *Food for the Journey: Recipes and Quotations from our Community* (unpublished manuscript used with permission, 2007).

[27] Alicia J. Dueck, *Negotiating Sexual Identities: Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Perspectives on Being Mennonite* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012); See also Alicia Dueck-Read, "Breaking the Binary: Queering Mennonite Identity," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (2015): 115-33.

[28] Alan Armstrong, Reader comment, submitted March 3, 2018, to *Canadian Mennonite* online. https://www.canadianmennonite.org/stories/unity-spirit. Accessed February 25, 2019.

[29] Dueck, *Negotiating Sexual Identities*, 26.

[30] For reflections on the importance of community for LGBTQ+ Mennonites, see the oral history project *The Listening Church*, http://listeningchurch.ca/. Accessed March 3, 2019.

[31] Dueck-Read, "Breaking the Binary," 122.

[32] *Be Present At Our Table: 150th Anniversary Cookbook, Erb Street Mennonite Church, 1851-2001* (Waterloo, ON: Erb Street Mennonite Church 2001).

[33] Ellery Penner and Rachael Peters, compilers, *The Cookbook Project: Celebrating 75 Years of Meals and Memories* (Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON: Niagara United Mennonite Church, 2013), 6.

[34] See the theme issue on "Refugee Newcomers and Mennonite Hosts," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 24 (2006): 92-222.

[35] See my article "Peppernuts and Anarsa: Food, Religion, and Ritual," *Anabaptist Witness* 2, no. 2 (November 2015): 87-90.

[36] Bruce L. Guenther explores the polarization resulting from the influence of evangelical Protestantism on Mennonites; see "Evangelicalism in Mennonite Historiography: The Decline of Anabaptism or a Path Towards Dynamic Ecumenism," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 24 (2006): 34-54.

[37] Lovella Schellenberg, et al., *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2011), 12.

[38] See *Mennonites Girls Can Cook: Traditions of Food and Faith*, online blog: www.mennonitegirlscancook.ca. Accessed March 4, 2019.

[39] Doris Janzen Longacre, *More-With-Less Cookbook* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976). For analyses of the More-With-Less Cookbook, see for example, Matthew Bailey-Dick, "The Kitchenhood of all Believers: A Journey into the Discourse of Mennonite Cookbooks," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 79 (April 2005): 153-78; Rebekah Trollinger, "Mennonite Cookbooks and the Pleasure of Habit," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 81 (October 2007): 531-47; Malinda Elizabeth Berry, "The Gifts of an Extended Theological Table: MCC's World Community Cookbooks as Organic Theology," in *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2011), 284-309; Melanie Springer Mock, "Mothering, More with Less," in Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast, eds., *Mothering Mennonite* (Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013), 256-72.

[40] Samuel J. Steiner, *In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 2015), 589-93.

[41] Sam Steiner, "Horst, Isaac Reist (1918-2008)," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (October 2016), http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Horst,_Isaac_Reist_(1918-2008)&oldid=141819.

[42] All of these cookbooks were self-published. *Potato Potential: All Eyes Turn to Potatoes* (1985); *Just Loafin': 50 Recipes for Various Breads from Mennonite Kitchens* (1991); *High, Healthy and Happy 3-H Mennonite Cookbooks: A Collection of Swiss-Canadian Mennonite Recipes* (1985). These are just examples of about a dozen cookbooks that Horst compiled.

[43] Isaac R. Horst, *Conestogo Mennonite Cookbook* (Mount Forest, ON: Self-published, 1981), 37.

[44] Helen Funk, *Met Helen en de Kjaäkj, Vol 1* (Winnipeg, MB: Family Life Network, 2007).

[45] Angeline Schellenberg, "Cooking up a Low German blessing," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, June 18, 2007. Accessed online http://www.mennoworld.org/2007/6/18/cooking-low-german-blessing/

[46] *Kommt Essen: Mit den Mennonitischen Frauen von Durango, Mexiko (Come and eat with the Mennonite ladies from Durango Mexico)* (Durango, Mexico: Mennonitische Frauen von Durango, Mexiko, 2011).

[47] Steiner, *In Search of Promised Lands*, 475. The four groups are the Old Order Amish, Old Order Mennonites, David Martin Mennonites, and Orthodox Mennonites.

[48] Marlene Epp, *Mennonites in Ontario: An Introduction* (Waterloo, ON: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1994 and 2012 editions).

[49] Royden Loewen, *Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 8.

[50] Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2013), 167-70.

[51] See the website *Anabaptist Historians* for brief summaries of a 2018 conference on Mennonites and the Holocaust that elicited debates on social media and elsewhere. https://anabaptisthistorians.org/tag/holocaust/. Accessed March 5, 2019.

[52] "Closer to Fine," *Indigo Girls* (1989). Lyrics on http://indigogirls.com/?cpt_discography=indigo-girls. Accessed March 7, 2019.