

Foreword

In 2001, the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* published proceedings from the “History of Aboriginal-Mennonite Relations” conference held at the University of Winnipeg the previous year. The issue opened with Elder Maria Campbell’s reflection on the unique friendship between two midwives: her Cree grandmother Kookoom Mariah and a Mennonite woman known simply as “the Mrs.” Over two decades later, in May 2022, Conrad Grebel University College hosted “Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters in Time and Space: A Gathering of Body, Mind, and Spirit.” Maria Campbell appeared once again at this conference, joined by her niece Lori Campbell (Montreal Lake First Nation), the associate vice president of Indigenous engagement at the University of Regina. Their eloquent interwoven keynote address can be found on Conrad Grebel’s YouTube channel.

In that intergenerational dialogue, Lori, a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, spoke about reconnecting with members of her family, including Maria, over the past decades. She also recalled her first engagements with the Mennonite community at Grebel while serving as director of the University of Waterloo’s Indigenous Student Centre. Maria expanded on the encounter between her grandmother and the Mennonite Mrs. that she introduced in 2000. Both Maria and Lori centred foodways in their exploration of Indigenous-Mennonite relationships—from the shock and laughter that ensued from encounters with a boiling pig’s head and a moose nose, to sharing soup and bannock on campus and a typical Mennonite meal after a tour of the historic Brubacher House. For Lori, these encounters highlighted

the similarities within our communities: the kindness, the welcoming atmosphere, the sharing of homemade down-to-earth food, the non-judgmental ways of engaging in conversation and the genuine curiosity about

our collective histories, and the ways in which outsiders had often formed inaccurate opinions of us or marginalized us.

Lori and Maria's keynote also revealed how the histories of Indigenous peoples and Mennonite settlers diverged. We cannot understand relationships like those between Kookoom Mariah and the Mennonite Mrs. outside the structures of Indigenous dispossession and Mennonite privilege under which Nugeewin was transformed into a place called Park Valley (Saskatchewan), or the Haudenosaunee lands of the Haldimand Tract became the present-day cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. They also spoke of the struggle against erasure and forgetting, Lori reminding Mennonites, as settlers, of their "responsibility to learn of their encounters with us."

The contributors to this JMS Forum seek to respond to Lori's challenge. Written by settler scholars who foreground their own positionality in their writing, the articles explore and critique settler colonialism as enacted through law, landscape, and literature. Appropriately, the contributors to this volume also offer histories that extend through "time and space."

Rosalind Beiler and Zachary Stoltzfus open the issue in mid-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Exploring Indigenous-Anabaptist (Amish) encounters through the lens of frontier violence, they recast the narrative of the "Hochstetler Massacre." Moving away from a telling of that history framed by Christian nonresistance, Beiler and Stoltzfus emphasize the prior Shawnee and Lenape displacement—by imperial powers as well as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy—and highlight Amish experiences of "proto-settler colonialism" in Alsace and the Palatinate which "conditioned them to be ideal settler-colonialists" along the Pennsylvania frontier.

Isabel Klassen-Marshall's article turns to the intertwined processes of Mennonite migration and Métis dispossession on Treaty 1 territory in Manitoba. She compares the manipulations of the Manitoba Act that enabled the extinguishment of Métis title to their homelands with the amendments to the Dominion Lands Act that allowed Mennonites to settle in their traditional village pattern rather than on individual farmsteads. Klassen-Marshall argues the desirability of Mennonites as settlers by the settler state motivated applications of property law that allowed Mennonite culture and lifeways to persist and thrive, while those of the Métis Nation were threatened by their displacement and dispossession.

Hannes Kalisch explores the missionary work of Mennonites who migrated from the Soviet Union to South America's contested Gran Chaco in 1930. Kalisch, who married into and raised a family in the Enlhet community of the Central Chaco, conducted extensive

oral histories for two decades together with Enlhet community member Ernesto Unruh. His article foregrounds the silenced contradiction at the heart of Mennonite mission work. “The settlers,” he writes, “though conscious that there was tension between the missionary project and the process of colonization . . . never seriously questioned the fact that evangelization supported their occupation of Enlhet territory,” and claimed that the Enlhet were headed for “extinction” prior to their arrival and that their spatial concentration near the colonies was “voluntary.” In the second half of the article, Kalisch describes an Enlhet perspective that challenges this narrative and draws from oral testimony about the disempowerment of Enlhet elders and the transformation of life brought on by Mennonite-imposed sedentarization.

As the articles by Beiler and Stoltzfus, Klassen, and Kalisch demonstrate, through their history of diasporic mobility, Mennonites became serial settlers on Indigenous lands. The articles also reveal how settler myths are perpetuated. Klassen-Marshall interrogates silences in her great grandmother’s journal. Beiler and Stoltzfus question textbook accounts of the Hochstetler massacre. Kalisch critiques the relatively recent historiography of Mennonite missionization process in the Chaco. Janna Martin also considers the narration of Mennonite settlement in her analysis of how the story of Swiss Mennonite settlement on the Haldimand Tract was presented in three plays commissioned by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. The mid-century flourishing of Mennonite historical societies, intertwined with the official multiculturalism of the Canadian state, was bound up in the consolidation of settler myths. Martin explores how ideas about land, Indigenous presence, and providence contained in these plays perpetuated assertions of settler-colonial innocence.

The final two essays in the JMS Forum consider Indigenous-Mennonite relations in terms of contemporary calls for truth and reconciliation. For Esther Epp-Tiessen, everyday encounters with Indigenous neighbours in Winnipeg demanded that Home Street Mennonite Church congregants reflect on their own connections to the displacement of Métis and First Nations communities in the city. Epp-Tiessen writes of Home Street’s past and present while reflecting on the history of Winnipeg’s urban encroachment and Adrian Jacobs’s call for a new “spiritual covenant” between Indigenous communities and settler churches.

Jeremy Bergen offers a theological perspective and warns that the “important and necessary work” of reconciliation “must not perpetuate white supremacy within churches or privilege particular ethnicities as ‘truly’ Mennonite.” Bergen acknowledges that those

claiming an ethnic Mennonite identity—even those not Mennonite by faith—have a specific historical connection to settler colonialism, and like many of the preceding authors he identifies his own ancestral participation in this history. Bergen argues that this specific history must be reckoned with, but that if the church is to be truly intercultural this reckoning cannot be identical with the work of reconciliation to which it is called.

The two regular research papers in this issue are also tied to the theme of settler colonialism. Blake Hamm reads diplomatic discourse to reveal precisely how Mennonites were able to extract the generous Canadian concessions described by Klassen-Marshall and others. Hamm argues that Mennonites skilfully leveraged the varied interests of Canada, the United States, and Russia against each other in complex international negotiations to extract benefits for those who departed the Russian empire for Canada in the 1870s and those who remained.

The final article in this issue is by Reginald Good, who published an article on the alienation of Six Nations land in the 2001 issue of JMS. In his 2023 article, Good blends analysis of historical, geographical, and archaeological sources to demonstrate how Indigenous land use preceded and shaped the geography of present-day Kitchener-Waterloo. The “myth of the pioneers,” writes Good, involved a silencing of the active Indigenous use of land in the region.

Fourteen book reviews follow. While the works reviewed cover a variety of topics, a number reflect aspects of Indigenous-Mennonite encounters and settler transformation of lands. These include *Be It Resolved*, a primary source anthology documenting Anabaptist commitments to Indigenous justice since the mid-1960s, Sarah Ens’s long poem *Flyway*, which situates the narrative Mennonite resettlement in the disappearing Manitoba tallgrass prairie, and Dora Dueck’s *Return Stroke*, containing a memoir of her life in the mission landscape Paraguayan Chaco.

This issue also includes a tribute by Royden Loewen to Marlene Epp. Epp recently retired as professor of history and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College and she has been, and continues to be, a foundational scholar for our field. I was fortunate to spend time with her while serving as a Fretz Fellow at Conrad Grebel in the summer of 2019. She has consistently pushed Mennonite studies to address pivotal changes and theoretical innovations in the discipline of history. In particular, women’s and gender history are at the heart of her works *Women without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000) and *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (2008). She has also brought Mennonites into

dialogue with other realms of ethnic and social history, in particular food history.

We hope you are inspired by this issue of JMS and that our Forum serves as a call for further engagement in Indigenous-Mennonite encounters by an emerging generation of scholars, Indigenous and settler.

Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, Editor