

# Foreword:

Most of this year's journal reproduces the proceedings of a remarkable conference held at the University of Winnipeg on 12-14 October 2000. The "History of Aboriginal-Mennonite Relations Conference" set as its goal to "cover a wide range of relationships....being open to identifying both successes and failures" and hoping that "the commonalities of these two people [might] serve as a foundation for common understandings" and a "stronger partnership." In total thirty presentations were given, including oral reflections, research papers and personal memoirs. In the end only about half of the presentations could be reproduced.

Included among the personal memoirs that appear in this issue are poignant encounters from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Ontario, and Yukon. Maria Campbell presents the story of the intimate friendship between two midwives, Cree-speaking Mrs. Campbell and a Low German speaking midwife (likely a Mrs. Reimer) and presents it in the context of the dispossession of Metis lands. Menno Wiebe reflects on his work as an MCC advocate that made him a friend of Aboriginal people across Canada and an oftentimes controversial prophet among Mennonites. Peter Campbell recalls his life as a student both of Cree elders at home and of Mennonite teachers at a residential school. Roger Roulette and Margaret Simmons recreate the world view of Chief Charlie Owen, a unilingual Cree-speaking Mennonite-Aboriginal leader, and recall their own encounters as Aboriginal people with Mennonites. David Neufeld focuses on bringing his own story as a descendent of Mennonite refugees to bear on Aboriginal stories he, as a public historian, seeks to interpret.

There are papers, too, that are especially committed to applying new academic models to this complex relationship. Jennifer Brown considers the successive historiographies that created either missionary heroes or aboriginal victims and suggests a middle road. Marilyn Iwama and Janis Brass present an unusual paper, applying the new ethnography to the interpretation of inter-racial dynamics within an extended Metis-Mennonite kin-group. Jonathan

Dueck argues that there are “theoretical weaknesses in the category of appropriation of voice” and offers a defence of the controversial work of Rudy Wiebe and Mennonite hymnologists.

Many of the papers are based on archival research. Reg Good, Donovan Giesbrecht and Leonard Doell describe lands - in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan respectively - that were settled by Mennonites in the nineteenth century, but which Aboriginal peoples have contested as rightfully belonging to them. Lucille Marr and Neil Funk Unrau chart the manner in which MCC has advocated on behalf of native people in Ontario and Alberta, arguing that relationship building was a crucial component of advocacy. Alvina Block offers an innovative paper on Mennonite missionary work in northern Manitoba, suggesting that the Christian faith that took root among Aboriginal people of a particular community was a syncretic religion. T.D. Regehr and Patricia Harms evaluate Mennonite service and economic development initiatives among Aboriginal people.

Other presentations at the conference are not published here, even though they were crucial components of the October meeting. They include the works, in order of their appearance at the conference, of Brian Rice, Terry Widrick, Richard George, Thelma Baker Meade, Norman Meade, Rudy Wiebe, Jennifer Heinrichs, Jaimie Friesen-Pankratz, Ralph Friesen, Glen Hostetler, Henry Hostetler, Albert Angus, Ray Funk, and Stan MacKay. Thank you too to Lorelie Apalit, Darlene Doerksen, Kris Dyck, Melissa Evans, Sherry Funk and Eleanor Koop for proofreading sections of the proceedings.

In addition to the conference proceedings this issue contains other regular features of the *Journal*. They include two research papers. The first, by Abe J. Dueck, analyzes the historic divisions among the Mennonite Brethren in light of the current process of dividing this conference along national lines. The second paper, by John Derksen, offers an innovative interpretation of Anabaptists’ relationship to the state. A review essay by James Urry considers the complex set of reactions - including guilt, gratitude, and good fortune - in Harry Loewen’s book, *Road to Freedom*, suggesting a model for future academic consideration of the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union. The twenty six book reviews are divided into three sections that appear in alphabetical order: History, Literature and Music, Social Science and Theology. I am sincerely grateful for the dedicated work of Abe Dueck and Mavis Reimer in organizing the book review section, and for the precise copyediting of Professors Al Reimer and Peter Pauls.

Royden Loewen, editor