

Mennonite Historical Society  
of British Columbia



# 2021 Annual Report

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**Mennonite Historical Society of BC**  
**Agenda of the 2021 Annual General Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 3, 2022, via ZOOM**

1. Welcome: Richard Thiessen, President
2. Minutes of 2020 AGM (held on 6 October 2021)
3. Financial Reports: Rod Ewert, Treasurer
  - (a) Financial Statements - 2021
  - (b) Budget – 2022
4. Election of Directors

Current terms:

Ending in 2022: Ingrid Epp, Rod Ewert, Maryann Jantzen, and Richard Thiessen  
Ending in 2023: Elmer Wiens and Cheryl Isaac  
Ending in 2024: Helen Esau Ho, Linda Klassen, Robert Martens and Elma Pauls

Ingrid Epp has decided to resign from the board. We thank her for her years of service, and are glad to know that she will continue to be an active volunteer with MHSBC.

The board is nominating Rod Ewert, Maryann Jantzen and Richard Thiessen for three year terms, ending in 2025.

We will be left with three vacancies on our Board. We have actively sought additional members throughout the past few months, and will continue to do so. If there are individuals who come forward, they will be appointed by the Board in the interim, and formally approved at the next AGM.

5. Presentation of Committee Reports
6. Questions / Further Business
7. Adjournment

**Minutes of the MHSBC Annual General Meeting of 2020  
held Oct 6, 2021 via Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Thiessen, Maryann Jantzen, Laura Unger, Rod Ewert, Jennifer Martens, Cheryl Isaak, Linda Klassen, Mary Ann Quiring, Elmer Wiens, Robert Martens, Dolores Harder, Julia Toews, Irene Plett, Waltrude Gortzen, Lillian Toews, Lorne Brandt, Sharon, Dave Rempel, Henry Wiens, Helen Esau Ho, Lorna Goertz, Peter & Joan Enns, Walter Friesen, Elma Pauls, Helen Nickel.

1. **Opening:** Richard called the meeting to order. Moved – Robert Martens, Second – Rod Ewert to approve the agenda as presented. **CARRIED.**
2. **Minutes of AGM** – October 28, 2020. Moved – Elmer Wiens, Second – Irene Plett to approve the minutes as presented. **CARRIED.**
3. **Financial Report – Rob Ewert**

Funds & equity – these operate with a few different funds:

- 1) Digitization project is a separate fund, digitizing paper copies to make them more accessible.
- 2) Mennonites in BC project - the fund contains about \$120,000 for publications which is to be spent in the next two to five years. No money was spent this year; we expect to begin disbursing funds in 2022.
- 3) Endowment fund – produces 75% of our funds, the proceeds of which go towards operating costs. We withdrew \$22,000 last year and then made another \$13,000. All markets did unexpectedly well in 2020. Edward Jones is actively managing our funds and this has been very positive for us.

Donations were down slightly from the budgeted amount in 2020. There was very little fundraising in 2020 and there is no fundraising budget for 2021.

We received a government grant of \$13,444.00 to offset expenses.

Motion to accept the financial statements as presented: Moved -- Irene Plett, Second -- Robert Martens. **CARRIED.**

**Budget:**

We are projecting total receipts of \$130,800 for 2021. There is an operating surplus (deficit) of (\$17,194.00). Some of this is due to a fund that will be transferred internally for budgeting for additional hard drives. Motion to accept the budget -- Cheryl Isaac, Second -- Maryanne Jantzen. **CARRIED**

**4. Election of directors**

The following directors' terms have ended in 2021: Linda Klassen, Robert Martens & Laura Unger. Laura has resigned from the board while Linda and Robert have let their names stand for another term. Also nominated to the board are Helen Esau Ho and Elma Pauls.

Dave Rempel expressed interest in joining the board.

Motion to accept the directors as stated -- Maryann Quiring, Second -- Julia Toews. **CARRIED**

**5. Presentation of committee reports**

We heard brief reports from the president, Office & Volunteer Manager, Archive Committee, Roots & Branches and Website and Computer Technical Committee.

Motion to accept reports -- Henry Wiens, Second – Linda Klassen. **CARRIED.**

**6. A brief time of questions & comments followed.**

Motion to adjourn: Dave Rempel.

Meeting Adjourned, 7:45 pm.

Next AGM potentially set for April 2022.

## **Board of Directors**

Ingrid Epp	-Retired Director of Development-The Reach Gallery Museum - Abbotsford
Rod Ewert	- Retired Chartered Accountant – Envision Credit Union – Abbotsford
Helen Esau Ho	- Registered Nurse, Abbotsford
Cheryl Isaac	- Retired Director, Continuing Education, UFV – Abbotsford
Maryann Jantzen	- Assistant Professor; Writing Centre Co-Director Trinity Western University – Abbotsford
Linda Klassen	- Former Business Owner - Abbotsford
Robert Martens	- Poet, Writer & Editor – Abbotsford
Elma Pauls	- Retired Health Care Administrator - Chilliwack
Richard Thiessen	- Executive Director Mennonite Museum– Abbotsford
Elmer G. Wiens	- Economist/Webmaster – Vancouver

## **Officers**

President	-	Richard Thiessen
Vice President	-	Robert Martens
Secretary	-	Linda Klassen
Treasurer	-	Rod Ewert

# President's Report

## Introduction

The year 2021 was a bit of a “mixed bag” for the Society as it continued to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers continued to return to the Library and Archives during the year, especially after they had received their COVID-19 vaccinations this spring. However, we were aware that there was a significant level of vaccine-resistance within the Mennonite community in the Fraser Valley, as appears to be the case throughout Canada in many areas with high concentrations of Mennonites. In the summer, the Mennonite Heritage Museum, in consultation with our Society, made the decision to require that all staff and volunteers working within the building be vaccinated. The implementation of this policy helped to reduce anxiety among staff and volunteers and created a more relaxed working environment. Unfortunately, several volunteers chose not to comply with this requirement, and at least one volunteer who was vaccinated ended her work with us in protest. We were saddened by the news in December that one of our volunteers passed away at the age of 71 due to complications from COVID-19.

Despite our attempts to create as safe an environment for our staff and volunteers as we possibly could, many staff and volunteers felt hesitant to interact with the general public, particularly because provincial health guidelines did not specify that libraries and archival centres must require proof of vaccination for visitors. Knowing that a significant segment of the Mennonite community was not vaccinated, we made the decision to remain closed to the public for the year. The public were encouraged to use email to submit research requests, which many did throughout the year. In the fall, a public workstation with a second mirrored monitor on a physically distanced desk was set up to allow for a limited number of visitors.

## Staffing and Personnel

Together, the Society and the Museum employ two full-time persons: Jennifer Martens serves as Office and Volunteer Manager and Mary Ann Quiring serves as Receptionist and Office Assistant. Each are employed half-time by the Society and half-time by the Museum.

The Society has approximately 60 volunteers that provide staffing for the Society and work on a variety of indexing, filing, translation, and scanning projects. Our volunteer structure includes several volunteer coordinators who work alongside our Office and Volunteer Manager. These coordinators maintain weekly contact with our volunteers and provide direct supervision and resourcing. This allows our Office and Volunteer Manager to focus more attention on volunteer policies and procedures and in-take procedures for new volunteers.

## Communications

*Roots and Branches*, our periodical, is our primary means of communication with our members. This year we again published three 32-page issues and a smaller Christmas issue for the year. We send out approximately 400 copies of the newsletter to members, churches, and sister organizations. We also rely on our website [<http://www.mhsbc.com>] and our Facebook page to communicate with our members as well as the general public.

## Public Events

No public events were held in 2021.

The Society is planning to hold a significant public event in February 2022 – a musical entitled Pier 21. Other events are being planned as well.

## Projects

### 1. Digitizing the Mennonitische Rundschau and Der Bote

Volunteers from the society have been digitizing issues of *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Der Bote* for several years. This year we learned that scans of *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* are now available online at the Internet Archive for 1880-1942 (missing 1897) and 1962-1993.

As of December 2021 the following issues of *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* had been scanned and were not available through the Internet Archive: 1943, 1944 (partial), 1945-1947, 1949-1950, 1951 (partial), 1952-1955, 1956 (partial), 1957, 1958-1959 (partial), 1960-1961. We have suspended further digitization.

The following issues of *Der Bote* have been scanned: 1924-1934, 1935 (partial), 1936, 1961 (partial), 1962, 1963-1964 (partial), 1966 (partial), 1969-1970, 1971 (partial). 1972-1978, 1979 (partial), 1980-1990, 1991-1992 (partial), 1993-2003, 2004 (partial), 2005-2008. These numbers remain unchanged from 2017.

## **2. Archival Holdings**

Linda Klassen heads up our volunteer group that works with processing our archival holdings and uploading images and archival description records to MAID.

A large collection of files from South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church was received in 2021. Other collections include the files of the Anabaptist Foundation, which ceased operations a few years ago, files from Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church, and files, slides, and audio recordings from Lao Christian Church.

## **3. EWZ Records**

We receive numerous requests from individuals, especially in Germany, for digital copies of EWZ files.

## **4. Genealogy**

Most of the visitors to our Archives have an interest in genealogy. Our volunteers assist visitors in compiling their family histories and they also respond to emails and letters.

Volunteers have also been quite busy scanning unpublished family histories and newspaper obituaries. Several of our volunteers are copying and pasting obituaries from the digital scans of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* into the Biographical Wiki database ([https://mla.bethelks.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](https://mla.bethelks.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Main_Page)) maintained by John Thiesen at the Mennonite Library & Archives at Bethel College. This database includes the full text of obituaries from several Mennonite periodicals, including *Mennonite Weekly Review*, *The Mennonite*, and a number of local newspapers. Our volunteers have entered 2,323 obituaries from the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*.

For many years our volunteers have maintained an obituary collection, including newspaper clippings and funeral bulletins. Over the past several years we have noticed that more and more people are choosing to publish obituaries of their loved ones on funeral home websites. These are often the only published obituary, or they are an expanded version of the obituary published in a newspaper. A project that we began in 2021 was to begin collecting digital obituaries from online newspaper and funeral home websites. At year end we had collected 2,683 online obituaries. Our goal is to eventually digitize all of the print obituaries in our collection and eliminate the newspaper clippings. We will only keep hard copies of funeral bulletins.

Several of our volunteers also do a significant amount of work with the GRANDMA database, managed by the California Mennonite Historical Society. Members of the public submit corrections and additions to their family information that is in GRANDMA, and our volunteers can log into the database in California and make the necessary changes. Several volunteers are also working at creating a Legacy database of individuals in the EWZ records. Once completed, this database will be merged with GRANDMA.

## **5. Translation Projects**

Volunteers are involved with several other projects, including the translation letters and diaries from German to English. Many of these projects begin as requests from individuals who make a donation to have something translated. Once the project is completed, a copy of the translation is made available to MHSBC.

Submitted by Richard D. Thiessen  
President

## **Office & Volunteer Manager Report**

Hello, my name is Jennifer Martens and as Office and Volunteer Manager, I am pleased to present the report for the office.

2021 continued with closure of the research center to the public for most of the year. While we were unable to host visitors, our volunteers continued to work on projects from home or came in to the building to work on-site. Communication from the office continued via email (27 news & notes and related), mail outs, social media and phone calls. In December, floor 2 was opened to the public by appointment and several visitors took advantage of the research assistance provided by our volunteers at the dual screen stations.

Communications continued with the producer of the Pier 21 musical and our sponsors for that event and a date was set for February 12, 2022 at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium for 2 showings.

Over the course of 2021, our volunteers and staff continued to adapt and pivot. For instance, during the extended Research Centre closure, volunteer hours from home continued to meet demand for research help. In 2021, 188 Paypal invoices went out which wasn't as many as 2020, but still a significant jump from the years prior (2016: 40, 2017: 49, 2018: 57, 2019: 89; 2020: 296). 20 requests were fulfilled via in person pick up or by phone/email. Meanwhile, those volunteers who felt comfortable to do so, came on site to work at distanced computer stations and complied with wearing masks and the advised sanitizing of high touch areas. Meetings were held by zoom or in large rooms with limited numbers of attendees. We have many volunteers interested in taking training in 2022 and more sessions are planned.

We are still looking for many volunteers. I have counted over 30 project teams for the historical society (including committees and task force teams) and there are many roles to fulfill. Shifts are 3 or more hours per week. Contact me to find out more!

Jennifer Martens

## **Archives Report**

While 2021 could not be considered "normal" it felt more normal than the previous year, for which I'm very thankful! Even so, we were deeply saddened by the loss of Al Wall in December, 2021. He was a dedicated and knowledgeable volunteer and fun to work with. We truly appreciate his rich contributions to MHSBC.

In 2020, we determined that our project room could safely accommodate six people, and we had six for most of 2021. We opened a second workstation with a new scanner that's now in regular use by several volunteers. We're grateful to Caitlyn, who joined us this year, as she helps Helen with scanning photographs.

Our work of preparing and posting photos to MAID (Mennonite Archival Information Database) went on pretty much as usual and resulted in a few hundred additions to the database. The text record area moved a little slower. As a result, I was able to take an inventory of our unprocessed jobs and rearrange them, with some going into the cold room for storage and others being reorganized in the storage room. There are some new lists and spreadsheets as a result! We received quite a few donations in 2020-21 even when we weren't working at capacity so there is, unfortunately, a sizable backlog of work. We keep saying we have the best job security anywhere, since we'll never run out of work!

We hope that in the near future we can begin welcoming new volunteers again. We welcome people who love historical photographs and written records, are detail oriented and enjoy creating order to become part of our team. Learning MAID is an option but not mandatory. If you enjoy working with older technology, we have a growing volume of audio material that needs some tender loving care.

Our little corner of the Museum is a great place to spend a day and I am so grateful to be a part of it. Thank you to each of you who work so diligently in the Archive department and for all that you give to MHSBC.

Linda Klassen  
Archive Department

## **Newsletter - *Roots and Branches***

In 2021, the Roots and Branches editorial committee once again produced three full-length issues of *Roots and Branches* as well as a shorter special Christmas edition. Robert Martens and Maryann Tjart Jantzen take turns as editors of the full-length issues, with Julia Toews and Louise Bergen Price as associate editors in charge of choosing pictures and also offering advice on content and layout. This year Julia and Louise once again put together a fabulous Christmas issue. I am very thankful to work with such a collaborative and cheerful committee: as the old saying goes, “many hands make light work.”

Our three main issues in 2021 featured diverse themes, with the February issue providing historical glimpses of Mennonites and their attitudes towards health issues and the June issue focusing on traditional Mennonite communities and their relationship with the surrounding culture. The September issue highlighted the life stories of several unique individuals out of step with the Mennonite mainstream, whose life choices seemed influenced by their longing “for a lost age of prosperity and security.” Typically each issue also features articles on diverse historical topics and artwork by local artists, along with book reviews, event reports, a genealogy column, relevant news releases, and announcements of upcoming events. In the future, we are also planning to include articles celebrating the lives of notable British Columbia Mennonites.

Our policy is to try to provide a broad range of material so that all readers will find something of interest. We welcome receiving any of the following: letters and photos from the past; “mystery” pictures that need identification; short personal narratives; book reviews; biographical sketches; articles of historical interest. Contributions can be in English or German (we will translate). All contributions are subject to editorial approval and revision, as needed.

Please direct any letters, comments or questions to the Newsletter Committee c/o the Mennonite Historical Society of BC, or email [archives@mhsbc.com](mailto:archives@mhsbc.com).

Maryann Tjart Jantzen  
MHSBC director, *Roots and Branches* co-editor

## **Library Committee Report**

Little has changed since the most recent annual library committee report (2020). Committee members have not been meeting, partly due to the pandemic; and partly because skilled volunteer librarian staff are currently lacking. A search is ongoing.

Will there be a merger of the MHSBC library with the Columbia Bible College library? CBC is part of the BC Library Consortium, which uses Evergreen, an open source library program. It is hoped that progress will be made on this file in the coming year, and that library committee meetings will soon resume.

Submitted by Robert Martens

## **Website and Computer Technical Committee**

Members: Elmer Wiens (Chair), Jennifer Martens, Richard Thiessen (ex officio)

Objectives: The committee was formed to discuss and implement improvements to the [www.MHSBC.com](http://www.MHSBC.com) website, and changes to the MHSBC computer facilities, scanners, software, etc.

Jennifer Martens and Richard Thiessen handle the computer facilities at the MHSBC’s offices. The following report deals with the [www.MHSBC.com](http://www.MHSBC.com) website.

Elmer Wiens works with Jennifer Martens and other members of the MHSBC Board and Staff to handle changes, updates, revisions, and troubleshooting on the [www.MHSBC.com](http://www.MHSBC.com) website as events unfold. These changes, etc. occur frequently throughout the year requiring hands-on attention by the webmaster.

The following list itemizes some features that available on the [www.MHSBC.com](http://www.MHSBC.com) website (3. – 9. same list as previous year).

1. We now have a website security certificate that increases the security of the MHSBC website. The URL of the website now starts with <https://> instead of <http://>, although both ways work the same way. An https connection is protected in that data sent between you and the website is encrypted and keeps the information private. It also tells a user's browser that we actually are who we claim to be.
2. The Genealogies and Family Histories web page has the list of family histories available at MHSBC. It was updated in February, 2022 with a PDF down loadable document. Users can also locate a reference to their family history on the web page indexed by title and cross-referenced by name. This web page is popular. Perhaps we should advertise its availability in R&B and request families to submit their information if they have not already done so (and welcome a donation). (<https://www.mhsbc.com/famhistories.php>)
3. Members of the Society can pay their membership dues online with PayPal. (<https://www.mhsbc.com/memberships.php>)
4. Donations to MHSBC can be made by way of PayPal (<https://www.mhsbc.com/donations.php>) Sponsors can view and print a .PDF document with sponsorship details ([https://www.mhsbc.com/pdfs/mhsbc\\_sponsor\\_event.pdf](https://www.mhsbc.com/pdfs/mhsbc_sponsor_event.pdf)).
5. Potential volunteers can complete and submit our online membership and volunteer form. (<https://www.mhsbc.com/volunteers.php>)
6. Tickets to events like writers' workshops can be purchased online through PayPal on the ([https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/purchase\\_event.php](https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/purchase_event.php)) webpage.
7. MHSBC events and meeting are posted on the website entry page and the Future Events web page [https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/mhsbc\\_events.php](https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/mhsbc_events.php)
8. Once the event is over, the event details are transferred to the Past Events web page. (<https://www.mhsbc.com/pastevents.php>) This web page provides a list of past events, accessible by year, going back over a decade to November 2004.
9. Editions of Roots and Branches are available on line one year after publication, archived back to 1995.

It has been my pleasure to continue working on these tasks this year.

Respectfully submitted

by Elmer G. Wiens, Webmaster

# Mennonite Historical Society of BC – 2021 Financial Reports

Mennonite Historical Society of BC Statement of Funds and Equity as at Dec 31, 2021		2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2021 Change	2021 Budget (TBD)
<b>Cash &amp; Investments</b>							
<b>Funds</b>							
01-1090	Petty Cash	200	200	200	200	-	200
01-1100	Chequing, ENVISION	10,376	10,101	49,669	37,995	(11,674)	38,188
01-1110	Savings, ENVISION	22,689	33,179	-	-	-	-
01-1111	US\$, ENVISION	330	572	1,745	1,508	(237)	1,508
01-1112	Stewardship Account, MBCONF	-	-	-	-	-	-
01-1113	EWZ Project	2,976	2,966	899	820	(79)	820
01-1114	Digitalization Project	26,750	7,477	10,981	2,973	(8,008)	2,973
01-1810	Shares	1,047	1,081	1,113	1,135	22	1,135
01-1200	MHSBC SPECIAL PROJECTS	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>64,369</b>	<b>55,575</b>	<b>64,607</b>	<b>44,632</b>	<b>(19,975)</b>	<b>44,824</b>
<b>Accounts Receivable and Prepaid</b>							
01-1250	GST Receivable	2	44	1,096	-	(1,096)	-
01-1260	Accounts Receivable MMS	1,734	7,023	6,206	8,146	1,941	8,146
01-1300	Prepaid Expenses	-	500	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total Accounts Receivable</b>	<b>1,736</b>	<b>7,566</b>	<b>7,302</b>	<b>8,146</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>8,146</b>
<b>Endowment, BC History Project</b>							
01-1115	Mennonites in BC Project	-	9,660	120,245	20,219	(100,026)	219
01-1421	Endowment, BC Hist Fund	-	-	-	100,077	100,077	101,711
01-1433	Endowment, BC Hist Mark to Market	-	-	-	1,635	1,635	4,100
	<b>Total BC History Project</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,660</b>	<b>120,245</b>	<b>121,930</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>106,030</b>
<b>Endowment, Cash and Investments</b>							
01-1410	Endowment, Cash	6,081	-	-	-	-	-
01-1420	Endowment, Book Value	452,368	546,131	568,042	582,028	13,986	616,145
01-1432	Endowment, Mark to Market	26,655	21,911	13,986	34,118	20,132	9,900
	<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>485,104</b>	<b>568,042</b>	<b>582,028</b>	<b>616,145</b>	<b>34,118</b>	<b>626,045</b>
	<b>Total Cash &amp; Investments</b>	<b>551,208</b>	<b>640,843</b>	<b>774,181</b>	<b>790,853</b>	<b>16,672</b>	<b>785,046</b>
<b>Accounts Payable and Equity</b>							
01-2406	Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-
01-2525	Equity	632,584	551,208	640,843	774,181	133,338	790,853
	Interim Equity	(81,376)	89,635	133,338	16,672	(116,666)	(5,807)
	<b>Total Accounts Payable and Equity</b>	<b>551,208</b>	<b>640,843</b>	<b>774,181</b>	<b>790,853</b>	<b>16,672</b>	<b>785,046</b>

**Endowment Fund - 2021**



