

## MC Sask Camps Review Executive Summary – March , 2023

### Purpose and context

Considering its fiduciary responsibilities as the governing body for three substantial summer child and youth camps, programming with vulnerable people, multiple programs, and a multimillion-dollar asset base, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) decided it prudent to commission a thorough review. The review included an extensive engagement process with key informants, staff and boards of each camp, congregation members, and organizational stakeholders. Data was gathered through interviews, in-person and online meetings of interested congregation members, and an online survey. A Project Team was appointed to assist the consultant through the process.

Through emergent agile design, key questions arose as raised and considered by interview and meeting participants, culminating in the following foundational question:

***In what ways can MC Sask adapt and improve to establish necessary governance over the three camps it currently owns and delegates to operate such that their good work can continue and develop?***

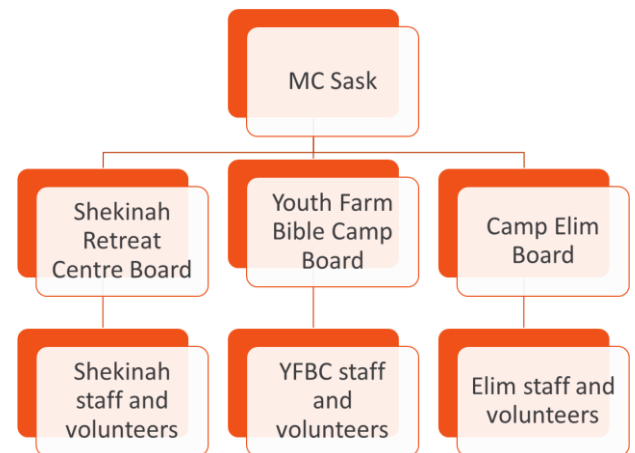
#### ***Common to all camps and often not known among MC Sask members:***

- ***Approximately 25-30% of children and youth attending camp are from MC Sk church families. Many of the remaining do not attend church.***
- ***Each have a significant source of income generated on-site. Less than 1% of any camp's revenue comes directly from MC Sask. This represents close to 1% of MC Sask expenses.***
- ***Assets owned by MC Sask, camp operated through a local board of directors and paid staff.***
- ***The "camp" portion of programming runs at close to cost recovery***

### Key findings

- All three camps show significant organizational strength, financial viability, and community support.
- The MC Sask community strongly supports retaining all three camps.
- While differences between the camps' cultures and approach to ministry are acknowledged to exist, the majority of MC Sask members responding to the study value the diversity and believe it represents the diversity within MC Sask churches.
- Each camp has a dominant significant organizational challenge:
  1. Youth Farm Bible Camp will face succession challenges due to the long tenure of a strong Executive Director, combined with possible limits to the strong growth it has experienced.
  2. Camp Elim has had patterned problems staffing its camp, particularly at the Executive Director position, an essential component for organizational health and thriving.
  3. Shekinah Retreat Centre has only recently developed the relatively stable financial position it has sought through its notably younger life than the other camps. This funding plan needs time to mature and integrate with operations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, MC Sask centrally owns all three camps, the lands and structures, and delegates the operation of the camps and, effectively, their “hands on” governance to the camp “boards”. **This leaves MC Sask, the camps, members, Council, and staff, in an extremely vulnerable position where the intimate knowledge of individual camp operations exists at the local board and staff level, while the authority and the fiduciary and liability responsibility exists only with MC Sask Council.**



Given current trends and MC Sask’s current limited capacities to adequately govern the camps, a change in the status quo is warranted. To be clear, MC Sask is perfectly able to govern its own operations and financial environment. It is the governance of the operations and financial world of the three camps *through their boards and staff* that is the problem.

There are four ways that camps in Western Canada organize their governance, ownership, and operations. If MC Sask were to adopt them, MC Sask would either:

1. Own and operate the camps itself, employing staff members – Not advised
2. Own and delegate governance and operations – This is the status quo, Not advised
3. Contract or lease out governance to a third party but maintain ownership – Potentially advised
4. Lease land and facilities to a newly created local non-profit/charitable organization that would assume governance and financial responsibilities – Potentially advised

From the synthesis outlined above, the consultant suggests that MC Sask adopt the following aspirations:

1. **Appropriate governance structure** – Governance responsibilities, liability and fiduciary, held with the entity or entities that are most able to know and understand the operations of the camps.
2. **High governance capacity** – All governance standards and capacities be set at best practice levels.
3. **Healthy multi-stakeholder environment** – A multi-camp system seamlessly integrated with other Mennonite institutions, community partners, local First Nations and Metis organizations, and other stakeholders, fostering a network of weak and strong ties resulting in a resilient and ethical community.
4. **Distinct identities with a common vision** – Three camps with distinct identities embraced and accepted by all that hold Anabaptist Mennonite values. While beliefs and practices differ, they exist within limits where the approach remains boldly and centrally Anabaptist Mennonite Christian while practicing acceptance, humility, and respect for views other than our own, and refrains from coercive or fear-based ministry practices.

A thorough list of detailed recommendations can be found on Page 33 of the final report.