



**Mennonite Church
Saskatchewan
Camps Review
Final Report
March 6, 2023**

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Executive Summary

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?

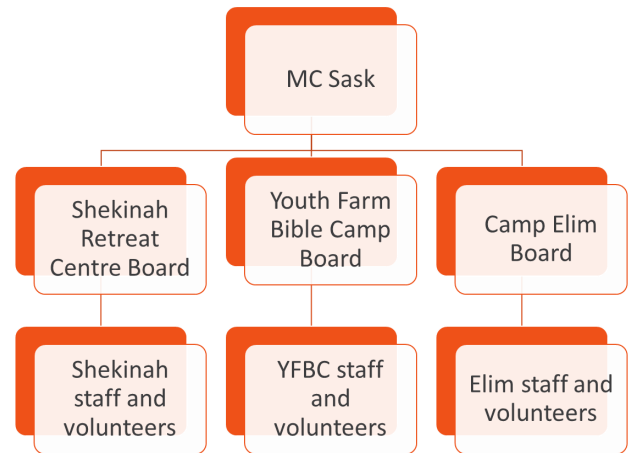
Common to all camps and often not known among MC Sask members:

- ***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.

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Introduction

In May of 2022, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) and Tim Nickel of Fifth Business Mediation and Organizational Consulting discussed the proposal of a review of the child and youth camps in Saskatchewan owned by MC Sask. Both parties accepted the details of this proposal in June of 2022. Work was to begin late summer of 2022. With this review, MC Sask intended to develop strategic actions with its youth camps and associated assets, liabilities, and programs. This strategy and these actions would take place in a multistakeholder environment with a long history of engagement in various Mennonite communities. Recognizing the high level of engagement and the important implications of the review findings, both parties agree that the process should be:

- Transparent
- Inclusive
- Foregrounding views of congregations
- Well informed
- Respectful
- Comprehensive

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The goal of the project was to have a report completed by MC Sask's Annual Delegate Session in March of 2023. At that session, the council would present the findings and engage with delegates and attendees on the issues outlined in the report.

Contractor

Tim Nickel is a mediator, facilitator, and organizational consultant who specializes in public engagement and multistakeholder collaboration. He grew up in Rosthern and attended Rosthern Junior College. He completed graduate work in Counselling Psychology, receiving a M.Ed. from the University of Saskatchewan in 1997. His professional life has focused on mediation and organizational development ever since, working in both private practice and with the Ministry of Justice in Saskatoon and Regina, with a two-year hiatus working in China. His current passion is multistakeholder collaboration, working, writing, and studying together with an online community of consultants from around the world through Community at Work in San Francisco.



History and Context

Beginning with the purchase of the Federal Government Dominion Experimental Farm in 1944 and Iverson's Beach on Lac Pelletier in 1945, the Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan has had a children and youth camp ministry for nearly 80 years. In 1956, land at Pike Lake was acquired as a camp for children and youth. The current configuration of camps settled in 1977 with the closure of the Pike Lake camp and the acquisition of the site that now hosts Shekinah Retreat Centre. The original intention of this shift was to close all the camps except Shekinah and make Shekinah Retreat Centre Saskatchewan's only child and youth camp. This potential decision was met with significant opposition by supporters in the Youth Farm and Elim communities. The ultimate decision, then, was to retain and maintain the three camps. This history of support and loyalty defines the function and culture of MC Sask camps and continues to provide the fuel for the sustainable function and growth of all three camps through significant adversity.

Since the transition in the 1970s, the camps have continued to provide a range of ministries in addition to the provision of child and youth summer camps. The Youth Farm has grown a variety of family-oriented experiences, developed thriving camp experiences for people with special needs, and offers back-country canoeing trips and voluntary service trips to Mexico, building houses with local people. Elim has focused on child and youth camps with the offering of a true "lake experience" and has constructed significant outbuildings with comfortable year-round ready accommodations for both revenue generation and community and personal retreats. Shekinah Retreat Centre, the "new" entity of the three, has matured and capitalized on its beautiful environment with timber frame constructed buildings and a retreat focus, in addition to the child and youth camps. All three camps have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis with relative strength, although to varying degrees are still recovering. Of note, and highlighted elsewhere in this report, is the fact that all three camps' financial resources used for ongoing operations and the development of physical structures derive from their own sources, with less than 1% of revenues coming directly as transfers from MC Sask. This represents approximately 1% of MC Sask's annual expenditures. The camps have become financially self-sufficient from a cash-flow perspective. MC Sask owns the land and structures.

Though MC Sask currently owns and delegates authority to operate the three camps, it conducted one financial and ownership review¹ of these assets 35 years before the present study. Given the typical vulnerabilities of boards and their staff complements, with their personnel transitions and ebbs and flows of capacities, MC Sask has assessed that it needs a better informed and strategically prudent plan to conduct the ongoing governance and business of its camps. The study parameters were intentionally kept open at the outset, using an agile method of exploring and refining the broad questions that made sense in the MC Sask context, deriving direction from MC Sask members and key camps informants themselves. The central question that arose was: **What governance, organizational, and ownership structure makes most sense to drive and support the Mission and Vision of MC Sask associated camps?**

¹ CCC Task Force. (1988) Camp Coordinating Committee Task Force Report regarding the Rationale and Economics of the 3 Campsite Complex of COMOS.

Methodology

The review was structured in five phases:

1. Refining the project with MC Sask Council and an advisory Project Team
2. Organizational analysis of the camps and MC Sask
3. Stakeholder analysis
4. Comparison with similar organizations
5. Engagement with Congregations, MC Sask Council, and delegates at the Annual Delegates Session



1. Refining the project with MC Sask Council and an advisory Project Team

Through networks and consultation with camps, a team of 6 members was chosen, including members connected to each camp, MC Sask Council, and the MC Sask Conference Minister. The purpose of the Project Team was:

- To advise the consultant on points of process and to give context to elements of the project,
- To hold the consultant accountable to his commitments,
- To communicate to their networks when the project required public contributions like suggesting that people attend meetings,
- To address community questions.

The Project Team members were:

- Josh Wallace
- Christine Epp
- Denise Martens
- Sarah Unrau
- Cheryl Woelk
- Jesse Doell

2. Organizational analysis of the camps and MC Sask

The organizational analysis started with information gathering through:

- An on-site visit to each camp
- Interviews with the Executive Directors of the camps (and Chair of the board and other board members for Camp Elim)
- Interviews with key informants
- Meetings with boards of directors
- Document review: annual reports, financial statements, and board minutes, *interalia*

The organizational analysis was intended not as a full in-depth organizational review of each camp but, rather, as a quick analysis to orient the consultant and provide general

impressions of the health of each camp and the type of role that MC Sask is playing or could have with each camp.

3. Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders were reached through:

- Interviews with representatives of organizations and key informants,
- Regional and online open meetings,
- Survey,
- Online submissions.

Stakeholders were chosen through iterative engagement and learning throughout the study. They included:

- Organizations: Rosthern Junior College and Mennonite Disaster Service.
- Highly involved individuals: There are groups of people who have been very involved with camps, some with an individual camp and others who have been involved with two or all three of the camps.
- Congregation members in MC Sask churches: This was a difficult group to reach given the geographical dispersion of the churches. A survey and multiple invitations to online or regional meetings were used to bridge the geographical gap.

In-person and online meetings

- 1 RCMP pullover to check if the rental car was stolen
- 12 quilts delivered from Zion Mennonite back to the MCC office in Saskatoon
- 6 thorough inquiries into the consultant's parentage

4. Comparison with similar organizations

While early in the study, there was an intention to perform a more classic market analysis, it became evident that filling camps with campers is less of a challenge than understanding the structure of the whole camping enterprise, with a particular focus on governance. With the advice of the Project Team and MC Sask Council, a list of camps and camping organizations in Western Canada was made that offered a range of models of funding and governance. Interviews and web searches were conducted with:

- MC Manitoba Camps programs
- Camp Valaqua, an MC Alberta camp
- Camp Squeah, an MC British Columbia camp
- Ranger Lake Bible Camp
- Camp Kadesh
- Saskatchewan Camping Association

5. Engagement with Congregations, MC Sask Council, and delegates at the Annual Delegates Session

A strong finding of the Camps Review was that, while there is plenty of energy, dedication, and vision for maintaining camps, the MC Sask camps community and system as a whole is disconnected and functions and views itself as multiple entities. The purpose of contacting stakeholders and individuals involved in camps shifted through the review process from primarily information gathering and data analysis to dialogue, mutual engagement, and relationship building. Recommendations of the project will include that the opportunities afforded through the investment in the review will be leveraged into further engagement, dialogue, and collaborative integrative work toward what are clearly shared fundamental visions for the future.



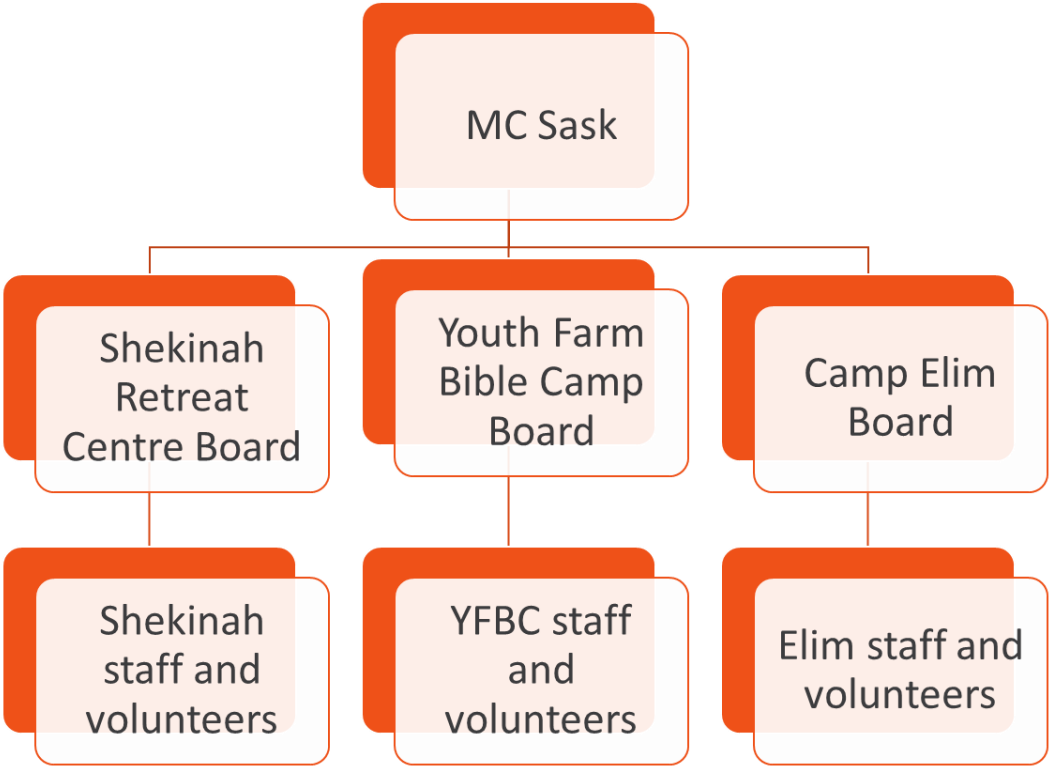
Organizational Review

Once the advisory Project Team was functioning, the first task of the review was to conduct a cursory organizational scan of each camp and the structure as a whole. The consultant physically visited each camp and conducted interviews with the Executive Directors (Camp Elim does not currently have an E.D.) and Boards of Directors (or representatives) of each camp.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan currently owns three properties, each with significant built assets, used for child and youth camps and associated activities. These centres are:

- Youth Farm Bible Camp, located on the outskirts of Rosthern, Saskatchewan
- Camp Elim, located on Lac Pelletier 46 kilometers South of Swift Current, Saskatchewan
- Shekinah Retreat Centre, located on the North Saskatchewan River 17 kilometers North-west of Waldheim, Saskatchewan

The only registered corporate structure in this organizational design is MC Sask itself. The three camps each have their own board of directors created by MC Sask for the purpose of local governance and support. However, MC Sask is ultimately responsible for all activities that take place on any of the properties and has fiduciary responsibility for their financial transactions, assets, and liabilities. MC Sask signs any mortgages and could be legally liable in the event of a lawsuit.



The consultant completed an assessment of the following factors deemed important for camp health

- Excellent governance practice and oversight
- A consistent and significant combination of sources of revenue to subsidize camps, other than camp fees
- Diverse sources of revenue
- Operational excellence
- A clear vision and mission with a motivating strategy, evident in an organizational culture
- Community support



	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
Governance (notwithstanding the fact that no local camp board has full authority to make major decisions for themselves)	YFBC, due to the presence of a larger staff and a long-time Executive Director, has a more classic policy board. Good board function for boards of organizations such as these include robust performance evaluation of the Executive Director and firm fiscal oversight and understanding. It is important that the relationship between the board and the E.D. is warm but assertive and transparent, not simply trusting. The YFBC governance practice is adequate but should be tended particularly in light of the long tenure of the E.D. and the	Elim has a fully operational board. Without an all-year full-time Executive Director, the board of directors is required to run the camp operations. While this assures excellent oversight and knowledge of camp functions, it limits the potential growth and functions to the capacities of the board members with little room for anything extra. In situations like these, board members often get burned out and leave and the enterprise of the organization (the camp) functions but can never thrive. The board made an excellent move to hire a book-keeper to	Shekinah has a long history of enthusiastic volunteerism. This extends to the board, whose members have often filled positions in running camps or building infrastructure. Unlike Elim, however, Shekinah has a full-year Executive Director position filled and other on-site full-year staff members. The practice of volunteerism or other business relationships introduces the possibility of conflicts of interests and blurring lines of accountability where the Executive Director is in the position of supervising people who are also their supervisor. If

	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
	<p>possibility of succession. A board also has responsibility to maintain stakeholder relationships. This is a challenge for YFBC because it has diverged from the culture of MC Sk. While some efforts have been made, this aspect of governance needs improvement.</p>	<p>assist with the lease finances, professionalizing a key portion of the governance responsibility. With this development, the board is conducting itself well with its financial oversight duties. However, the board appears unable to secure a suitable hire for its Executive Director position and will require assistance.</p>	<p>possible, these conflicts and blurring lines should be minimized or treated with a high level of transparency. While not impossible to handle, it takes a significant amount of discipline and capacity to manage this situation. The current Shekinah board complement has an excellent skill set. Their challenge is support of their E.D. pair, who have significant operational challenges.</p>
Financial Stability	<p>The YFBC is “enjoying” a high growth rate and has remarkable financial health. A question in coming years will be its limits to growth. Continued rapid growth will challenge the vision, mission, and brand of the YFBC. Its Corn Maze revenue source has become an engine for revenue. Linking any growth or development to clear strategic priorities will become increasingly important.</p>	<p>Camp Elim has an excellent source of revenue with its leased properties. While some may debate if there is some better way to leverage these assets, the consistent revenue provides a stable foundation for the operations. Alternatively, that consistency also means that they have a clear ceiling amount. The potential hiring of an Executive Director (the aforementioned challenge) will increase expenses but the goal would be that net profit will be likely since that position would allow for significant increases in on-site facility rental income throughout the year and</p>	<p>Shekinah has experienced inconsistency with its financial health over its more than 45 years of existence. A corollary of this statement means the camp has <u>survived</u> through repeated financial challenges and crises. To thrive, rather than survive, it requires, as noted above, a significant and consistent source of revenue. The Timberlodge currently provides the potential for this source. Since its construction in 2000, leadership has waived on its views of its use and purpose. Therefore, it has never provided this consistent source of revenue. The current plan is to maximize this purpose to subsidize other operations. Currently, this is</p>

	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
		possibly a school program on the shoulder and off seasons.	the only viable solution to the problem of maintaining a significant and consistent source of revenue. Shekinah's two main sources of revenue beyond camping fees were the Timberlodge and their schools program and both were shut down completely during most of the COVID pandemic. Further risk analysis would help understand the unique vulnerabilities of these two sources.
Operations	Most notable about YFBC is its wide range of programs and activities. They view themselves more as a community of committed Christians engaging in a common vision of ministry than simply a church camp, even though this program remains important. Their challenge will be to align activities to a common vision and strategic priorities and match capacity (mostly staffing) with the program requirements. This currently appears to be in control. Notably, the current E.D. has been employed for 23 years and is responsible for much of the success of the camp. It will be crucial for the	Elim, by necessity, has focused its operational attention on its summer camps. Their operational board has expertise in building construction and maintenance, having developed an excellent set of physical assets that can also generate revenue. Without a professional staff, however, Elim's board will be required to work to run the camp and will be limited in its expertise by the skill sets of its members. Contracting out tasks will help but, ultimately, much hinges on the hiring of a full-year Executive Director. Of note, Camp Elim has a	COVID hit Shekinah hard in both its finances and its operations. It has at its core three types of operational programs: 1) summer camp, 2) school environmental education, and 3) personal and group retreat opportunities. All three of these are showing sharp recoveries but challenges remain. Among them, pandemic related breaks in continuity for staffing caused a loss of corporate knowledge.

	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
	board to plan for succession well in advance of his eventual departure, when that time comes.	very steady and steadily growing number of campers.	
Culture	YFBC is known as a more evangelical environment. This perceived difference has been a challenge for some in the wider MC Sk church to accept. Relationships have suffered, at times. On the site and within the organization, the culture is characterized by energy and conviction. As with many parts of the Mennonite community, real and perceived differences in identity and theology make dialogue and acceptance a challenge. In a promising different frame or view point, YFBC considers itself a bridge to congregations, organizations, and individuals who have left MC Sk for identity and theological reasons. The camp succeeds, at times, at this role and other times falters. Addressing these issues directly and openly would maintain the “weak ties” necessary for peaceful community networks.	What is very striking about Camp Elim is its level of pride, support, and community involvement. The supporting community has a solid idea of what it is and what they believe. Having such extensive “hands-on” experience in the camp, they see the tangible benefits and transformations that campers experience. While much has been said about their need for an Executive Director, the limits set by the necessity of the board to work at the camp has resulted in a kind of strength and resilience that persists over time. In contrast, it also results in a persistently threadbare or exhausted feel to the whole enterprise. As the core of volunteers ages and drops out, without full replacements, the fear is that exhaustion will win.	Camp Shekinah in some ways has been the “darling” of camps in Saskatchewan at the same time as developing reputation for “always asking for money” and “jumping from crisis to crisis”. With a stronger financial foundation, which is possible if not imminent, it could be that its deep and rich promise of natural and environmental vision to emerge once again. It has a clearly inclusive ethic and nature-based theology. “God in Nature” is mentioned by enough people, enough times, to be remembered as a tag line. However, without attention paid to assessing the fundamental reasons for its lack of stability and the feeling as though it jumps from crisis to crisis, it risks pushing those who are not direct boosters of the enterprise beyond their thresholds for tolerance and they may withdraw support.
Community Support	YFBC has a diverse and engaged community evidenced by strong	Camp Elim has a passionate group of supporters, primarily drawing	Shekinah benefits from having several supporting churches, a

	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
	donation amounts and both individual and organizational interest. Of note, YFBC garners support from and conducts collaborative activity with church congregations outside of MC Sask and local First Nation, Beardy's and Okemasis' Cree Nation.	people from Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current. Like other camps, Elim's boosters are very loyal. Most have a long history with the camp, both attending and working there, and/or serving on the board of directors. There is concern that membership at Zion Mennonite Church is decreasing and aging. There is a strong view among this group that the camp has to increasingly draw support from outside Zion Mennonite Church, primarily from former attendees and the larger community that has formed around the camp over the years.	location in close proximity to Saskatoon, and close ties to Rosthern Junior College. The group of people willing to donate, volunteer at the camp, or serve on the board of directors is relatively large. Like the other camps, the COVID pandemic hampered long-standing community-based traditions (fundraising events).
Strengths	YFBC's strength is in its energetic and diversified ministry activities. It views itself more as a community of Christians with a common vision of ministry. This has led to significant growth and financial stability.	Elim's greatest strengths are its 1) strong community support, 2) location on a beautiful lake that supports an exciting camp experience, right through the teen years, and 3) its ownership of lease properties providing a steady revenue source.	Shekinah's strengths include the stunningly beautiful location and the attractive Timberlodge with strong potential as a revenue source. It also has a strong core vision and philosophy that resonates with a wide range of public, both in and outside of Mennonite communities.
Weaknesses	YFBC's significant challenge as a camp is its lack of proximity to a	Elim's most significant challenge historically has been the difficulty in	Challenges include the fact that the land is situated on a flood plain and

	Youth Farm Bible Camp	Camp Elim	Shekinah Retreat Centre
	body of water. This has limited its connection to serving youth and young adults which has had implications for it's staffing.	hiring staff, requiring the board of directors to take operational roles and limiting the scope of what the organization can accomplish.	is therefore vulnerable to significant damage or disruption. It's primary private revenue source, the Timberlodge, was particularly vulnerable to COVID because of health restrictions and, because of differing visions for its use throughout its history, is only now beginning to realize its full potential as a revenue source.

Summary and General Findings

All three camps show organizational strength with the Youth Farm showing notably that it is thriving. Among other things, with the support of the MC Sask camp community, each of the camps could improve:

- For YFBC, a plan for 1) succession for the E.D. and 2) a plan for the limits to growth,
- For Shekinah Retreat Center, stable source(s) of revenue, further development of the Timberlodge for revenue and/or planning for contingencies or alternatives,
- For Elim, developing a sustainable staffing model, including a year-round Executive Director.

All three camps desire a more positive and constructive relationship with both MC Sask and each other.

All three camps are sustainable, given current projections and despite the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are not drawing any significant MC Sask financial resources and the time resources dedicated to camping programs fit squarely in the mission of the Mennonite Church “to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.”²

² Mennonite Church Saskatchewan website. <https://mcsask.ca/about-us/why>

Camps Local Operational Factors

Human Resources

Camps reported challenges in hiring competent staff members for both summer programs and leadership roles.

The Pipeline – A structure that helps in this onerous task is establishing a steady “pipeline” of personnel that starts with children campers and progresses to teen campers. Then some of those become Counsellors in Training, who then might become paid Counsellors themselves. The hope is that some of these then might return to take a Summer Camp Director position and eventually move into an Executive Director role. In addition, former campers often end up in board positions or work or volunteer in other capacities.

Labour trends – Participants in the study speculated that while some youth might follow similar patterns as earlier decades, youth in the 2020s are less likely to stay in a position for multiple years and are more inclined to take higher paid positions than camps are able to provide. This may not be borne out by the statistics since real wages for youth aged 15 to 18 have decreased by 11.5%. However, another relevant statistic is that the workforce participation of people aged 15 to 18 was 35.4% in 2019 compared with 57.5% in 1975. Compounding that number is the decrease in population of youth aged 15 to 18 in Saskatchewan, from 92,000 in 1975 to 70,000 in 2019. In other words, there simply might be fewer youth looking for jobs, making it difficult for employers to find the staff they need if they are looking for youth.³

Types of roles – For the typical ages of a camp counsellor, the responsibilities required of them are very high and the types of activities varied.

Volunteer trends – Fewer people are volunteering for boards or other volunteer roles.

Succession – Camps require succession plans for both abrupt changes or fully expected changes to leadership positions.

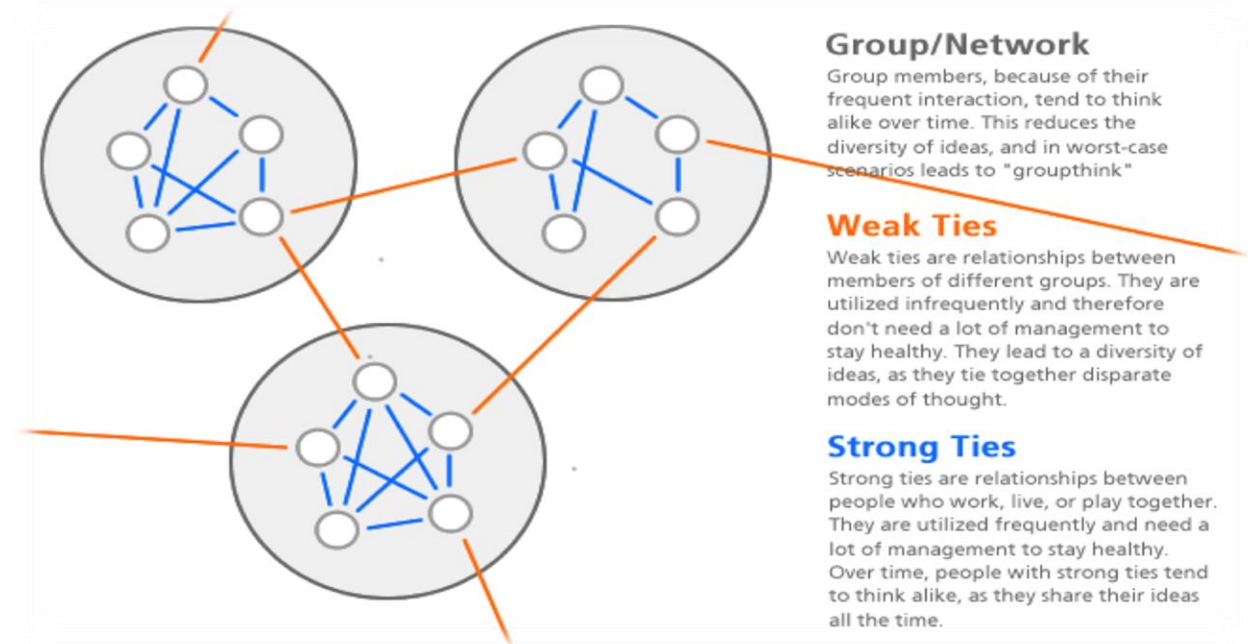
Labour relations and disputes – These problems happen in all organizations. How well supported are camps when these things happen?



³ Statistics Canada. (1975, 2019) Labour Force Survey.

Prior to and during the Camps Review, there was the rumour and sometimes unexamined idea that not all camps share MC Sask theology. Some view one or another camp as being too “Progressive” and others believe that one or another camp is too “Evangelical”. While some people thought that this was a widely shared view, the survey results showed that the predominant view, while noting the differences, values the diversity along the perceived continuum of Progressive through Evangelical cultures of faith. They believe that MC Sask contains at least this level of diversity of views and that there is value in holding the diversity within the camps program, encouraging **differentiation within limits**.

Current theory on peacemaking in community networks holds that it is the “weak ties” that connect separate organizations, that might disagree on fundamental matters of identity and values, that create an environment of peace. Weak ties are those that arise with common work on shared business, chance respectful meetings, and representation in common organizations. Collaborative approaches to differences and conflict strengthen and maintain these ties. More weak ties in a network creates greater resilience and diversity of thinking.





Finance

Over the years it has become evident that a successful camp in Saskatchewan under the current governance model requires:

- At least one reliable and significant source of revenue apart from camp fees, unless those camp fees are high,
- A range of other sources of revenue that provide resilience,
- Robust financial oversight including technical financial accounting and professional financial capacities of judgement, and knowledge of finance and tax law.

Considerations regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic

In March of 2020, the entire globe faced a social and economic challenge few living people have experienced. MC Sask camps, hosting humans in close quarters (at times) as its primary activity, endured forced temporary closures and other public health measures. Organizations throughout Saskatchewan shifted their models and worked out creative solutions to survive. Hindsight provides the opportunity to learn from the implications of the decisions made during crises. Not all the decisions might have been perfect but all three camps are now back to offering camps to children and youth and conducting all programming that was offered prior to the pandemic. Feedback from the Survey and interviews suggests that further development is required to establish the rich capacities and traditions that existed in 2019, with some corporate amnesia having occurred. In addition, the camps themselves report challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. The “Pipeline” of staff had been broken with two years of limited programming. Energy and creative inputs will be required to bridge into a fully post-COVID world.

Stakeholder Engagement

The consultant interviewed 20 individuals, some in groups, and some multiple times. In addition, four in-person meetings were held in Rosthern, Saskatoon, Regina, and Swift Current with 43 people attending. Two online meetings were held for a total of 9 people. Finally, a Survey resulted in 107 responses. The design and efforts to carry out the plan were intended to give maximum opportunity to MC Sask members, people closely associated with the camps, and organizations that interact with camps in any way. There was a significant challenge reaching geographically dispersed groups of people. The two groups of people not reached well by the methods chosen would be those who live in centres more than a half hour from Rosthern, Saskatoon, Regina, and Swift Current and might not be comfortable with digital conferencing technology and individuals who have little interest in child and youth summer camps themselves but might have interest in MC Sask function and organization. Most of the people reached had some genuine interest and/or history with one or more of the camps. However, 11.21% of Survey respondents had not attended or had a child attend camps.

It is important to note that the overwhelming view of respondents contacted in any way was positive in their view of camps in that they:

- Think camps are valuable and should be maintained, if possible,
- Had a positive experience themselves at camp or their children did,
- Camps programming should be based in Mennonite Anabaptist Christian theology,
- Believe that three camps holding a diversity of cultures and traditions was good and offered a variety of choice for MC Sask members' families and others in the community.

Thorough engagement

- 20 key informants
- 4 boards or board chairs
- 4 in-person regional meetings in Rosthern, Saskatoon, Regina, and Swift Current
- 2 online meetings
- 107 survey responses.

It is worth noting, inferring the inverse scenario as a possible motivation to contribute views to the study, that very few people engaged in a negative way, saying that camps should be closed or altered significantly. Of these few views that existed, most were misinformed about their reasons why any camps should be closed, saying that they were an unnecessary drain on MC Sask resources when in reality they do not drain any significant financial resources from the MC Sask organization (i.e. funds contributed by MC Sask congregations directly to the MC Sask organization in Saskatoon) in direct payments.

Key Informants

The predominant views of Key Informants were that:

- MC Sask camps are interdependent entities at varying degrees of stability and organizational health. All require a range of supports outside of themselves and welcome the idea of being accountable to MC Sask and the other camps as long as there is a healthy respect for their autonomy and expertise in running camps.
- Governance and risk-mitigation are primary and urgent problems in the current structure.
- The most appropriate role for MC Sask is to provide support but to leave operational questions to local boards and staff.
- Camp staff, volunteers, and governors want more opportunities to collaborate and communicate with one another and with MC Sask Council and staff.
- Given that MC Sask churches are shrinking and aging, while participants in camps are predominantly from non-Mennonite or non-Christian families, a re-invigorated and re-imagined vision and mission for camps is needed.
- Embracing the full cultural and theological spectrum that currently exists between camps is important but it is also important to set some limits. There was a strong message that fear-based or coercive ministering practices were unacceptable. Alternatively, there was a significant minority that viewed a threat from a secularization of camps ministry. A centrist majority preferred that Mennonite Anabaptist ministry be:
 - present,
 - visible and audible, and
 - confident, but also
 - accepting and inclusive,
 - open-minded, and
 - non-coercive and not fear-based but, rather,
 - invitational and exploratory.

Camps, from this point of view, provide an experience of “God in Nature” where children and youth can explore and develop their faith and spiritual life without being pressured to convert or “be saved”.



Organizational Stakeholders

Rosthern Junior College (RJC)

RJC has a long-standing relationship with Mennonite camps, especially Shekinah Retreat Centre and Youth Farm Bible Camp (YFBC). Currently, they collaborate and share resources with both camps. For example, RJC runs school programming at Shekinah Retreat Centre and pools vehicle resources for mutual benefit with YFBC.

While these ties exist, RJC is interested in strengthening and maintaining positive ties with both camps and is open to introducing new activities and connections with Camp Elim. This could even include joint planning and structured and regularly scheduled communication with all three camps.

Both the camps and RJC exist as “extra-congregational institutions” which have links to a wide range of contacts and interests outside the Mennonite world. RJC, like camps, enjoys the diversity and challenges of deriving approximately 70% of their student body from non-Mennonite families. They also connect with a range organizations and congregations outside the MC Sask world, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite. As this landscape changes and becomes more interconnected, camps and educational institutions provide the weak links that foster constructive broader communities, bringing MC Sask Mennonite perspectives and influence.

RJC has developed the tag-line “Anabaptist Mennonite education for the world!” With the organizational maturity it has gained from challenges similar to those experience by MC Sask camps, the camps might consider adopting an aligned spirit of engagement with the world.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)

Mennonite Disaster Service Saskatchewan has provided volunteers through its Family Programming to assist both Shekinah Retreat Centre and Camp Elim over the recent past. The camps clearly benefit from structured access to labour assistance primarily for capital building projects and MDS gains from having projects with which to engage and promote their programs. Their family programming supports their other programs by increasing the pool of people willing to help, increasing their capacities through experience, and increasing the exposure to their organization through word of mouth.

It is a challenge for MDS to reach pools of willing volunteers. Building and maintaining connections to the camps will help them in this regard. Planning regular contact between MDS and the camps will benefit all these organizations.

Congregation Members

Repeated invitations to both in-person and online meetings resulted in 52 engaged participants. At the meetings, the consultant presented the interim findings of the organizational review and preliminary framings of the issues that were arising through the consultations. Participants engaged in thoughtful discussions about camps and offered the following views:

- Participants were excited about the potentials and possibilities of the camps, viewing much of this potential as currently unrealized, despite the good work already done by the camps. They were relieved to understand that all three camps were already or were well on track to becoming independent and financially viable. They see future generations benefiting from the experience of “God in Nature”, a commonly held idea of the greater impact of the camps on children. They hope that younger generations get involved to keep the camps energized.
- The participants at the camp were, for the greater part, already knowledgeable about the operations of the camps. Their concerns centred mostly around two areas: Staffing and Governance.
 - Staffing – they were worried about the apparent difficulty in attaining qualified staff members, particularly but not exclusively, for Camp Elim. This challenge is piqued as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do they hope for camps to retain qualified staff to conduct the basic operations but also the essential work of the continuation of camp traditions and ministering in a confident way.
 - Governance – The participants’ concerns about governance centred on the complicated indirect role that MC Sask has over these large and asset heavy entities. They worry about accident and staffing liabilities as well as ensuring the financial health of these three camps. They identify that, while mostly good competent people have been on and continue to serve on the three local boards and MC Sask Council, this is never guaranteed and populating these roles is an ongoing challenge with a shrinking pool of MC Sask church members to draw from.

Also among their concerns was the possibility that the Anabaptist Mennonite identity would be lost. They clearly valued the diversity of theological and cultural approaches to ministry but want there to be limits. Participants do not want the camps to become either too secular or, alternatively, theologically fear-based or coercive. They want God at the centre of the camp culture but do not want vulnerable campers to experience coercion of fear-based theology or ministry practice during their stay at camps.

- The participants who do not regularly volunteer stated that they need more regular information about camp programs from all three camps. They want to help but do not know how, especially if they live far from camps. They also want transparency. They have a sense of identity and affiliation, through their MC Sask church and history, that gives them a sense of ownership and, consequently feel entitled to know the inner workings, including the financial health data. They feel strong in that MC Sask needs to address the system of camps to address the deficits of governance and operational needs (mostly staffing). More active involvement from MC Sask would be appreciated.

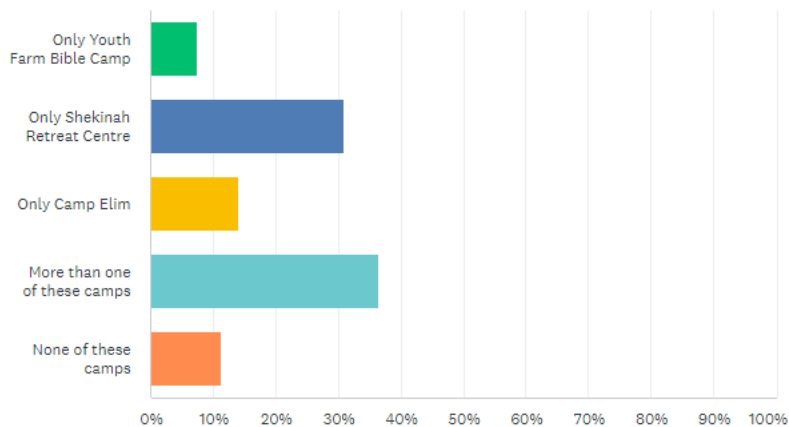
- A strong stance that many participants took about what should happen next was that MC Sask should lead an effort to strengthen the governance of the camps. By this, they meant that good governance should be both structured in to policy and procedure and that there should be greater transparency and communication between camps and between camps and congregations. The participants were largely already supporters of camps so this message was not a comment on personal deficits or overtly poor practice but rather a call to formalize the governance and increase capacities to best practice standards. They view the camps as having “outgrown” the capacities of MC Sask itself.
- Overall, participants are excited about the potential of camps and want them to continue to grow and thrive, seeking new ways to have positive “MC Sask” influence on the world. They were divided about what corporate structure would be best, although a majority thought that a movement toward camp independence would be prudent. There was a very strong message that selling the camps to outside entities and closing the camp operations was highly disagreeable. They see far too much good going on currently among already sustainable (or nearly so) camps with strong potential for more.

Survey

107 people responded to the online survey that remained open from mid-January through most of February.

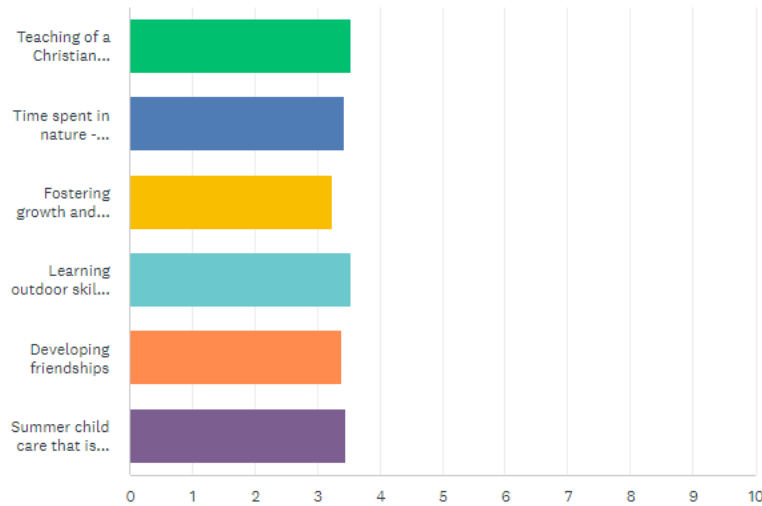
Did you or your children attend one of the three camps (Youth Farm, Shekinah, or Elim) as a child or youth?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0



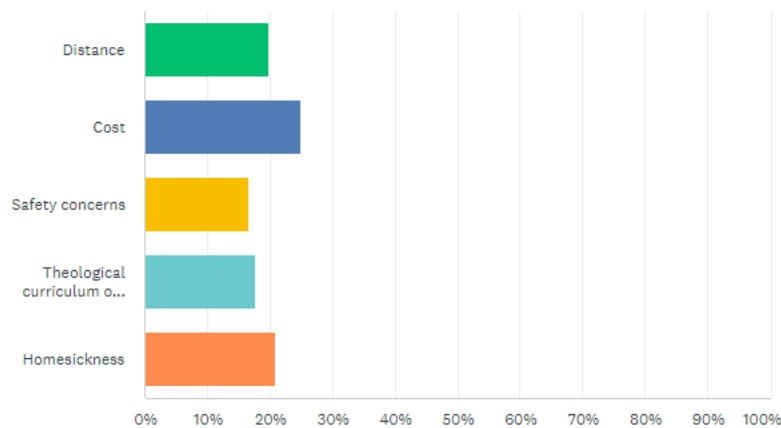
Please rank the aspects of the church camp experience in order of how important you believe them to be when considering having children and youth attend camp, with 1 being the least important and 6 being the most important.

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0



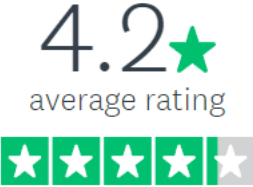
The camps are located near Swift Current, near Waldheim, and at Rosthern and cost between \$360 and \$375 for one 5-day week of camping. Select what you would consider the most significant barrier if you were considering sending a child to camp.

Answered: 96 Skipped: 11



Rate the importance of maintaining MC Sk Mennonite Church camps in the ongoing ministry of the MC Sask church.

Answered: 105 Skipped: 2



	UNIMPORTANT TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH	(NO LABEL)	(NO LABEL)	(NO LABEL)	ESSENTIAL TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	0.95% 1	5.71% 6	11.43% 12	33.33% 35	48.57% 51	105	4.23

The first of two open response questions was: **“When you hear mention of MC Sask Camps, what is the first thing that comes to mind?”** The question elicited a long list of largely positive statements describing the respondents own experience at camps or those of their children. The responses revealed a high priority with the recurring theme of “God in Nature”. MC Sask members who gave answers to the question believe summer camps offer a unique and powerful spiritual experience which they are excited about being offered to new generations of children and youth.

The second question was: **“What more would you like to say to MC Sask about the camping ministry?”** and was intended to allow respondents to report a wide range of thoughts and views about camps. They answered with advice to MC Sask that camps programs should focus on being inclusive, accessible, empowering, safe, professional, and convenient for the children who participate in them. Like the participants in meetings, survey respondents supported the view that a diversity of approaches to theology was good, within the limits of “not becoming too secular” and not being too “fundamentalist” or “evangelical”. There was a recognition that MC Sask contains different approaches but values inclusivity, humility, peacemaking, and service. They want God at the centre while ensuring all identities feel included.



Analysis of similar organizations in Western Canada

As described above, the consultant interviewed for and researched alternative models of governance and ownership structure for camps. Unlike some camps in Eastern Canada, with much larger bases of affluent paying customers and a family and parenting culture that values high priced experiences for their children, that are run for-profit, almost all summer camps in Western Canada are operated as charitable organizations. Most of these are religious organizations themselves or are owned by religious organizations and a few are run with special interests in mind such as Camp Easter Seal which is owned and operated by SaskAbilities Council for people with special needs. For comparison, Camp Wenonah near Algonquin Provincial Park in Southern Ontario charges near \$5,000 for one month of overnight camping for one youth, while MC Sask camps charge \$360 to \$375 for 6 days of overnight camping for one youth. Religious Camps in Saskatchewan similar to MC Sask camps charge as much as \$680 for 6 days of overnight camping for youth.

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 advised⁴

Alternative Governance and Ownership Arrangements

1. MC Sask owns and operates, employs staff members directly

- The conference assumes full responsibility.
- Requires the expertise and centralized staff capacity to run camps and fund staff and operations.
- Reduces the number of links of accountability to the responsible board of directors (Council) (more direct accountability and influence)
- Adds a significant program (three programs in Saskatchewan's case) to Conference operations
- Less autonomy for camps

2. MC Sask own and delegate governance and operations to local boards and staff

- This is the current model

⁴ A helpful and thorough description of camps governance arrangements is contained in a report written for Mennonite Church Manitoba in 2010 by Dorothy Fontaine, named 2010-066-10 MCM Governance Report. MC Sask camps governance models are described and analyzed. Available from the MC Sask office.

- Local boards make ongoing policy decisions, oversee finances, and manage the hiring of the Executive Directors. They are responsible to make camps function.
- Significant autonomy for camps.
- Ultimate, responsibility lies with Central Conference organization so it requires some way to ensure risk is mitigated and local boards are functioning effectively.

3. **Contract governance to a Camping organization that governs and provides organizational support to a local board and staff. MC Sask owns land and facilities.**

- An external agency or firm would lease the camps from MC Sask and assume full responsibility for governance and operations.
- Provides a high standard of operational capacity through the larger organization where running Christian Camps is the central function.
- The vision, mission, and theological curriculum of that organization would be adopted.
- Local camps would have freedom to develop program as long as they functioned at the operational standards of the larger organization and adopted their theological tenets.
- One Hope Canada is an organization that offers this arrangement.

4. **Local non-profit/charitable status for each camp**

- The camps would be leased, sold, or gifted to a local non-profit (likely created for the purpose) that would govern itself. Leasing is the most likely option.
- The non-profit charitable organization would be fully responsible to establish and maintain its own revenue, governance, staff, and operations with no external support unless it partners with other organizations as a distinct entity.
- The camps would have full autonomy.

Examples of these types of arrangements

- **MC Alberta (Valaqua) and MC BC (Squeah)** – Owned and operated by Mennonite Church Alberta and Mennonite Church British Columbia. One camp each. **(Option 1)**
- **MC Man (Assiniboia & Koinonia)** – Mennonite Church Manitoba owns and operates Assiniboia **(Option 1)** and delegates governance and operational authority to a local board of directors for Camp Koinonia **(Option 2)**
- **Ranger Lake Bible Camp** – Contracts out governance and organizational support to One Hope Canada **(Option 3)**
- **Camp Kadesh** – Effectively independently self owned and operated with a non-profit board of directors **(Option 4)**

Within and between these basic structures, there lies an infinite range of possible associations between camps and MC Sask. For example, other Mennonite organizations such as various Mennonite Central Committee affiliates have full operational and governance independence yet hold close and binding (in their actual day-to-day impact, even if not legally binding) covenants between them. Mennonite Central Committee Canada holds a well-respected covenant relationship with its American counterpart MCC US. This covenant impacts both countries' organizational decisions, despite sometimes significant divides and differences. Through these well-respected agreements, otherwise unconnected organizations coordinate activities and align their intentions to impact the social and political world in a way that manifests both of their mission and vision for the world. Once MC Sask and impacted communities make any decisions regarding the corporate structure of camps in Saskatchewan, they still have many choices about how to continue to operate and relate together.



Trend analysis

Youth labour trends – Inflation adjusted wages for youth aged 15 to 18 have decreased by 11.5% since 1975. However, another relevant statistic is that the workforce participation of people aged 15 to 18 was 35.4% in 2019 compared with 57.5% in 1975. Compounding that number is the decrease in population of youth aged 15 to 18 in Saskatchewan, from 92,000 in 1975 to 70,000 in 2019. In other words, there simply might be fewer youth looking for jobs, making it difficult for employers to find the staff they need if they are looking for youth.⁵

Religiosity – In the past five decades there has been a steady decline in religiosity among Canadians. Increasingly, people seek “spiritual” experiences outside the walls of a formal church, mosque, or other religious institution. This shift happens more between generations than it does within a generation. In other words, children have tended to be less religious than their parents but individuals do not show as much decline in their religiosity over their lifetimes.⁶

MC Sask Camp governance and operational independence from MC Sask (formerly COMOS) – The Camp Coordinating Committee (CCC) Task Force Report of 1988⁷ provided a statistical and financial analysis of the three camps programs (YFBC, Shekinah, and Elim). It was evident that the expectations of Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan (COMOS) (now MC Sask) members, camps involved people, and the COMOS Governing Council viewed each of the camps as:

- A cost to be paid by COMOS through general funds,
- Dependent on COMOS for decision-making direction,
- In need of significant physical development.

In the 35 years since its publication, the camps have become steadily more stable and independent. While each had an advisory “committee”, the CCC was to:

- Take responsibility for co-ordination of programs.
- Take responsibility for finances including budget and fee structures.
- Take responsibility to oversee staff recruitment.
- Take responsibility to appoint a minimum of five members to each of the three area camp committees for a three-year term.
- Take responsibility to co-ordinate development at all three camp sites.⁸

Camps themselves now have assumed all these responsibilities under local “boards” instead of committees. There is a clear path toward greater independence and autonomy.

⁵ Statistics Canada. (1975, 2019) Labour Force Survey.

⁶ Statistics Canada. (2019) General Social Survey.

⁷ CCC Task Force. (1988) Camp Coordinating Committee Task Force Report regarding the Rationale and Economics of the 3 Campsite Complex of COMOS.

⁸ Menno Nickel. (1988) Historical Review of our Camping Program Since The Pike Lake Bible Camp Closure in 1978.

Environmental – During the history of camps, the environmental movement seeds were sown, germinated with Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring*, and then grew to become a mainstream political and social forest in the 2000s. It is well recognized that, with 8 billion people on the planet, addressing environmental sustainability challenges is a top priority. Mennonite Churches, with strong agricultural roots and a culture that values connecting with and spending time in nature are already deeply engaged within this trend. One of the primary criteria for the selection of the Shekinah site was an emphasis on its pristine natural beauty. It was the view of many MC Sask members and Key Informants in this study that camps hold a unique role, even an obligation, to include environmental focus to programming. In addition, being outdoor natural environmental facilities, the camps are exposed to changes in climate and other natural events. Shekinah in particular, situated on a flood plain, is vulnerable.

Social and technological –Technology, particularly digital technology, is impacting day to day lives to an exponentially increasing degree. COVID-19 sped adoption of use of digital devices, especially communication technologies. A matter of policy at MC Sask camps is to help campers reduce unhealthy dependence on their digital devices. However, parents often now expect a phone call with their camping child mid-way through the week. Digital technologies offer fantastically powerful ways of promoting organizations at low cost. Communication technologies shrink time and distance between individuals. Without question, social and technological trends introduce powerful challenges and opportunities that need to be known.

Truth and Reconciliation – An important social trend in Saskatchewan is Truth and Reconciliation within and between Settler and Indigenous communities. Not new, but gaining recognition, urgency, and some success, reconciliation efforts result in just and strong communities. All three camps are well situated to engage in these efforts.

Synthesis

It is important to emphasize that, throughout this report, references to Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) refer to the whole organization, including Council, staff members, congregations and their members, camps, their staffs and volunteers, all the physical and intellectual assets and liabilities, and all other aspects of the enterprise of MC Sask. Within a large membership type charitable organization, it is easy for its single parts to forget that it is one organization, each part having a role.

The central question arising out of the 2023 MC Sask Camps Review is:

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

Currently, as noted earlier, 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.** As an example of the vulnerability, at the time of publication of this report, MC Sask Council is replacing 50% of its members including the moderator and the current interim Conference Minister is being replaced with another interim Conference Minister. Its revenues and member populations are shrinking and it has 3 staff to conduct all its work. It is a legitimate view that MC Sask has limited capacity to govern these 3 large entities effectively.

This paints a bleak picture but MC Sask has developed a culture of competence, attracting dedicated and resourceful people to conduct business despite these challenges. Over the past half century, however, since the last time a review of any sort was conducted, the balance of knowledge and capacity to run and govern camps has reversed, with camps on an upward trend of capacity and MC Sask reducing capacity. The most likely path forward lies with these trends continuing. MC Sask needs to reconcile itself to this reality by taking action to:

- Match the corporate structure to the natural governing capacity while maintaining the vision and mission of Anabaptist Mennonite identity and ministry,
- Develop resilience in the system through supporting increased capacity, building structures of collaboration and communication with camps, MC Sask entities, and other stakeholders,
- Change the narrative of camps from one of a discrete MC Sask (COMOS) program that costs money (still a view held by a significant number of people) to one that celebrates three powerful, growing, sustainable, autonomous, and interdependent Mennonite organizations that provide Mennonite Anabaptist child and youth development opportunities to the world through experiences of “God in Nature”.

MC Saskatchewan can consider some of these questions:

- What capacities does MC Sask have currently?
- What are the trends that apply to MC Sask's and each camp's capacity to govern and operate?
- Under each corporate arrangement, if there are risks or challenges, how could they be mitigated?
- What communications and support challenges might exist with each option?

The choices MC Sask makes with regard to the three camps should satisfy the following aspirations:

1. Governance responsibilities, liability and fiduciary responsibilities, held with the entity or entities that are able to know and understand the operations of the camps.
2. All governance standards and capacities be set at best practice levels.
3. 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. 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 Mennonite Anabaptist Christian while practicing acceptance, humility, and respect for views other than our own, and refrains from coercive or fear-based ministry practices.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan – the organization, the institutions, and the members – has to “own” this. In a unified way, all entities within MC Sask have to feel collective pride and responsibility for the overall enterprise and view it as integral to who they are and what they offer the world. Much strength exists in these “extra-congregational” organizations. The choices made now can energize and focus this strength.

Recommendations

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

5. **Appropriate governance structure** – Governance responsibilities, liability and fiduciary responsibilities, held with the entity or entities that are able to know and understand the operations of the camps.
6. **High governance capacity** – All governance standards and capacities be set at best practice levels.
7. **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.
8. **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 Mennonite Anabaptist Christian while practicing acceptance, humility, and respect for views other than our own, and refrains from coercive or fear-based ministry practices.

The premise of the following recommendations is that MC Sask currently does not have the capacity to govern the going concerns of any camps, nor will it in the foreseeable future. Further, each camp already has or could develop the capacity to both govern and finance itself within a supportive environment. So, the present recommendations reject, on the grounds of sustainability and prudence, Governance Options 1 and 2:

1. MC Sask own and operate, employ staff members
2. MC Sask own and delegate governance and operations (status quo)

Instead, the consultant recommends MC Sask work collaboratively with camps to choose among the third and fourth options,

3. Contract or lease out governance but maintain ownership
4. Local non-profit/charitable status for each camp

Different options could be employed by individual camps and the timelines need not coincide. In other words, with a plan of development and transition individualized for each camp, the timeline for implementation might differ significantly.

The consultant offers the following recommended actions to manifest the aspirations:

(The bullets below some recommendations are possible ideas offered in the spirit of a brainstorm process. They could and should be modified, deleted, added to as seen fit through collaborative processes with MC Sask and the camps themselves. Their inclusion here gives a sense of the intended tone and outcome of the recommendation.)

1 Appropriate governance structure

- 1.1 MC Sask approaches each camp to conduct, together, a gap analysis to determine the steps needed for the camp to self-govern through either Structure Option 3 or 4, and to choose one of the options.
- 1.2 MC Sask transfers, on a collaboratively determined timeline, governance to newly created charitable organizations that lease existing assets from MC Sask at a below market rate on basic conditions of maintaining a culture and practice within the limits of a mutually agreed definition of Mennonite Anabaptist ministry OR an already existing third party conducts this lease on condition to allow the local board and staff to run a Mennonite Anabaptist child and youth camp with an agreed amount of autonomy.

2 High governance capacity

- 2.1 MC Sask supports the development of governance capacity for each camp's board of directors to take over full governance of their camp.
- 2.2 MC Sask creates a fund for governance training to continue to support the maintenance of good governance at each camp funded through the lease agreements with each camp.
- 2.3 MC Sask supports the capacity of camp boards through the development of a roster of legal, accounting/financial, and human resource professionals within MC Sask churches and other "friends" to both sit on boards and/or to provide pro-bono advice and professional service to camps. New capacities of online and hybrid meeting allow for remote membership on boards. The database need not limit itself to Saskatchewan residents or MC Sask members.

3 Healthy multi-stakeholder environment

- 3.1 MC Sask creates and hosts a Camps Forum, a collaborative working group with the Executive Directors and/or Board Chairs of each camp plus MC Sask to:
 - To share ideas for operational success
 - To share resources
 - To collaborate where possible
 - To help and support one another
 - To raise issues and discuss difficult topics
 - To support and celebrate each camp's distinct identity
- 3.2 MC Sask host a publicly available Camps Resource Centre including (among other possibilities):
 - Historical archive on a searchable database
 - Dashboard metrics of each camp
 - Employment search service
 - Editing access shared with appropriate camp staff members

- 3.3 MC Sask supports ongoing organizational development for camps
 - Templates or consulting services, if they exist, for camps to complete regular strategic planning, process mapping, operational planning, market development, staffing searches or other organizational development as needed
- 3.4 Convening and facilitation of collaborative co-planning among stakeholders and community partners, ultimately resulting in greater mutual understanding and possibly foundational operating agreements, contracts, and covenants
- 3.5 MC Sask provides mediation of disputes and conflicts among stakeholders and partners and supports a culture of respect, collaboration, and acceptance
- 3.6 MC Sask regularly and enthusiastically informs congregations about camps, celebrating camps, and encouraging and facilitating involvement

4 Distinct identities with a common vision

- 4.1 MC Sask develops and tends strong relationships with each camp’s leadership that prompts discussion, in a respectful and accepting way, acknowledging the diverse views of its own members, the ideological foundations of the camp ministry and practice. This should be done in the spirit of mutual learning, while tending the commitment to uphold Mennonite Anabaptist values and emphasizing overlap in views rather than the differences.
- 4.2 The Council Moderator, Church Engagement Minister, and Regional Church Minister (or equivalent future roles) visit each camp regularly at frequencies appropriate for their roles for the purpose of learning, support, relationship building, and direct involvement if requested.

Change Management Considerations

- A thorough change management plan would ideally consider the interests of all stakeholders. This Camps Review is part of this collaborative effort.
- MC Sask is about to undergo a major change of personnel in its leadership. Planning for continuity is paramount. Past Moderators and former council members could be part of processes moving forward.
- Regular and detailed communication with congregations will begin generating excitement. Initial messages to all stakeholders will set the stage for expectations and framing of the efforts. These should be done intentionally with the goals of the effort in mind.
- A plan should include all costs of making the change (legal, staff time, etc.).



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