

# FINDING AID

## Administrative Records of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Fonds

### Series 505/1 Manitoba Conference Branch of the Woman's Missionary Society

Author Linda White, 2002, Revised 2003, 2006, 2013, 2014

United Church of Canada Archives

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**500 Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference fonds. -- 1917 - 2004; predominant 1954-1993. -- 43m of textual records and other material.**

The Conference of Manitoba came into existence in June of 1925 with the creation of The United Church of Canada through the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Local Union Churches of Canada. The name was changed in 1980 to the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario as a result of a successful petition to the General Council of the United Church by Cambrian Presbytery. The Conference encompasses the entire province of Manitoba and the area of Northwestern Ontario drained by the Rainy River and Winnipeg River systems as far east as Marathon, Ontario and south to the United States border.

The Conference has an administrative as well as a geographic meaning. The thirteen conferences within The United Church of Canada function as a governing body or court of the church. Very simply, they are composed of members of the Order of Ministry on the roll of Presbyteries within the geographical bounds of the Conference and lay persons under appointment to administrative or staff positions within the Conference by a court of the church or the United Church General Council. These are matched by an equal number of lay representatives elected from the Pastoral Charges within the Conference. Chairpersons of Conference Committees and the President of the Conference United Church Women are also members of Conference. In addition to the obligation to meet annually and to appoint a Conference Executive, the Conference was charged with appointing Standing and Special Committees to carry out the day to day work of the Conference. In 1925 these were Education and Students, Evangelism and Social Service, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Pensions, Publications, Religious Education, Missionary and Maintenance Fund, Church Property, Settlement, Statistics, Historical and Obituaries.

With a few exceptions, the structure of Conference remained essentially the same until 1972 when a major realignment of the administrative structure of the United Church at the General Council (National) and Conference levels took place. In 1972, the Boards of Home Missions, Evangelism and Social Service and Christian Education had ceased to exist along with the staff positions associated with that work. New paid staff positions which made their first appearance around this time were Regional Director of Broadcasting in 1971 (lasting only until 1972), the positions of Conference Personnel and Conference Administrative Support in 1972 and the positions of Leadership Development and Program Resource in 1973. In 1975 and 1976, and again from 1989 to 1993, a staff position for Communications was added. In 1983, the Conference staff position of Christian Development and Outreach was created and, in 1986, an Evangelism and Social Action staff person as well as a full time Conference Archivist was hired.

The changes in National and Conference administrative structure, which resulted from a move towards more regional and local control of church programs, were reflected in the evolution of Conference Committees. The powerful Conference Home Missions Committee and its sub-committees, responsible for overseeing the mission initiatives of Conference and the administration of mission grants according to Board of Home Missions directives, had been replaced by the Administrative Support Committee (briefly called the Congregational Support Committee) by 1973. Another major reorganisation of the Conference committee structure took place in 1983 when a system for the division of the work of Conference committees among four Councils (Stewardship, Worship and Education, Ministry and Personnel, Evangelism and Social Action) was devised. Committee chairs reported to their respective Councils that in turn were represented on the Conference Executive.

Another major reorganisation of Conference Structure took place in 1993. At that time, the pressure of meeting current demands with dwindling resources resulted in a move to reduce the number of Presbyteries from eight to six. The work previously allocated among four Conference Councils was then divided between three Program Units (Education and Justice, Ministry and Personnel, and Stewardship and Mission). The number of Committees reporting to the Program Units, and through them to the Conference Executive was reduced. Salaried staff were also decreased and reorganised to include the positions of Executive Secretary, Education and Justice staff person, Stewardship and Mission staff

person, Personnel staff person and Conference Archivist. Further changes to the Conference Structure were made in 2005.

Many of the materials which make up this Conference fonds had been stored in the basement of the Conference administrative offices at 120 Maryland Street in Winnipeg in an ad hoc manner for varying lengths of time over a period of approximately forty years before coming into the Archives. Generally, the records of Conference executive, staff and committee chairs were transferred to the basement at the end of their term of office. Renovations to and rearrangement of the basement area resulted in the movement of the materials around the storage area on more than one occasion. It is probable that space constraints resulted in the unrecorded disposal of an undetermined number of documents and other materials throughout the storage period. Administrative records in storage at 120 Maryland were formally transferred to the Archives in 1989. The movement of the Conference administrative offices to a new address in the fall of 1996 precipitated an inventory and the relocation of those records in 1995 prior to the move. The balance of the fonds consists of record series that had been accessioned by the Archives at various periods prior to 1995. The provenance of records accessioned prior to 1976 is often obscure.

The fonds consists of textual and other materials generated by the Conference, the Conference Executive, Conference Staff Associates and Conference Committee members in the fulfilment of their mandate as outlined in *The Manual of The United Church of Canada* from 1925 to 1994. Throughout the life of the fonds, several Conference staff members have served in more than one church or community administration simultaneously while keeping unified files. This has resulted in materials from other administrative jurisdictions being interspersed among the fonds.

Fonds are composed of the following series: Conference Annual Meetings, 1925-1993; Conference Executive, 1925-2002; Conference Offices, 1958-1989; Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups Answering to the Executive and Sub-Executive, 1968-1993; Manitoba Conference Branch of The United Church Woman's Missionary Society, 1918-1962; Manitoba Conference Branch Woman's Missionary Society Archives Collection, [ca.1885-ca.1960]; Manitoba Conference Lay Association, [ca.1910]-1962; District Council AOTS, 1964-1977; Conference Committee on Christian Education, 1927-1992; Conference Home Missions Committee, 1926-1973; Superintendents of Home Missions, 1926-1973; records of the Administration of Norway House Residential School, 1954-1967; Conference Hospitals, 1923-1982; Home Missions Inter-Conference and Ecumenical Groups, 1956-1969; Conference Evangelism and Social Service Committee, 1933-1976; Conference Congregational Life and Work, 1952-1979; Church in Society Committee, 1976-1983; Evangelsim and Social Action Council, 1983-1993; Inter-Conference and Ecumenical Groups reporting to the Evangelsim and Social Action Council, 1972-1999; Conference Communications, 1964-1992; Worship and Education Council, 1981-1994; Worship and Education Council Women's Groups, 1982-1992; Education and Justice Unit, 1987 - 2004 (predominately 1993 - 1998); Committee on Education, Students and Church Vocations, 1975-1978; Conference Education Committee, 1972-1983; [Interim] Placement Committee, 1970-1972; Conference Settlement Committee, 1971-1980; Conference Staff Committee, 1966-1992; Ministry and Personnel Council, 1982-1993; Conference Personnel Officer, 1972-1993; Conference Personnel Records, 1957-1993; records of the Conference Finance Committee, 1964-1974; records of Conference Administrative Support, 1973-1983; records of Administrative Support Staff, 1972-1993; Conference Stewardship, 1967-1993; Church Camps, 1918-1975; Church Home for Girls, 1945-1976; Women's Union, 1926-1958; Manitoba Conference Woman's Association, 1946-1962; Conference United Church Women, 1963-2002; Fellowship of Professional Women, 1949-1980; Manitoba Canadian Girls in Training, 1918-1990; and the Manitoba Student Christian Movement, 1923-1981.

Title based on contents of fonds.

The fonds also includes ephemera, photographs, slides, audio tape recordings, video tape recordings and 50 sets of blueprints, plans and architects' drawings.

Original order of many of the series of the fonds was substantially obscured during the storage period and many materials were in an extremely disorganised state with no original order or access points apparent;

where necessary, order based on administrative function has been reconstructed by the arranging archivist.

Some restrictions on access; see series descriptions.

Finding Aids consist of series descriptions and box lists; some sub-series and file level description available.

Further accruals are expected.

**505/1 Records of the Manitoba Conference Branch of The Woman's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada. – 1917-1962. -- 1m textual records and other material.**

The United Church Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) was created in 1925 through an amalgamation of the Woman's/Women's Missionary Societies of the uniting churches. The Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian Woman's Missionary Societies had been created as an adjunct to the existing home and foreign missionary societies of these churches in order to take over aspects of the work which were thought to be particularly the province of women. This included the employment and support of women teachers for mission schools and female medical workers, the staffing, support and supervision of institutions such as orphanages, school homes, residential schools and social service homes and other such mission work as was predominately carried on among women and children. It was believed that this would free the general missionary societies to concentrate on the more important work of evangelisation and preaching the gospel. The first WMS in Manitoba was an auxiliary of the Presbyterian Women's Foreign Missionary Society formed in Winnipeg in 1884. A Methodist Woman's Missionary Society auxiliary was formed soon after in 1888.

The local (congregational) branches of the Presbyterian and Methodist WMS were organised as auxiliaries. The auxiliaries of the Manitoba Synod of the Presbyterian WMS was organised into 'presbyterials' in 1925 and this system of organisation was carried on by the United Church WMS. At union, 276 Manitoba Auxiliaries were organised into the eight presbyterials of Birtle, Brandon, Carman, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Rock Lake, Superior and Winnipeg with administrative boundaries roughly corresponding to the presbyteries of the same names. Delegates from the eight newly constituted presbyterials met on 1 June 1926, to inaugurate the Manitoba Conference Branch of the Woman's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada. Officers appointed included the President, four Vice-Presidents, the Recording Secretary, the Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer. Also appointed were Secretaries of Christian Stewardship & Finance, Strangers, Associate Helpers and Young Women's Auxiliaries as well as Mission and Baby Bands. A Mission Circle was any group of teen-aged girls in sympathy with the aim and objects of the WMS. A Mission or Baby Band was any group of children organised under a superintendent for the purpose of developing a missionary spirit. Other Secretaries appointed were CGIT, Social Service (the forerunner of Temperance and Christian Citizenship), Supplies and Literature, Missionary Monthly, and Literature Depot. Nominating and Resolution Committees were appointed from the floor of the meeting and a Constitution and By-laws were considered. This administrative structure was essentially the same throughout the life of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the United Church WMS.

Not all the institutions operated by the Woman's Missionary Societies of the uniting churches in the Conference came with them into union. A Presbyterian hospital and school home in Sifton and the Cecelia Jeffries Residential School remained under the control of the Presbyterian Church after 1925. In Manitoba, institutions operated by the United Church WMS included hospitals and dispensaries at Teulon (opened in 1904); Ethelbert (1915-ca.1957); Pine River (1920-1946); and Eriksdale (1926-ca.1959). The Teulon School Home, at first accommodating boys only, was opened in 1912 and a girl's residence was added in 1918. A residential school at Portage la Prairie was opened in 1886 by the Portage la Prairie Auxiliary of the Presbyterian WFMS. A school home was a boarding establishment where boys and girls of school age could live while attending public schools. The children came from farm families in remote areas where there was no access to schools. Children were usually attending secondary school, however, in the early years elementary school pupils were also accommodated. In later years, the surviving school home at Teulon provided boarding accommodation for secondary students from remote reserve communities attending Teulon Collegiate. This was different from other residential schools where students boarded and attended classes at the same institution. The Portage la Prairie Indian School eventually evolved into a residence for First Nations Students attending high school in Portage la Prairie.

As well, many women were recruited and supported by the Manitoba Conference Branch of the WMS for mission work overseas in Japan, China and Africa as well as in Canada. For instance, Conference Branch WMS appointed and supported a worker among First Nations women and girls in Winnipeg. Conference Branch WMS also sent representatives to ecumenical organisations. For instance, in 1949 the President of the Conference Branch WMS served on the Provincial Council of Women. From the very

earliest days, the Conference Branch WMS also operated a literature depot that made mission education materials available to Conference WMS and CGIT groups. In 1957, it was decided to transfer the assets of the WMS Literature Depots to the new Board of Information and Stewardship. In Manitoba Conference this was the Conference Committee on Information and Stewardship. A library of 100 books was presented to the Prairie Christian Training Centre. When United Church mission work was rationalised in 1962, institutions previously operated by the United Church WMS were transferred to the supervision of the Board of Home Missions. The last annual report of the Conference Branch of WMS was presented to the Conference Annual Meeting in 1962. After this date the sole women's group in the church became the United Church Women.

The custodial history of many of these records is obscure. Many of these items were likely collected together by the WMS as part of archives and history projects. A number of WMS annual reports and pamphlets were accessioned as part of a larger collection of materials pertaining to United Church women's organisations brought to the Archives in 1988 by Diaconal Minister Laura (Sharpe) Long, a long-time member of various Manitoba Conference women's groups. The 2006 accession came to the archives as a part of a transfer of records from the Conference office.

Records of the Conference Branch WMS described as part of this series include Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Woman's Missionary Society Executive, 1917-1959; Annual meeting materials, 1927-1961; Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Advisory Committee, 1934-1946; records of the Committee on Housing for Girls of Indian Descent, 1953; the Memorial [from Winnipeg Presbyterial re: religious broadcasting], 1955; materials pertaining to the Commission on the Work of Women in the Church, 1959-1961; the Annual Statistical Report, 1961; records on the Integration of Home Missions Work, 1961-1962; Books and pamphlets, [195-]; and a Methodist/ United Church WMS Cash Book , 1918 - 1926.

Title based on contents.

Twenty-two Annual Reports of the Woman's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada dating from 1946/47 to 1961 and accessioned along with the Laura Long materials have been housed with the Conference Archives Annual Report Collection.

File level description; box list available.

For records of the hospitals and nursing stations operated by the Conference Branch WMS, please see the series '509/4 Records of Conference Hospitals' described elsewhere in this fonds.

For records of the Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School see the series '509/2 Records of the Superintendents of Home Missions'.

Records of the School Home in Teulon, dating from ca.1960 were accessioned by the Conference Archives in 1996 and remain unprocessed.

Records of Presbyterial WMS organisations (housed in Boxes WO-3 to WO-10, WO-14 and WO-15) were not described as part of this arrangement and description project.

Accession: 1988-35; and others.

Location: Box 505/1-1; Box 505/1-2; and off-site storage.

**File Description**

1. Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Woman's Missionary Society Executive. – 1917-1959. – 6 volumes.

These volumes contain the hand-written minutes of the meetings of the Executive of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the United Church Woman's Missionary Society (WMS). Also found in these volumes are minutes of the Annual Meetings and Schools for Leaders of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the WMS including the inaugural meeting of the Conference Branch which took place on June 1 & 2, 1926.

Title based on contents.

Please see the files 'Annual Meeting materials', 'Integration of Home Missions Work' and 'The Work of Women in the Church' for records pertaining to the period from 1960 to 1962 described elsewhere in this series.

Annual Meeting materials. -- 1927-1961. -- 4 folders.

These folders contain mimeographed copies of the annual reports of the secretaries and standing committees of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the WMS. A handwritten account of the 1924 Annual Meeting is also included. Also found here are fourteen programs detailing the agendas for the annual meeting (also called annual conference) of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the WMS for the years 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1945, 1947, 1949 and 1953. As well there are materials pertaining to the final biennial meeting of the Manitoba Conference Branch WMS in 1961. Items include the President's biennial address, two biennial meeting programs, the biennial drama pageant program and clippings documenting the final meeting of Superior Presbyterial. As well, there are copies of the minutes of the final meeting of the Conference Branch sub-executive and a memo from the continuing committee of the sub-executive appointed to wind up the business of the WMS.

Title based on contents.

2. Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Advisory Committee. – 1934-1946. – 1 volume.

The business of this committee concerned the day to day operation of the mission institutions administered by the Woman's Missionary Society in Manitoba Conference. These included Gypsumville Unit, Pine River Unit, Ethelbert Unit, Eriksdale Hospital, Teulon Hospital, Portage Indian School and WMS School Homes as well as immigration and other mission work in Winnipeg. The main responsibilities of this committee were the recruitment and supervision of trained staff for mission work and the maintenance of WMS properties in Manitoba Conference. The committee was also concerned with the recommendation of candidates for WMS missionary training at the WMS Training Home in Toronto.

Title based on contents.

3. Committee on Housing for Girls of Indian Descent. – 1953. – 1 folder.

Items found here include meeting minutes and recommendations of a committee drawing membership from various Manitoba women's groups including the Conference Woman's Association and Conference Branch WMS as well as the Provincial Council of Women and the Provincial Department of Health and Welfare. This committee was concerned with finding solutions to the problem of providing housing accommodation for First Nations women moving into Winnipeg from Manitoba reserves.

Title based on contents.

These items were removed from a brown envelope of material labelled as pertaining to the 1953 Annual Meeting of the Conference Branch WMS affixed to the back cover of the Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Executive for 1949 to 1959.

For other records on hostel initiatives see the sub-series '509/1/5 Indian Metis Reception Lodge' described as part of the series '509/1 Records of the Conference Home Missions Committee'.

4. Memorial [from Winnipeg Presbyterial re: religious broadcasting]. – 1955. – 1 folder.

Items found here include a carbon copy of a memorial sent to Mrs. Halstead, President of the Conference Branch, from the Winnipeg Presbyterial recommending that the United Church promote a half-hour television program each week.

Title based on contents.

This item were removed from a brown envelope of material labelled as pertaining to the 1953 Annual Meeting of the Conference Branch WMS affixed to the back cover of the Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Executive for 1949 to 1959.

5. The Work of Women in the Church. – 1959-1961. – 1 folder.

Items found here include WMS mailings, reports and other materials pertaining to the recommendations of the Commission on the Work of Women in the Church. The Commission recommended the creation of one women's organisation within The United Church of Canada. Also included here is a copy of the Condensed Minutes of [the] Final Meeting of Conference Branch WMS Sub-Executive on December 6, 1961.

Title based on contents.

6. Annual Statistical Report. – 1961. – 1 folder.

Items found here include the form on which all the auxiliaries and affiliated societies of the Winnipeg Presbyterial of the Manitoba Conference Branch of the WMS were listed along with the names of their executive officers and their total membership (only membership numbers are listed here). This form would normally be forwarded to the national Board of the WMS in Toronto.

Title based on contents.



7. Integration of Home Missions Work. – 1961-1962. – 1 folder.

Items found here include correspondence and other material pertaining to the transfer of the responsibility for supervision of the mission work previously done by the WMS to the supervision of the Board of Home Missions.

Title based on contents.

8. Books and pamphlets. – [195-]. – 4 items.

Books and pamphlets found here include: Wide Windows: The Story of the Woman's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada by Jean Gordon Forbes; the WMS Handbook for Auxiliary Officers which gives guidelines for the organisation of congregational groups; the Constitution and By-Laws of the Woman's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada (1950); and a copy of the Conference Branch history 'The Woman's Missionary Society in Manitoba 1884-1959'.

Title based on contents.

9. Cash Book. -- 1918 - 1926. -- 1 volume.

The cash book contains financial records of the Manitoba Methodist WMS immediately before and after Union in 1925.

Title based on contents.

**Box 505/1-1 (previously W01)**

**Records of Conference Women's Groups. Manitoba Conference Branch of the United Church Woman's Missionary Society.**

Accession Undetermined

- Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Executive. – 1926-1959. – 5 volumes.
- Minutes of the Manitoba Conference Branch Advisory Committee. – 1934-1946. – 1 volume.
- Committee on Housing for Girls of Indian Descent. – 1953. – 1 folder.
- Annual Reports. – 1952, 1954-1961. – 1 folder.
- Memorial [from Winnipeg Presbyterial re: religious broadcasting]. – 1955. – 1 folder.
- Integration of Home Missions Work. – 1961-1962. – 1 folder.
- Manitoba WMS (Methodist) Cash Book. -- 1918 - 1926. -- 1 volume.
- WMS (Methodist) Executive Minute Book. -- 1917 - 1926. -- 1 volume.

**Records of Conference Women's Groups. Manitoba Conference Women's Association.**

Accession 1991-25

- Minutes. 1951-1956. – 1 volume.
- Minutes. 1956-1962. – 1 folder.
- Annual Meeting Policy Motions/Minutes. – 1950-1960. -- 1 folder.
- Reports. – 1956-1957. – 1 folder.
- Scrapbook. – 1957-1961. – 1 volume.

**Box 505/1-2 (previously WO11/WO12)**

**Records of Conference Women's Groups. Manitoba Conference Branch of the United Church Woman's Missionary Society.**

Accession 1988-35 (Laura Long)

- Annual Reports. – 1950, 1952, 1954-1956, 1958-1961. – 1 folder.
- The Work of Women in the Church. – 1959-1961. – 1 folder.
- Books and pamphlets. – [195-]. – 4 items.
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**WMS Archives Accession**

- Annual Meeting programs. – 1927-1953. – 1 folder.
- Annual Meeting materials. – 1961. – 1 folder.
- Annual Statistical Report. – 1961. – 1 folder.