

# FINDING AID

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

### Series 521/1 Records of the Women's Union

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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; Evangelism and Social Action Council, 1983-1993; Inter-Conference and Ecumenical Groups reporting to the Evangelism 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.

**521/1 Records of the Women's Union. – 1926-1958. – 20cm of textual material.**

The Presbyterian Women's Union was formed after a meeting at St. Stephen's Church on 5 April 1907. The Presbyterian women were convinced of the value of the work carried on by the Methodist Deaconess Aid Society in conjunction with the All People's Mission south of the CPR tracks and wished to carry on similar work to the north. Property was secured on Alfred Avenue and a kindergarten as well as a program of home visits by a Deaconess was begun. A grant was secured from the Presbyterian Church Extension Committee and further funding was solicited from Winnipeg's Presbyterian churches as well as Ladies Aid Societies, Bible Classes, Girls' Clubs and other groups. The Women's Union provided three members for the Alfred Avenue Mission Board and supported the work in any way that was required. This mission later amalgamated with the Dufferin Avenue congregation in 1911 and became known as Robertson Memorial Church and Institute. The Women's Union continued to support this work financially (pledging to provide \$2000.00 towards an annual budget of \$5000.00 which they did until 1913) and in other ways including support for Camp Robertson. The Women's Union supported this Fresh Air Camp with a Picnic for many years. The annual Fresh Air Camp Tea succeeded the picnic. Also in 1911, the Women's Union amalgamated with the Women's Moral Reform Council in order to undertake the support of a Social Service Rescue Home on Simcoe Street in Winnipeg. The Social Service Board of the Presbyterian Church provided financial support for the Home and the Women's Union was responsible for day to day management and any extra expenses. From 1917, the Women's Union co-operated with the Methodist Deaconess Aid Society in the operation of the Home. In 1923 the United Social Service Home, as it was now called, was relocated to Kildonan and around 1928 it began to be known as the Church Home for Girls.

The Methodist Deaconess Aid Society was formed in 1905 to support the work of the Deaconesses settled at the All People's and other Institutional Missions. This included material and moral support for the Methodist Deaconess Home on George Street (closed in 1925) and support of the Methodist Fresh Air Camp, Camp Sparling. In 1925, the Presbyterian Women's Union joined with the Methodist Deaconess Aid Society and representatives from the Central Congregational Church. The new organisation took the name of the Presbyterian group with the first meeting of the new Women's Union held on 16 June 1926. The Union continued to support the work of the City Missions in many practical ways. This included everything from home visitors, tea and sandwiches, library books and furnishings to knitted mittens and a club for unemployed single men. Practical support for United Church Fresh Air Camps and the Church Home for Girls also continued. The Women's Union ceased to exist around 1957 as the work previously handled by Institutional Missions became more professionalised and the United Church moved towards the creation of one organisation for all women of the Church (United Church Women).

The provenance of these records is unclear. It is possible that they were accessioned in ca.1985 as part of larger collection of materials that also included records of the Manitoba Conference Fellowship of Professional Women.

Surviving records of the Women's Union described here include Minutes, 1926-1949; Reports of Monthly and Annual Meetings, 1946-1957; Treasurer's Records, 1926-1950; Financial Statements, 1936-1957; Lists of Representatives from Affiliated Churches and Members at Large, 1948-1958; and the essay 'The Women's Union Looks Back', 1951.

Title based on contents.

The Women's Union was also known as the Winnipeg Women's Union.

File level description; box list available.

For historical accounts of the work of the Presbyterian Women's Union and the Methodist Deaconess Aid Society in Manitoba see the file 'Historical Narratives' described as part of the series '505/2 Manitoba Conference Branch Woman's Missionary Society Archives Collection'.

Records accessioned for Manitoba Conference Fresh Air Camps are described as part of the series '520/1 Church Camps'.

Records accessioned for the Church Home for Girls are described as part of the series '520/2 Church Home for Girls'.

For the records of All People's, Robertson Memorial and other Winnipeg Institutional Missions please consult the Charge records for the individual missions.

Location: Box 505/1-3.

**File Description**

**1. Minutes. – 1926-1949. – 5 volumes.**

Meetings of the Women's Union were rotated among the various United Churches in Winnipeg that sent representatives to the meetings. Minutes consist of five bound volumes of hand-written minutes of the regular monthly meetings, Executive meetings and the Annual Meetings of the Women's Union of the United Church.

Title based on contents.

**2. Reports of Monthly and Annual Meetings. – 1946-1957. – 1 folder.**

Items found here include reports of the monthly and Annual Meetings of the Women's Union. These reports are essentially digests of the meeting minutes. It is not clear for whom these reports were created.

Title based on contents.

**3. Treasurer's Records. – 1926-1950. – 2 volumes.**

These volumes contain the financial records of the Women's Union. This includes a volume detailing accounts (receipts and disbursements) from 1926-1950 and memberships (name of member and dues paid) from 1926-1949. Another volume titled Treasurer's Report details receipts and disbursements from 1938-1947.

**4. Financial Statements. – 1936-1957. – 1 folder.**

Items found here include year-end statements of cash receipts and disbursements. Of special interest are the entries for annual grants to missions.

Title based on contents.

**5. Lists of Representatives from Affiliated Churches and Members at Large. – 1948-1958. – 1 folder.**

Title based on contents.

**6. The Women's Union Looks Back. – 1951. – 1 folder.**

Items found here include two copies of a presentation written to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's Union. The event took place on 25 November 1951 at Augustine United Church. A copy of the opening remarks acknowledging long-time members of the Women's Union is also found here.

Title based on contents.

**Box List**

**Box 505/1-2 (previously WO11/WO12) Records of Conference Women's Groups. Records of the Women's Union.**

WMS Archives Accession

- Treasurer's records. – 1926-1950. – 2 volumes.

**Box 505/1-3 (previously WO11)**

**Records of Conference Women's Groups. Records of the Women's Union.**

Undetermined Accession (possibly 1984/85)

- Minutes. – 1926-1949. – 5 volumes.
- Reports of monthly and annual meetings. – 1946-1957. – 1 folder.
- Financial statements. – 1936-1957. – 1 folder.
- Lists of representatives from affiliated churches and members at large. – 1948-1958. – 1 folder.
- The Women's Union Looks Back. – 1951. – 1 folder.