

Commission de services
régionaux de Kent



Kent Regional
Service Commission

MENNONITE

i n f o r m a t i v e b o o k l e t



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Information Booklet

Understanding Mennonite Communities

Welcome to our newsletter information booklet where we delve into understanding Mennonite communities and their potential impact on agriculture and local life in New Brunswick.

Mennonites, known for their distinctive lifestyle and agricultural practices, are poised to contribute to our region's economy and cultural diversity. Let's explore some common questions about Mennonites and their integration into our communities.

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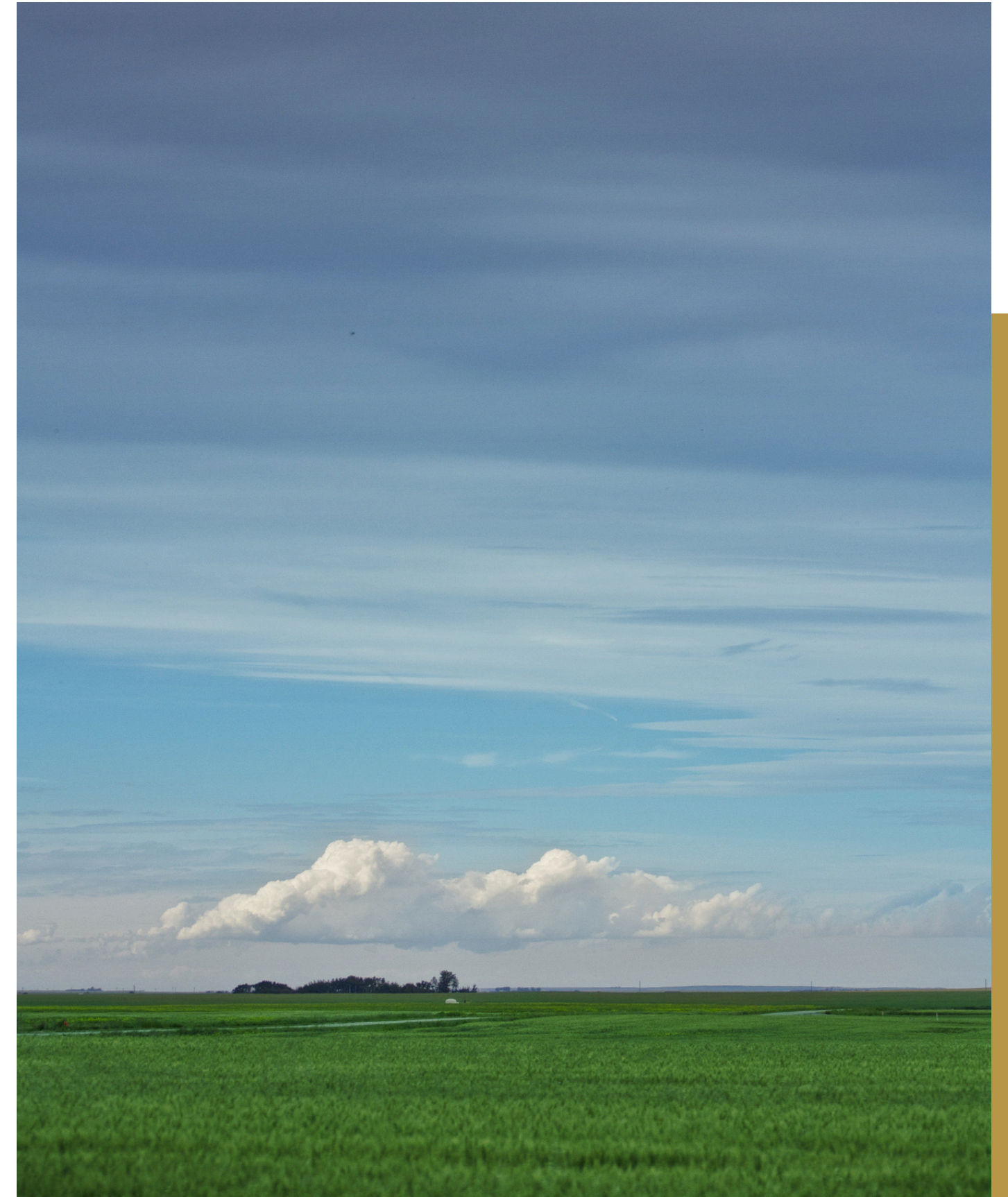


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1. Understanding Mennonite Communities:



Who are the Mennonites?

Mennonites belong to a Christian religious group. They are often identified by the way they dress. Men usually wear black coats and pants, identical light-coloured shirts and straw hats. Women wear dresses with bonnets when working outdoors.

Why do Mennonites want to settle in our region?

In order for young Mennonite families to continue their traditional way of life, new farmland needs to be procured. The price of farmland is generally much lower in our region than in other parts of the province and our country or where economic sectors including agriculture and residential/tourism are more competitive and/or profitable.

Why Mennonites and not other farmers to help renew agriculture in Kent?

In general, it's very difficult to attract succession in the agricultural sector in our region in the current social and economic context. Although Mennonites farm on a relatively small scale, their way of life allows them to practice a relatively sustainable and profitable agriculture.

Are Mennonites able to produce interesting volumes despite their relatively small farms?

Since these families work very well together, they are able to buy their seed, fertilizer, animal feed and other supplies in bulk. Therefore, it makes it less expensive than if each family bought individually for its own farm. They do the same for the sale of their produce, where they pool their products for market, permitting them to offer more interesting volumes at competitive prices.



What does a Mennonite family look like?

A typical Mennonite family consists of a man and a woman.

They often have large families because they believe their children will assist with farming and later take care of their elders.

Mennonites see their children as a gift from heaven.

Source de la photo: Canada Alive



2. Agriculture and Food Production:

What can we do to improve the situation?

The Kent Regional Service Commission (KRSC) received a mandate from the Kent farming community at a forum held in May 2019 at the Acadieville Community Center to develop a strategy to help revive the potential of agriculture in Kent County. One of the strategies was to encourage new farmers to settle in the region. The KRSC partnered with retired agronomist Gérard Thébeau, a native of the Acadieville/Branche du Nord area, to develop a strategy in this regard.

Could Mennonite families help us produce local foods to meet our food needs?

Professor Gabriel Arsenault of the Université de Moncton has done a great deal of research about the Amish. The Amish community shares a common heritage and culture with the Mennonite community and the two communities are very comparable.

He believes that Nouvelle-Arcadie and the province of New Brunswick will benefit from the arrival of these farming families. Among the reasons Professor Arsenault lists, they will help increase our agricultural production and reduce our dependence on imported foods. The Mennonite Community will also help rejuvenate our population and revitalize the region's rural economy and tourism industry.



2. Agriculture and Food Production:



Is N.B. food dependent/self-sufficient?

N.B. is self-sufficient in several food groups, including potatoes, cranberries, maple syrup, blueberries, milk, eggs and turkey. However, we produce only 7% of our vegetables, 32% of our fruit, 45% of our beef and 22% of our pork (Source: Local Food and Beverage Strategy – N.B. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries).

Should we be concerned about our dependence on other provinces or countries for other foods we find on our plates?

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us realize how dependent our society is on other parts of the world for many products we use daily. This includes vaccines, medicines, fuels and a wide variety of the food we eat.

Is N.B. agricultural production vulnerable?

The province of New Brunswick has been losing farmers and farmland for many years.

The average age of farmers in 2021 was 56, and it is anticipated in Canada that 40% of farmers will retire in the next 10 years. Kent County has lost nearly 300,000 acres of farmland in the last 100 years. We have a shortage of farm succession and our population is aging. We're losing the expertise accumulated over generations at a frightening rate!



3. Lifestyle and Cultural Practices:

What language do Mennonites speak?

Mennonites speak two languages: English and Pennsylvania German. They are considering adding a French course to their children's school curriculum in the future.

What kind of lifestyle do Mennonites lead?

The Mennonite way of life and values are primarily influenced by their Christian faith, rural lifestyle, and dedication to hard work. They choose to live simply and humbly in farming communities, abstaining from modern conveniences such as electricity and automobiles.

What is the main transportation means of the Mennonite families?

Old Order Mennonites use horses and buggies as their main means of transportation.

What kind of equipment do Mennonites use for farm work?

Horses are used for much of the farm work, while medium-sized tractors are also used for tasks that require more power. Various farm implements with different technological advancements are utilized, and local contractors are called upon for work that requires specialized equipment, such as excavators and gravel trucks. These communities aim for long-term sustainable food production through relatively small-scale farming, which tends to reduce environmental risks.



How do Mennonites manage without electricity?

The Mennonites use lamps for lighting, wood-burning furnaces for heating, and generators to run pumps, sawmills, and other power tools. If they find that the region has enough wind to justify the investment, they could also consider using wind turbines to run water pumps.

4. Integration into Local Communities:

Where will the Mennonites go to get the things they need?

The main business center for the Mennonite community will be the Village of Rogersville, where they can access most of the services they need. These new activities will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the economy of Nouvelle-Arcadie as well as the entire province of New Brunswick.

Do Mennonites manage their own children's education?

Yes, Mennonites manage their own schools. They believe that education beyond the eighth grade is not necessary for their rural lifestyle. Their schools are often one-room schools, similar to those found in most parts of New Brunswick over 50 years ago.

Do Mennonites pay taxes?

Yes, Mennonites pay income, property and inheritance taxes. They do not collect family allowances, employment insurance or old-age benefits. They contribute to the cost of medical services and pay for their own dental services.



4. Integration into Local Communities:

What route will the Mennonites use to get to Rogersville?

The new families plan to use shorter, less-travelled roads to facilitate transportation by horse and buggy. Most travellers from Richard Village Road and Village St-Jean to Rogersville will pass through Block 14 - Village St-Pierre. Once in Rogersville, they will use side streets to reach their various business destinations. It's important to note that Mennonites do not conduct any business on Sundays!

Will the Mennonites need special structures to accommodate the horses once they arrive in Rogersville?

Yes, they will need hitching posts in the most common business centers. They will also require a shaded shelter and/or a resting area for the horses, allowing them to rest, have water, and food.

Where are these Mennonite families coming from?

The “Old Order” Mennonite families that are planning to move to the Village St-Jean and to Ricahrd-Village area are Canadian citizens born in Canada and originally from Bruce County, which is located in southwestern Ontario, about two and a half hours west of Toronto.



5. Cultural and Religious Traditions:

What do Mennonites do after grade 8?

After 8th grade, children have the opportunity to explore a range of trades, such as animal farming, agricultural production, welding, baking, carpentry, and furniture making, as well as other commercial ventures. They will also gain exposure to general construction, using their skills for personal use, within their community, and for charitable purposes. This hands-on experience helps them determine their future career paths.



What kind of religious celebrations do Mennonites hold?

The Mennonites gather in a common building every Sunday for religious celebrations. They have a deacon and a minister. The deacon takes care of matters requiring charity, while the minister is solely responsible for leading religious celebrations and other matters related to the community's faith.

Both the deacon and the minister are appointed by the parishioners and do not receive payment for their work. In addition to their responsibilities as deacon and minister, they also have their own regular duties.

Do Mennonites like to be photographed?

Mennonites do not appreciate being photographed, especially having their faces photographed. These people are very humble and value their privacy.

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As our communities prepare to welcome Mennonite families, it's important to understand their way of life and traditions in order to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment.

We hope this booklet provides valuable insights into the potential benefits and opportunities of integrating Mennonite communities into our region.

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THANK YOU.

Mennonite
Informative booklet