

October 30 opening remarks by Korey Dyck, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery director

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming. My name is Korey Dyck, and it's a privilege to represent the Mennonite Heritage Centre, a program of Mennonite Church Canada this afternoon. It is also a privilege to later unveil these wonderful watercolour portraits of these 'women of courage', who brought their families out of war in Europe to peace in Canada. If you haven't already seen Ray's work, you are in for a treat.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives & Gallery's mission is to bring faith to life — by connecting the past, present, and future through art & history.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre has been 'bringing faith to life' since 1933, when what is now Mennonite Church Canada appointed its first archivist to gather materials reflecting the Mennonite experience in Canada.

Since this time our mission has always remained the same: to have our collected examples of faithful living, speak into current events and issues so that hope and healing can flow through us into the world.

One way we demonstrate this goal nationally and internationally is through the MHC Gallery's travelling exhibit, *Along the Road to Freedom*. Ray Dirks, the Gallery's curator and the artist behind these vivid paintings, is a special person. In saving the experiences of these "Women without Men", forced to lead their families across the world, Ray is not only providing a corrective to past histories dominated by important men, places, and dates, he honours the wholly different experience of women and their perspective of life during WWII, including my Oma, or grandmother's story. Her portrait is the one with the children's doll in it. While retelling this particular group's story, if we look closely, we see a universal story of loss, suffering, hope, and rebuilding. It is at once an immigrant story, and a faith story — a story to which all Manitobans can relate.

At the end of the program, I invite you to take your time as you look and read and become connected to these women, to these mothers and grandmothers. Their example continues to bring me hope with our struggles of today. Thank you Ray for this labour of love given to generations to come.

