

RM 42: Simulation Exercise – Saanich Peninsula MM Response

SAANICH PENINSULA MONTH MEETING (SPMM) RE-CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT STRUCTURE OF CYM

We gathered on 30 April to review our meeting's interest in a regional restructuring of CYM to address the participation challenges we find in the current YM structure.

We reflected on three main queries developed from our recent report to Representative Meeting (November 2016) as well as the material provided in the Simulation Exercise material provided from the Clerks Committee.

Query 1

What is your level of support for the SPMM vision of calling for two (or more) regional yearly meetings for Canada?

For more than ten years, SPMM has expressed a sincere interest in shifting the current nation-wide structure for Canadian Friends to a more regional and geographically accessible model.

Our level of support for this structural change remain strong, with enthusiasm that a significant restructure which more practically addresses the vast distances of this large country would have potential for greater participation and fellowship. Several members raised interest in considering a multi YM model to create even more "local" YMs such as Vancouver Island or Coastal BC. They reminded us that the adage of Think Globally, Act Locally has often created the most participatory and engaged organizations. We also noted that there are many smaller regional YM in the United States such as Mountain YM which captures Friends that are regionally nearby and their YM work and activities are scaled to realistically meet the energy and practical expectations to participate.

We also were clear that this desire to restructure does not imply a "split" from the Canadian Friends family. Part of our discussion about a new structure included looking at a regional annual gathering with a larger "national" gathering every few years (such as a 5 year meeting) that would bring the Canadian family of friends together. One of our attendees noted his heartfelt concern not to lose the depth of experience and connection with Eastern Friends.

Query 2

How do you prioritize five key issues raised in the summary report

- 1-geographic impracticality,**
- 2) environmental impact,**
- 3) prioritizing fellowship opportunities,**
- 4) "national " mandate,**
- 5) levels of participation and access.**

Is there one of these that speaks to you the most, is of greatest concern?

We shared our individual responses to these areas of concerns which often create barriers to our personal participation in CYM, both its ongoing work and attending the annual gatherings.

The first two items of the vast distances and the environmental impact of our current structure slide together as a first priority of concern for most of our members. We struggle with the concept of negatively impacting the environment to more fully participate in CYM work and to

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attend the annual gathering.

For many years, we did not send a rep to meetings as the travel was hard on both the rep and the planet. Annual gathering as well as committee meetings happen at great distances for finite windows of time which mostly mean airplane travel as well as jet lag for those attending.

Equally challenging for some members was the basic accessibility to participate. Given the reality of our aging population, current venues hosting gatherings offer very limited accessible or appropriate accommodations. They are often placed at student campuses with restricted mobility access, dorms with bunk beds and no air conditioning. As an aging community that is very unhelpful and unappealing. We do not blame programming committee as inventory for gathering sites in the current model is limited but this frankly does deter and in some instances directly restrict attendance.

Another frank reality for participating and access to the current model is the sheer economics and affordability to participate. Attending the annual gathering is expensive in fees, time and travel costs. Shifting to a five year national model would assist greatly in planning and budgeting for participants. Equally, as the current gathering loses money, shifting the model could enable a better plan for working on costs and planning for fundraising to assist Friends needing support to attend.

Many in our meeting prioritize fellowship and collective activities and projects over the busyness of business sessions as true community building opportunities. Much of the administrative agenda of CYM business has less appeal than a gathering with a focused shared service project or activity. One Friend expressed their general disinterest in the agenda of business tasks he experienced at a CYM he attended. Another spoke about past regional gathering between several western monthly meetings which focused on a specific concern. Would creating a service activity focus for our annual gatherings possibly be a helpful draw for the youth we keep hoping to attract and/or retain. As well as creating community building through activities, we also noted that a more regional model could nurture more frequent and regular inter-visitation and greater opportunity for long lasting fellowship.

We also identified that CFSC might have the possibility of a greater role as a “national” voice for Friends in Canada. It already does make statements on behalf of Canadian Quakers and this model could parallel the role of AFSC services for unprogrammed American Friends.

Query 3

Assuming your support for this concern, what resources can you bring to the table to moving forward this vision?

-volunteering of time and energy, financial, spiritual and morale support?

Is it a theoretical vision or something we as SPMM can realistically work towards?

Friends expressed that they have limited ability to concretely respond to this query.

They feel that the material from CYM Clerks was leaping farther ahead than they felt able to explore yet.

As a small and aging meeting, the practical ability to step into specific roles feels limited. That being said, , meeting members have set priorities to re-establish more active participation in

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western half as well as inter- visitation with other Friends in the island - now home to three monthly meetings.

As well, our meeting has always approach new work, projects and opportunities with efficient and effective action.

As our vision would likely include a scaling back of the formal activities and work of a more regional YM, we feel that volunteers would follow as would funds. As one senior friend often reminds us the feet and the funds will follow if the idea is a good one.

We thank representative meeting for making time in this year of fallow to explore these concerns of structure, accessibility, participation and priority.

In
Friendship
Ro Fife
On behalf of Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting.