

RM November 2017 – Report 13

SIMULATION EXERCISE SUMMARY REPORT

Simulation Exercise for Dividing Canadian Yearly Meeting Representative Meeting
September 2017

Representative Meeting met on the evening of Friday June 30 to engage the questions posed by the Clerks Committee's simulation exercise. This included an extended period of worship, presentation of summaries from Monthly Meetings and hearing late reports from various groups in the Yearly Meeting. Eric Kristensen and Cameron Fraser each took notes during the exercise, reviewed reports and then met together in September 2017 to create a draft summary.

It was clear from the June meeting that there was no unity to divide the Yearly Meeting. Friends clearly communicated the value and importance of meeting face-to-face as part of building our Canadian Quaker community. There was unity in a desire to respond to Saanich Monthly Meeting's concerns regarding connection and participation. Some Meetings were clearly uncomfortable engaging in the simulation exercise, and some did not respond to the exercise questions, often citing that these conversations had happened many times before.

The exercise did provide an opportunity for Friends to reflect on CYM and generate ideas for steps we can take to make our Yearly Meeting sustainable in terms of human and financial resources. There was no definite response regarding to how often CYM in Session should meet in the future, but annual, biannual and triennial options were suggested. The following report provides summary points from the simulation exercise, general themes about CYM, a recommendation for follow-up action and questions for discernment.

Simulation Exercise

- There was significant feedback and concern raised regarding the process of being asked to do the simulation exercise.
- In response to simulation exercise, there is clearly no unity to separate
- Concerns were raised about:
 - Human and financial resources
 - Duplication of and reliance on CYM infrastructure
 - Potential diminishment of our interpersonal relationships and Canadian Quaker community
 - Greater impact on the environment as a result of splitting the Yearly Meeting
- There was united in a desire to respond to and support Saanich Peninsula MM as well as isolated Friends, Meetings and Worship Groups

General Themes About Canadian Yearly Meeting

1. CYM in Session – how often, where and when we meet
 - There was unity regarding the importance of face to face interactions, and we get that from meeting annually
 - A few sub---themes that warrant further exploration include:
 - a) Meeting on a biennial or triennial basis;
 - b) Using communication technology; and
 - c) Possibly having a central, stationary location for CYM (for example, Winnipeg)
 - Maintaining our human connections sustains the fabric of our national Canadian Quaker community
 - There is no replacement for face---to---face connections

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- There is great value in the opportunity to know others in their home settings by meeting in diverse geographical areas – to better know each other and understand perspectives
 - We recognize the need to nurture youth on a national and regional scale
 - There is value in being a national body – the Canadian Quaker voice in Canadian society
 - There is value in large Meetings for Worship for Business – this is widely reported as having a great impact and informs individual Friend and Monthly Meeting practices
 - CYM is part of a greater Quaker and Canadian society and, like our associated meetings and groups, is not operating in isolation – CYM is our organizational connection to other national and international bodies
2. CYM – as an institution (infrastructure)
- There was great concern about the negative effects on CYM institutions if CYM were to divide (as proposed in the simulation)
 - There was unity around the value of YM structures:
 - a) Archives
 - b) Camp NeeKauNis
 - c) CFSC
 - d) CYFYM
 - e) CYM Office and staff
 - f) Representation to non---Quaker bodies
 - Change is constant and CYM continues to respond and evolve

Recommendation

We recommend that Representative Meeting strike a Simulation Follow-Up Working Group to season a way forward and offer the following list of thoughts and questions for discernment and seasoning.

For Discernment

1. There continues to be a need to support isolated Friends and Worship Groups. Winnipeg MM has communicated concern about how Prairie Monthly Meeting will be supported during challenging times. Whitehorse WG has disbanded. Many Friends continue to communicate their sense of isolation. How do we respond more effectively to isolated Friends and Worship Groups?
2. There is a need for greater connection between Meetings, Worship Groups, and CYM. Saanich Monthly Meeting's request to explore the idea of splitting CYM, and associated communications, was perceived as communicating a lack of connection. How can we respond to SMM's call for greater connection? How do we support a sense of interconnection within all CYM Meetings? Worship groups? Isolated Friends?
3. Some mention was made that CYM business might be more effectively engaged in by local groups, e.g., Coldstream MM taking over the management of Canadian Friends Foreign Mission Board. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of CYM regionalizing its Committees? Might it be possible for Half Yearly Meetings to prepare and season some CYM business? Is there willingness to do so? Would it be valuable to hold a national meeting of Regional Gatherings and Monthly Meetings to share practices and discern any

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potential ways forward?

4. Ideas continue to circulate about the frequency and location of CYM. It has been suggested that CYM take place on an annual, biannual, and triennial basis. There was clear concern about the effects on business when not holding consecutive yearly CYM Meetings for Worship for Business. What are our options for the scheduling CYM? What would be the benefits and drawbacks of holding CYM for two years and then having a third fallow year, before repeating the cycle?
5. CYM in Session locations currently rotate on a four---year cycle between the Maritimes, Ontario, Winnipeg, and Camrose, Alberta, and different costs and benefits are associated with each site. What do we gain from having CYM rotate? Could a rotational Rep Meeting meet similar goals? What would be the benefits and drawbacks of CYM consistently meeting in Winnipeg? Would there be a benefit to having a standing arrangements committee? What would be the benefits and draw backs of rotating Rep Meeting?
6. We seem to have an increasingly difficult time finding Friends to serve on CYM Committees, including as Clerks. What do Friends perceive as the challenges and barriers to serving on CYM Committees?
7. We currently appoint CYM Clerks on a four---year cycle. This current structure might not be serving us, as we are without an Incoming Clerk and Presiding Clerk, and the Mentoring Clerk agreed to continue service for an additional year to fill the gap. We are currently without a Clerk after CYM 2018. Would a change to the four---year Clerking cycle lead more people to entertain service as CYM Clerk? What changes to the CYM Clerk role and associated practices would lead people to consider serving in the position?
8. Travelling in the ministry is part of our ancient Quaker “toolkit” for maintaining community among Friends. Even when faced with daunting travel difficulties, Friends travelled assiduously in previous centuries and were supported by their Meetings. How might we consider raising up a travelling ministry? What spiritual resources (recognition of gifts of ministry, eldering and oversight) would we need to create and build up? What practical and financial resources would be needed to support these efforts?
9. With every decision we make, we need to allow for enough time to fully immerse ourselves in the experience, as well as time for evaluation. We decided to hold a fallow year for CYM, and are evaluating the effects of this fallow year. How do we continue to assess the effects of the fallow year in the years to come? What practices are necessary to ensure we have ample time and space for the evaluation of our experiences and actions?

We are sure that other Friends have constructive thoughts and inspiration to bring to our discernment on these issues. Please share ideas with the Simulation Follow---Up Working Group (subject to establishment).

In service, Cameron Fraser and Eric Kristensen