

MCA personal reflections essay  
Elijah Koop

My family history shows a strong Mennonite heritage that spans several generations. However it is not so much through our traditions that I find my heritage most evident, rather through the Mennonite community. The Mennonite Community has guided me throughout my upbringing, and it has guided my decision to attend Canadian Mennonite University in crucial ways.

I have been attending Foothills Mennonite Church for around twelve years. Sunday school classes and services, Easter events, the Christmas program and youth are some of the qualities of Foothills Mennonite that really stuck with me as I grew up. These qualities helped me realize the importance of community and how it is related to the Mennonite faith. I participated regularly in our annual Christmas plays, occasionally helped out the service by playing a song on piano and took great meaning and fun out of youth events. However it was Camp Valaqua that really took my understanding of my faith to the next level.

I became familiar and appreciative of Camp Valaqua through our church's annual retreats. The cabins, lodge, activities and many hidden secrets spread across the whole camp amazed me. It was a peaceful, familiar place with an atmosphere that is difficult to describe. Camp Valaqua helped me turn my faith into a more personal relationship with God that is understood best in nature. I became involved in the summer program as a camper, PIT crew member and Counsellor in Training. Many of the great people I met at Camp Valaqua had positive experiences at CMU and they recommended that I attend, and so I gave it serious thought and decided to apply.

I have been brought up by my church and my camp, but I have yet to flesh out my beliefs and fully claim them as my own. By learning at CMU I hope to deepen my understanding of what my faith is and learn how to discuss religion and spirituality with others.