10. Pentecostal Assemblies

Introduction

After its founding in 1906 in the U.S. the Pentecostal movement reached Canada soon, and by 1910 there were Pentecostals on the east and west coasts as well as in Winnipeg and Toronto. Those living in the Prairie provinces often were immigrants from the U.S. and therefore tended to look south for guidance and spiritual relationships. But many German-speaking Pentecostals also migrated to Canada from Europe and brought with them a form of Pentecostalism shaped by European events. Some maintained important networks for prayer, renewal and education; for example, in the area of education several important pastors, such as Wilhelm Kowalski, Alfons Mittelstaedt, Reinhold Hildebrandt, Matthias Baumgartner and Christian Green, were trained at the International Bible Institute in Danzig, Poland; each of these leaders established prominent Pentecostal ministries in Canada.

Revival meetings and baptisms had been held as early as 1908 in Calgary and 1918 in Edmonton, but Alberta's German Pentecostal movement began in earnest in the spring of 1919 when Rev. George Schneider, a German-speaking pastor from Edmonton, began to hold tent meetings on a farm near Leduc for born-again believers in what would become the Wiesenthal church. House and tent meetings were then held all over the province without being part of a larger group. It was not until July 16, 1934 that the German Provincial Conference consisting of ten congregations was established. At a meeting in Leduc in 1940, Rev. Ludwig Posein was elected as District Director. Four years later, Rev. Julius Schatkowski succeeded him and served in this position until 1949. During his term the Alberta Beach camp ground covering 85 acres was purchased.

In 1937 Pastor Wilhelm Kowalski immigrated to Canada and became the pastor of the Wiesenthal Church. It was in that church that the first Conference of the German Assemblies of Canada was held with representation from all over Canada, and this was when the German Branch Conference had its beginning.

At one time there were 23 German Pentecostal churches in Alberta. Most of them were located in an area around Edmonton, from Barrhead in the north to Ponoka in the south, with a few other churches in Valleyview, Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. The consolidation of the congregations in 1934 provided a major impetus as churches were established in New Sarepta and Barrhead in that year, in Onoway, Blackmud, Gardenview (Barrhead) and Vega in 1935, and more followed in Manola, Newbrook, Edmonton, Heimdal and Thorsby, and so on. However, as the young people moved into the cities and the older generation sold their farms, the churches suffered losses in their membership, and many had to close.

Post-World War II immigration saw many German-speaking people arrive in Canada, which boosted attendance in German Pentecostal churches greatly and was the reason that numerous churches in Alberta's cities experienced growth, and some new churches were founded. The Alberta District of the German Branch had its biggest number of churches and pastors in the mid-sixties: In 1960 it encompassed 16 churches, and at one time there were 28 congregations in the District.

The German Branch was very active: More than 100 ministers served in Alberta by the 1990's, and Pentecostal missionaries were sent to other provinces and to East Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Europe, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Russia, Siberia and elsewhere through the German Branch.

As had happened a generation before, membership in the German Pentecostal churches began to decline once again in the 1980's and 90's. Consequently, some switched to English, some became independent, others were closed, but on December 31, 1999, when the amalgamation with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada took place, all remaining 18 churches (only four from Alberta) and all Credential holders were transferred to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

At present, several of the former German Pentecostal churches are still going strong, albeit in English. The Millwoods Pentecostal Assembly is the largest Pentecostal church in Edmonton, if not in all of Canada. It runs three morning services and an evening service, sometimes reaching 3,400 people altogether on one Sunday.

The Southside Pentecostal Assembly had its last German service in the spring of 2016. Today there are still some churches of the former German Branch where they have a German Bible Study during the week.

In 1942 the Alberta Beach Pentecostal Camp on Lac Ste. Anne—now called Sunset Point Christian Camp—was established for the purpose of spiritual renewal and fellowship under the leadership of a German pastor, Julius Schatkowski. Its purpose has remained the same to this day, but the opportunity has been broadened to other groups and individuals to experience a life change in a camp setting. It has been a charity and is open year-round for Christian camps, retreats, conferences, seminars and outings for groups and individuals, accommodating more than 1,500 people.

The Shepherd's Care Foundation (originally called German Pentecostal Benevolent Association) was set up in 1968 by the German Pentecostal Churches of Edmonton with the intent to establish and maintain long-term care facilities for the aged under the name of Shepherd's Care Nursing Center. A not-for-profit organization, the Foundation has grown tremendously over the years and currently provides housing, care and support for over 1,600 seniors in six locations in Edmonton and one in Barrhead.

Baker, Daniel, served the German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1941–1943); Edmonton German Pentecostal Church (now Southside Pentecostal Assembly), Edmonton, AB (1944–1959); died on September, 1973 – POAC.

Baumgartner, Ernest, originally from Yugoslavia; married to Erna Tonn, also a pastor; served Bethel Pentecostal Church, Barrhead, AB (1973–1980) and other congregations such as Vega, AB on Sunday afternoons – POAC.

Bechtloff, Adam, originally from Poland; deacon; was a deacon in Onoway, AB (now disbanded); served New Sarepta Pentecostal Church, New Sarepta, AB (1953–1957); Heimdal Pentecostal Church, Leduc, AB (1955–1960) on Sunday afternoons; German Pentecostal Church, Onoway, AB (1957–1964); chaplain at Bethany Senior Home; died on February 1991 – POAC.

Busenius, Leilla, served as a minister at Newbrook, AB (1945–1947); then moved to Manitoba – POAC.

Doberstein, Bruno, served at Wiesenthal, Leduc, AB (1964–1970; the congregation was disbanded in 1971); sent to serve the mission field in Africa from Alberta where he served (1970–1980 and 1986–?); served part-time German ministry at Zion Baptist Community Church, Edmonton, AB (2001-October, 2008); died in October 2008 – POAC.

Doberstein, Horst, married; graduated from B.C. Bible Institute, Vancouver, BC (1956); missionary in Argentina and Brazil for 10 years; served various congregations in Western Canada; Superintendent of the German Branch of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada for five years, of which one term was 1985–1987; served Ontario for three years and then founded a congregation in Edmonton, AB; served the Edmonton German Pentecostal Church (now Southside Pentecostal Assembly), Edmonton, AB (1977–1987); retired and living in Edmonton, AB where he helps in the German ministry at Southside – POAC.

Dowbush, R., served Thorsby Pentecostal Church, Thorsby, AB (1958–1964) – POAC.

Drewitz, Arthur, married to Adina née Segert; born on March 10, 1927; parents: Julius and Marie-Elisabeth Segert; served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1953–1954); also served as treasurer of the German Branch of the POAC; died in Kitchener, ON on August 29, 2011 in his 85th year; his parents were

Emil and Wilhelmine Drewitz; she died in Kitchener, ON on March 8, 2014; her funeral was held at Immanuel Pentecostal Church, Kitchener, ON on March 12, 2014 with pastors Marcus Brandt and Philip Kniesel officiating, followed by interment at Woodlawn Cemetery – POAC.

Erisman, Alexander, served in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario – POAC.

Fitz, Stanley, married to Audrey; served Heimdal Pentecostal Church (since disbanded), Millet, AB (1948–1951); served Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1955–1960); assistant pastor at Edmonton German Pentecostal Church, Edmonton, AB (1960–1965); Bethel Pentecostal, Barrhead, AB (1965–1972); during this time he also held services at the German Pentecostal Church in Onoway on Sunday afternoons (1967–1968); served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1973–1977); may have also served New Sarepta, AB; was sent to the mission field from Alberta to Tanzania, East Africa (1977–1980); then served Christian Life Assembly, Langley, BC – POAC.

Frederick, W., married in 1934; served Wiesenthal, Leduc, AB (1930–1935); German Pentecostals in the 1930s in the Onoway and Thorsby areas, AB – POAC.

Gaetz, Edward, did much evangelistic work in German Pentecostal Churches in Alberta; retired to Osoyoos, BC where he died – POAC.

Golbeck, Horst, born in Germany; married; served Westend German Pentecostal Tabernacle, Edmonton, AB (1971–1977) (disbanded in 1980); Elim Pentecostal Church, Calgary, AB (1977–1984) (disbanded in the mid 1990s); Alberta District German Branch Director (1977–1985); was a chaplain in Kelowna, also in Abbotsford, BC; retired and living in BC – POAC.

Green, Christian, married to Ruth née Muth; he was from Yugoslavia and she from Poland; served Wiesenthal, Leduc, AB (1950–1952); moved to Eastern Canada – POAC.

Green, Ruth, née Muth; served in the POAC ministry and served Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1944–1947); Bashaw Gospel Chapel, Bashaw, AB (1947–1980) – POAC.

Guretzki, Ann, married to Johannes Opperman; served Newbrook, AB (1954–1956); he is now deceased; she lives in Germany – POAC.

Guretzki, Ebenhardt, grew up in Onoway, AB; served New Sarepta Pentecostal Church, New Sarepta, AB (disbanded in 1966) and Thorsby Pentecostal Church from a distance; Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1968–1970) (disbanded in 1972); retired and residing in Oregon, USA – POAC.

Guze, Ewald, immigrated to Canada from Poland (1938); did evangelistic work in the churches and served Thorsby, AB (1942–1944); missionary in Brazil for 23 years; resided in the end in Surrey, BC; deceased – POAC.

Herms, Reinhold, married to Elsie; served German Pentecostal Churches for 50 years and of those 45 in the POAC of the German Branch; served as associate pastor at Edmonton German Pentecostal Church, Edmonton, AB (1977–1987); German congregation at Southside Pentecostal Assembly, Edmonton, AB for a while; Alberta District Director of the German Branch (1987–1987); now retired and residing in Chilliwack, BC – POAC.

Hetman, Helena, served Edmonton German Pentecostal Church, Edmonton, AB (1942–1943); married to Ernst Janke – POAC.

Hildebrandt, Reinhold, immigrated to Canada (1951); served Manola Pentecostal Church, Manola, AB (disbanded in 1968) (1951–1952); then served Kitchener, ON; San Francisco, CA; also founded an Old Folks Home; died in CA – POAC.

Hirch, Wally, grew up in Chilliwack, BC; married; served Edmonton German Pentecostal Church as assistant pastor (1966–1971); sent to the mission field in Argentina and Brazil from Alberta (1971); still residing in Brazil – POAC.

Idler, Bert, served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1988–1989); married; died in July 1989 – POAC.

Janke, Ernest, born in September 1907 in Kiev, Russia (now Ukraine); immigrated to Onoway, AB area; served New Sarepta Pentecostal Church, New Sarepta, AB (1948–1950 and 1957–1959); Westend German Pentecostal Tabernacle, Edmonton, AB (1965–1971); founded a German radio program broadcast from CFCW, Camrose, AB; died on March 27, 1984 – POAC.

John, Manfred, born in East Prussia, Germany; married Erika née Guretzki; served Gardenview Pentecostal Church near Meadowview/Barrhead, AB (1963–1969) – POAC.

Kahlke, Arthur, served in Alberta and Ontario – POAC.

Kakoschke, Otto, served Bethel Tabernacle of Ponoka, AB (1962–1966); Kelowna, BC; Chilliwack, BC retired in Chilliwack, BC – POAC.

Koerber, Henry, served German Pentecostal Church, New Sarepta, AB (1947–1948) – POAC.

Kollmar, Knut, served Norwood Christian Life Assembly of Medicine Hat, AB (1972–1977); Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB as assistant pastor (1972?–1979?); served Montreal, QC – POAC.

Kopat, Martin, from Hamburg, Germany; married to Ilse; served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1955–1960); was the last minister of the German Pentecostal Church, Onoway, AB (1969–?) which closed in 1973; also served Vega, AB; retired in Edmonton, AB – POAC.

Kowalski, Wilhelm E., married to Erna; immigrated to Canada in 1937; served Wiesenthal (Leduc), AB (1937–1950); served Edmonton German Pentecostal Church, Edmonton, AB (now Southside Assembly) (1940–1942); served Blackmud German Pentecostal Church for five years (around 1944–1949); helped found the German Branch, POAC as he was the superintendent of the same; served Bethel Pentecostal Church, Barrhead, AB (1950–1955); served Edmonton German Pentecostal Church (1959–1969); also, at times, served Thorsby Pentecostal Church, Thorsby, AB and Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB from a distance (1962–1965); served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1969–1973); retired to Chilliwack, BC and died there – POAC.

Kunkel, Otto, from Vancouver Island, BC; served Vega German Pentecostal Church, Vega, AB (1970–1973); retired – POAC.

Kurtz, Gustav, served the German Pentecostal Church at Onoway, AB (1950–1953); was the superintendent of the German Branch of the POAC after Wilhelm E. Kowalski; served Vancouver, BC then Ontario; retired in Ontario – POAC.

Litke, Hugo, married to Iris; served Vega German Pentecostal Church, Vega (near Barrhead), AB (1947–1950) – POAC.

Lotholz, Arnold, from Gardenview near Barrhead, AB; married to Ruth; served Norwood Christian Life Assembly of Medicine Hat, AB (1983–1989) (the congregation was disbanded in 1989); served Mayerthorpe, AB to present – POAC.

Mascher, Helmut, studied in Edmonton, AB; married; sent to the mission field in Africa from Alberta (1963–1979); founded an orphanage in Africa; later pastored at a Baptist Church in Edmonton, AB – POAC.

Maser, Ella, née Cook; served Newbrook, AB (1945–1949) – POAC.

Miller, Henry, married to Lydia Hildebrandt; she served Blackmud German Pentecostal Church, Leduc, AB (1950–1952); he served German Pentecostal Church of Falun, AB (1950–1952) (the congregation was disbanded in 1955 after 21 years of existence); Vega German Pentecostal Church, Vega, AB (1952–1961); Bethel Pentecostal, Barrhead, AB (1961–1965); Norwood Christian Life Assembly of Medicine Hat, AB (1965–1971); both deceased – POAC.

Miller, William, born near Edmonton, AB; evangelist; served Thorsby, AB (1936–1942); Barrhead, AB (1944–1946) where he was the first ordained pastor, and also served Manola Pentecostal Church, Manola, AB; also served Vega, AB in the early 1970s and Vega German Pentecostal Church (closed in 1975); died in June, 1974 – POAC.

Mittelstaedt, Alfons, married to Martha; served Bethel Pentecostal, Barrhead, AB (1955–1960); Kelowna, BC; deceased – POAC.

Mittelstaedt, Len, married; served Norwood Christian Life Assembly, Medicine Hat, AB (1981–1983); sent to the mission field in Africa from AB (1981–1983?); then served in Sri Lanka (1983–?) – POAC.

Mueller, Immanuel, married to Ruth née Stoik; sent to the mission field in Africa from AB (1964–?); served Blackmud German Pentecostal Church, Leduc, AB (1960–1962) (disbanded in 1962); Heimdal Pentecostal Church, Leduc, AB (1962–1964); served Bethel Pentecostal Church, Barrhead, AB (1980–1981); then owned textile factory in BC – POAC.

Mueller, Reinhold, from Winnipeg; married, his wife from Montreal; served Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB as assistant pastor (1961–1962) – POAC.

Muth, Ruth, served Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1944–1947); Bashaw Gospel Chapel, Bashaw, AB (1947–1980); married to Green – POAC.

Nerling, Ed, served Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB; Toronto, ON, German-language radio program there and also on Huntley Street TV program.

Nerling, Fred, served Vega German Pentecostal Church, Vega, AB (1962–1965); Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1965–1968); sent to the mission field in Argentina from Alberta (1966–1980); then served in Nanaimo, BC; resides in Abbotsford, BC; brother of Ed Nerling – POAC.

Neubauer, Ray (Reinhard), served Onoway, AB and Saskatoon, SK, married to Gabriele Kowalski.

Parker, Albert, served as interim pastor at First German Pentecostal Assembly of Leduc (Wiesenthal) (1926–?) – POAC.

Pohl, Allen, married; served as assistant pastor at Elim Pentecostal Assembly of Calgary, AB (1979–1980); Heimdal Pentecostal Church, Leduc, AB (1982–1986) – POAC.

Posein, Ludwig, served Wiesenthal, Leduc, AB (1929–1930 and 1935–1937) and also New Sarepta Pentecostal Church, New Sarepta, AB (1934) and as an ordained pastor in New Sarepta (1939–1945); the Second Pentecostal Assembly of Leduc (Blackmud), AB as the first lay minister and later ordained minister (1938–?); organized Newbrook German Pentecostal Church, Newbrook, AB (1933); Alberta District Superintendent of the German Branch (1934–1938 and 1950–1959); served as pastor of the Ferintosh German Pentecostal Church, Ferintosh, AB (1946–1954); retired to Chilliwack, BC; died on February 3, 1984 – POAC.

11. Seventh-day Adventist Church

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a long and successful history in Alberta. True, according to the Canadian censuses there were only two Adventists in the province in 1891 and 215 in 1901, but their number rose steeply to 1,825 by 1911. The latter were distributed all over the province, but most of them resided in the Medicine Hat (N=535), Red Deer (N=550) and Strathcona Districts (N=235).

There were many Adventists of German origin among these early settlers. The 1901 Census reported some 70 German-descent Adventists, including children, in the area near Leduc (15 in Rabbit Hills, 35 in Fredericksheim, four in Millet and 15 in Leduc itself); there was also an Adventist family of German stock in Spruce Grove. The heads of virtually all these families, such as the Ratzlaffs, Ergangs, Reimans, Reschkes, Kuhns, Komms, Falkenbergs, Belters and Menzels, had been born in Russia of German heritage, and all had come to Canada between 1892 and 1895.

Ten years later the number of Adventists of German origin in the Leduc area rose to almost 100, and that was where virtually all resided at that time: The 1911 Census encountered no Adventists of German descent in the City of Edmonton, in the Edmonton and the Victoria Electoral Sub-districts and only one in the City of Strathcona. In southern Alberta, 18 German-heritage Adventists lived in the City of Calgary, and just a handful in the Calgary, Medicine Hat and Macleod Electoral Sub-districts.

The Seventh-day Adventists arrived in Alberta before the turn of the 20th century. Colporteurs Thomas R. Astleford in Edmonton and James W. Sowler in Calgary began their work in 1895. In 1898 the first Adventist church in Alberta was organized in Leduc, and in 1899 the first permanent pastor, Henry Block—a graduate of the German Ministerial program at Union College in Nebraska—arrived in Leduc. By 1901 there were altogether 60 members of the church in the Northwest Territories. Five years later the congregation's staff comprised three ordained ministers in Alberta alone, an ordained licentiate and several church staff members.

In 1901 the first English-speaking Adventist workers settled in Ponoka. In 1902 the first two English-speaking congregations were organized in Harmattan (a hamlet 25 km west of Olds) and Ponoka, respectively. The first church school opened in Harmattan in 1901, a second one was established near Tees in 1903. Soon after, the first Alberta-wide organization, the Alberta Tract Society, was formed in Ponoka, and in 1904 the Alberta Mission Field was set up at the first Alberta Adventist Camp Meeting. The Alberta Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 1906. By that time six churches had been established (Leduc German, Harmattan, Ponoka, Rush Lake near Tees, Granum (Leavings) and Leduc English), and there were twelve Sabbath schools and about 300 Sabbath-keepers. The church continued to expand rapidly: By 1916 additional churches with a total membership of more than 770 members were founded in Acme, Bismarck, Calgary, Clemens, Clive, Coronation, Didsbury, Edmonton, Gadsby, Hanna, Hawksdale, Irvine, Lacombe, Lewisville and Midnapore. Leduc German alone had 42 members.

In the 1920 and 1930s, the church reached out to areas west of Edmonton (e.g., Alberta Beach-Onoway, Chip Lake), to the southwest (e.g., Warburg, Thorsby), to the southeast (e.g., Donalda, Millet), the area near Red Deer (e.g., Bentley, Innisfail) and further south to Lacombe, Beiseker, Drumheller and Lethbridge. Congregations were also established at that time in the Peace River country (e.g., Bluesky, Peoria, Wanham).

Upon arriving in Edmonton colporteur Thomas R. Astleford was able to interest the Leduc homesteaders Gustav Litke and John Stickle in the way in which he presented the Bible. Others joined the group, and in 1898 Pastor H. J. Dirksen organized the members into the Leduc German Church. When Pastor Henry Block arrived in 1899 he found a congregation of 35. Under his leadership the Leduc congregation built a

small frame church four miles south of the town in 1903 that would be their spiritual home for the next 49 years. Pastor Block served from 1899 to 1912 as German-language evangelist for the entire province.

Congregations with many members of German ethnicity were established in numerous localities across Alberta in the inter-war years, such as in Rosebud, Rockyford and Beiseker. But there were more:

In 1911 the Calgary Church was divided into the Midnapore German Church, the continuing church, and the Calgary English church. In 1916 the Calgary (English) church had 33 members and the Midnapore church had 35. The German congregation in the downtown area, which evangelist Ziprick had helped reorganize as the Bridgeland Church, purchased a church building in 1925 that would serve them for the next 50 years. As the years went on, many of the original German Adventists from the Beiseker and other farming districts retired to the Bridgeland area near the church, developing a community that stretched over several blocks.

The Adventist history in the Medicine Hat/Irvine area goes back to ca. 1912 when German-speaking Russians from the Dakotas joined the congregation. In 1920 the Hilda Church was organized; seven years later the Medicine Hat Church was established. Adventists had lived in the Hanna area (about 150 km east of Red Deer) since about 1910. The Hanna Church was organized in 1915. In 1920 the Bentley Church (some 20 km west of Lacombe) was organized with about 50 members.

In 1912 Ernest Schafer attended German services held by preacher H. H. Humann in Edmonton, and soon his family and the Riske family helped form the German school class in the Edmonton Church that had been founded in 1907. In 1912 tent meetings were held with C.C. Neufeld and A. C. Harder preaching in German.

In 1918 H. A. Niergarth was the first Adventist minister to hold Sabbath meetings in Clairmont north of Grande Prairie, and soon settlers followed him into the Peace River area. In the late 1920s settlers from northern Germany put roots down in the Belloy (Peace River) area. The Belloy Church was founded in 1931 by Elder D. R. Reiner, and a church was built in 1936. In 1930 the first service was held in the Wanham Adventist Church (100 km north of Grande Prairie).

In 1931 Emil Steinke and Mattis Comm began conducting Bible studies with families in Thorsby. In 1932 the Thorsby Church was organized by Elder Neufeld. In 1932 the Seventh-day Adventist church in Millet was founded.

Block, Henry, came from a German family; born in Russia; immigrated to the U.S., went to Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska and graduated from the College's German ministerial program; arrived in Leduc in 1899 as the first permanent pastor; under his leadership the Leduc congregation built a small frame church south of the town in 1903 that would be their spiritual home for the next few years; he served from 1899 to 1912 as German-language evangelist for the entire province.

Comm, Mathis, began conducting Bible studies in Thorsby, AB in 1931.

Dirksen, H. J., was sent from Manitoba; led in the organizing of the first SDA church in the Northwest Territories on May 14, 1898 in Leduc, AB.

Harder, A.C. preached in German in Edmonton in the early 1910s.

Humann, Henry. H., organized the Rosebud (AB) Church in 1908; was a preacher in Edmonton in 1912.

Neufeld, C.C., preached in German in tent meetings in Edmonton in the early 1910s.

Neufeld, J.D., by the 1930s was pastor of all German-speaking Adventists in Alberta; was instrumental in setting up the church in Millet, AB.

Niegarth, H.A., was the first Adventist minister to hold Sabbath meetings in Clairmont (AB) north of Grande Prairie.

Steinke, Emil, began conducting Bible studies in Thorsby, AB in 1931.

Ziprick, Oscar J., arrived in Calgary in 1922; worked in Calgary, mostly with German-speaking families; helped organize the Bridgeland Church; traveled across Alberta from 1922 to 1927; later went to the General Conference as the German-speaking evangelist for North America.