The *Northern Beacon* made its first appearance in January 1942. The paper was started as a community building exercise within and between Alternative Service camps and to inform friends, family and the outside world of the work of conscientious objectors. Circulation eventually reached 1,055.

Articles on religious life, sports, camp doings, personal profiles, letters from readers, poetry, work project updates and reports from American COs captured many interesting aspects of the Alternative Service experience.

With the transfer of the men from Montreal River to the British Columbia Forestry Service camps, publication was temporarily discontinued. However, former editor Wes Brown and others revived the paper, now called *The Beacon*, from their new camps in British Columbia. John L. Fretz later took over the editorship. Both Brown and Fretz were from Ontario. The paper ceased in 1945 following the closure of the Forest Service camps.

Editor John Fretz wrote that the viewpoints of the various groups within the camps “were published so as to strike a balance and no viewpoint of any one group was to become the belief of the paper. No political issues or discussions were allowed in the paper.”

Today, the paper is widely recognized as a significant source of Alternative Service history. The Mennonite Archives of Ontario has digitized the faded copies to preserve CO voices.

- with text from *Alternative Service in Canada* by J. A. Toews
Staff of *The Northern Beacon* at Montreal River with the first issue, January 3, 1942

Rufus Jutzi’s handwritten dispatch to *The Beacon*

Hello everybody. C 4. Reporting. We live one week at the camp with which we associate many days spent firefighting. On April 23, just one week after we came back from Hill Top, when we helped plant innumerable trees, that of us came down to Langford Camp to clean up before the gang came for the weekend. The gang went for yoga, but I wanted to spend the rest of the week, the last two weeks almost, in the camp. The fellows came back on the 23. While we enjoyed our winter camp at Lake Cowden, the gang were all glad to be back at C 4. When the majority of us had been back at camp life, and there again we were introduced to the art of fighting fires.

Printing *The Northern Beacon* using a duplication machine, 1942

Conchies Speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service, 1941-1946  
Mennonite Archives of Ontario exhibit, 2016-2017