

October, 2018



British Home Child Group International

September 28th - National British Home Child Day By Sandra Joyce

On Wed. Feb. 7, 2018, Motion 133 to designate September 28 as National British Home Child Day in Canada passed unanimously in the House of Commons. This means that those British Home Children still living and BHC descendants now have a day to celebrate the contributions they and their ancestors made to the founding of our great country.

The Private Member's Motion was initiated by MP Guy Lauzon on November 22, 2017 after the idea was brought to his attention by one of his constituents, Judy Neville, a British Home Child descendant and current President of the Ontario East British Home Child Family group.

Previously only Ontario, thanks to a Private Member's Bill passed in 2011 by Neville's brother, former MPP Jim Brownell, officially celebrated a provincial Home Child Day. Nova Scotia also celebrated a provincial Home Child Day but it has had to have the Day approved annually.

This Motion was preceded by a Motion to Apologize to the Home Children which was passed unanimously on February 16, 2017. This motion was introduced by the Bloc Quebecois and supported by all parties. MP Luc Therriault was encouraged to present the Motion by former Leader of the Opposition, Gilles Duceppe. Duceppe's maternal grandfather was a Home Child sent from Ireland to Quebec who often spoke to his grandson about the loneliness he experienced as a Home Boy.

Prior to that, the British Home Child Group International's Apology Committee had emailed all MPs with information about the home children in their language of preference and followed up by a phone call in either English or French.

As the window of opportunity was quite small to present the Motion to the House of Commons, Mr. Duceppe and MP Therriault invited Co-founders of the British Home Child Group International, Karen Mahoney and Sandra Joyce to represent the Home Children and their descendants in the House. Sandra Joyce spoke at the media scrum after the Motion was unanimously passed. Present were MP Elizabeth May, MP Jessica Kwan, MP Luc Therriault, and MP Judy Sgro. On behalf of the BHCGI and other groups, Judy Sgro had presented petitions on behalf of the Home Children and their descendants four times in the House of Commons.

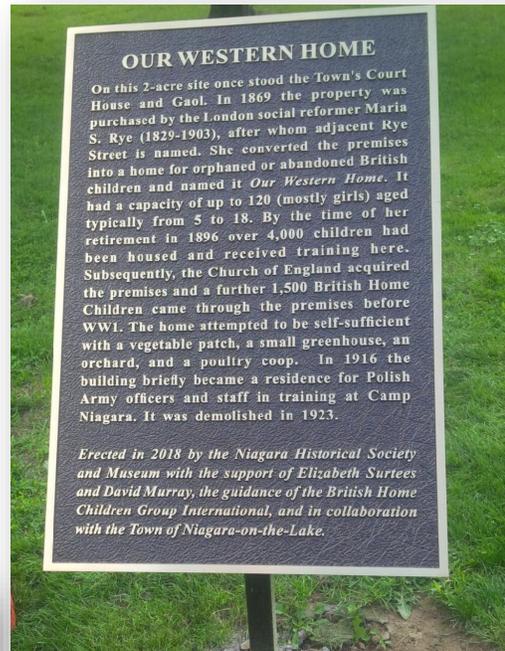
In less than a year, two Motions have passed in the House of Commons, honouring the Home Children and their descendants. This part of history has finally been acknowledged by the Canadian Government and their stories will continued to be told especially on September 28th.

This year, the BHCGI will co-host the unveiling of a plaque marking the first receiving Home in Canada, opened by Maria Rye in 1869 in Niagara-on-the-Lake on our first National Home Child Day.

National British Home Child Day continued



Claresholm event photo by Kathleen Moors—with Hazel Perrier, BHC John Vallance, Bruce Skilling & Connie Falk



Rye Plaque—photo by Tina Muller



BHC Heritage Plaque—Toronto



Middlemore Plaque in Nova Scotia



Tree Planting Ceremony at the Lost Villages Museum with MP Guy Lauzon & OEBHCF Pres. Judy Neville

Home Children, Eugenics and Dr. Helen MacMurchy by Sandra Joyce



It is important to remember, on the first National British Home Child Day in Canada that Home Children, were seen in their mother country and Canada as being inferior largely because of defective genes. They were often looked upon with disdain, if not alarm.

Belief in eugenics, the idea that you could not change the genetic makeup you were born with, was prominent all over the developed world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The impoverished children sent to Canada, whose parents often had no course but to relinquish their children to institutions or workhouses, were regarded with suspicion, if not fear. The belief was that these children could procreate with established Canadians and cause irreparable harm to the established race.

Eugenics, allegedly based on science, was embraced in Canada (and elsewhere) and led to concern about the waves of immigrants flooding the country. Eugenics arguments were used to justify the involuntary sterilization of thousands of Canadian disabled women, single mothers, immigrants, First Nations people and the poor. In Nazi Germany, eugenics paved the path for to death camps for Jews and other “undesirable” groups.

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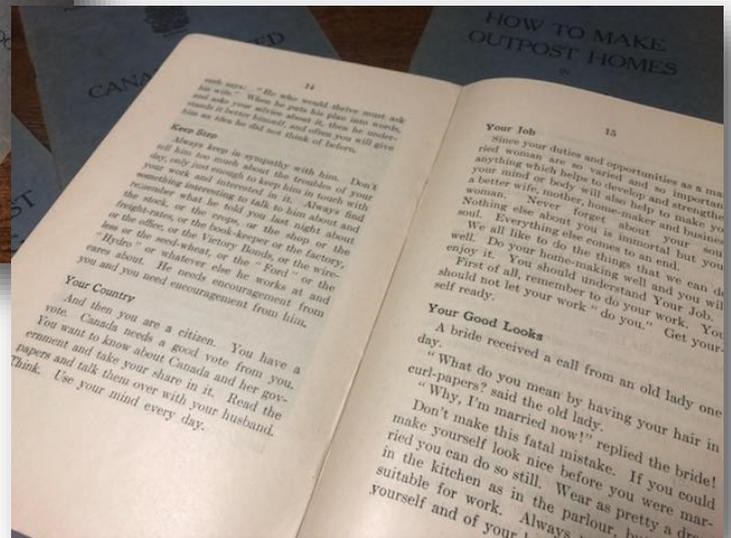
Dr. Helen MacMurchy, internationally declared one of the top ten women in medicine in 1949, was a fervent eugenicist. In 1906, she was appointed to the position of Inspector of the Feeble-minded in Ontario. While in this position, she promoted institutionalization of individuals, removal of their children and segregation and sterilization of those considered to be unfit. She believed that feeble-mindedness was largely based on genetic makeup especially in the cases of the impoverished, unwed mothers and eastern Europeans. In 1920, she published a paper called ‘The Almosts – a study of the Feeble-minded’ calling for sterilization of individuals.

In her favour, Ms. MacMurchy was also a strong voice for maternal health and the health of children. She wrote “Little Blue Books” promoting pasteurization of milk, hand-washing and sterilization of feeding bottles. They were published in dozens of languages, including Cree, and sold millions of copies. They encouraged good hygiene, stay-at-home mothers, and the importance of breastfeeding. One of her most quoted statements is harsh, though: “when the mother works, the baby dies.”

She made a special study of medical inspection of schools, child welfare and public health in England and in the United States and applied this knowledge to when she became provincial inspector and assistant inspector of hospitals, prisons and charities, a position she held for seven years.

In 1934, MacMurchy was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) and has been recognized as a person of national historic interest in 1997. A plaque was erected in her honour in May, 2012 in Ottawa, Ontario.

Dr. Helen MacMurphy Little Blue Books



British Home Child Group International

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