

MLAs unanimously declare 2006 the Year of the War Bride

Liberal TJ Burke overcome with emotion as he stands to debate his motion in the legislature

By Kathy Kaufield
Telegraph-Journal

Following an emotional round of speeches by provincial politicians, New Brunswick has declared 2006 the Year of the War Bride.

MLAs voted unanimously Thursday in favour of Fredericton North Liberal MLA TJ Burke's motion to declare next year in honour of war brides, marking the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the majority of them in Canada.

The vote makes New Brunswick the first province in Canada to officially support a campaign led by Fredericton resident Melynda Jarratt to have the Canadian government declare 2006 the Year of the War Bride.

She's hoping that support from provincial legislatures will urge Ottawa to follow suit.

About 35 war brides, mainly from the Fredericton area, attended the sometimes emotional debate in the legislature.

His eyes filled with tears, Mr. Burke was so overcome by emotion that he was unable to speak for about two minutes as he stood on the floor of the legislature to debate his motion.

Mr. Burke was trying to read a 1991 Telegraph-Journal article about his grandmother, British war bride Jean Paul, who was finally reunited with her sisters after nearly 50 years.

After a lengthy silence, MLAs showed him some support by applauding.

"You'll have to forgive me. I get a little choked up," he said finally.

Saint John-Champlain MLA Roly MacIntyre eventually stepped in and read the article, which detailed Mr. Burke's grandmother's life.

Ms. Paul was only 19 when she came to Canada with her infant daughter to live on a native reservation with her husband, Canadian soldier Charles (Buck) Paul.



Burke

Despite the fact both a priest and her husband's commanding officer tried to talk her out of marrying Mr. Paul, she did anyway and arrived at the reserve to live in a house with one light bulb, a dirt floor, no flush toilet and only cold water. She was the first non-aboriginal woman, except for nuns, to live on the reserve.

Mr. Burke said he still marvels at his grandmother's strength for leaving her family in England and at her obvious love for her husband.

Both his grandparents have since died and Mr. Burke said spending time with the war brides on Thursday made him miss his grandmother.

"I had tea with them "...

"I miss those moments "...

"And these women reminded me so much of my grandmother today," he said.

Doris Lloyd, an 83-year-old war bride from Plaster Rock, came to the legislature to watch MLAs pass the motion.

"I think it is wonderful, I really do," she said.

Ms. Lloyd said the day brought back memories of her husband and the family she left behind in England, some of whom she never saw again once she left in 1944.

"I feel sad. I feel glad. I feel proud.

" Yes, very proud I am a Canadian," she said.

Ms. Jarratt said she's pleased to see New Brunswick become the first province to pass the motion. She hopes Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan will follow suit soon. She said Miramichi MP Charles Hubbard has also committed to introduce a similar motion in the House of Commons if he is re-elected.

"It's time to give the war brides, tip a hat to them, it's their due," she said.

"They really, really developed and built this country "... they changed the course of history in this country."