

Article

Settler Colonial Structures of Domestication: British Home Children in Canada

Morgan Brie Johnson

Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada;
mo.b.joh@gmail.com

Abstract: There has been a surge of research on Home Children in the past several decades, as the phenomenon previously unknown to many came into the spotlight. However, much of the historical research has focused on either the psychological and physical impacts on the children at the hands of their new “families” (there were many reports of child abuse and neglect) or the ways they were saved from their poverty in Britain by being sent to the colonies. This article will put this existing historical research into conversation with theories of settler colonialism, considering Home Children as a tool of *domestication* for the social reproduction of Canadian white settler society, which was paired with the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands. This analysis stems from and is intertwined with personal reflections on my own family history as a white settler woman descending from a Home Child to explore the gendered labour of social reproduction as a crucial pillar in creating and maintaining settler colonial Canada. Following Lorenzo Veracini’s argument that settler colonialism is a distinct structure that uses domestication as one of its key tenets and relies on its “regenerative capacity”, this paper will explore how British Home Children were a key component of settler colonialism in Canada and how this history has manifested in the current gendered, racialized, and classed politics of “settling”.



Citation: Johnson, Morgan Brie. 2021. Settler Colonial Structures of Domestication: British Home Children in Canada. *Genealogy* 5: 78. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030078>

Received: 9 June 2021

Accepted: 19 August 2021

Published: 31 August 2021

Publisher’s Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: settler colonialism; domestication; British Home Children; Land Back; decolonization

1. Introduction

I am sitting on a small wooden dock with my feet comfortably dangling in one of the clearest lakes I have ever swam in. The dock is precariously propped up on large rocks and each of its wooden boards gets replaced one by one as years of lake water disintegrate them. As a millennial urban apartment renter living in an unprecedented housing crisis, this is the only place I have had a lifelong relationship with. My grandfather bought this land when my father was a child and it now belongs to my uncles, who generously allow my partner and I to continue visiting every summer. This is possibly the most common narrative of cottage ownership throughout the province of Ontario in the country that, to many, is referred to as Canada. Hundreds of these stunning lakes are speckled with white settler family cottages like this one.

The dock at my cottage sits on large rocks because more than half a century ago, my grandparents moved them all into one pile, offering the perfect structure, and clearing a sandy open swimming area right next to it. Today, this practice would be illegal, as it disrupts important habitats for the wildlife in the lake. I assume my family would never repeat this practice; I am certain my grandparents had no idea that it was harmful. Yet, the next generations benefit from it year after year.

Inspired by the story of my great-great grandmother, a 19th century British Home Child girl and grandmother to my paternal grandfather who built my cottage, this article will reflect on the implications of the Home Child program in relation to the Canadian settler state’s historical and ongoing agenda of land acquisition. Following Lorenzo Veracini’s argument that settler colonialism is a distinct structure that uses domestication as one of its key tenets and relies on its “regenerative capacity” (Veracini 2010, p. 3), I will explore how

British Home Children were a key component of settler colonialism in Canada and how this history has manifested in the current gendered, racialized and classed politics of “settling”. Inspired by theories and practices of critical family history, which Christine Sleeter defines as applying “insights from various critical theoretical traditions to an analysis of how one’s family has been constructed historically within and through relations of power” (Sleeter 2011, p. 423), I will pair personal reflection with settler colonial theory, Indigenous land defence movements, and family archival information sourced from Canadian census records and immigration records from Library and Archives Canada.

2. Home Children

At first Matthew suggested getting a Barnardo boy. But I said ‘no’ flat to that. ‘They may be all right—I’m not saying they’re not—but no London street Arabs for me’, I said. ‘Give me a native born at least . . . I’ll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born Canadian’.

—L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (spoken by the character Marilla Cuthbert)

The transition from feudalism to capitalism in the 15–17th centuries in England resulted in a mass explosion of “enclosures”, where what had been communally held land, or the “commons”, was forcefully transformed into private property (Federici 2004, p. 62; Coulthard 2014, p. 7). The seizure of these commons was met with mass uprisings and protests, often spearheaded by poor and peasant women who were the most dependent on communally held land for subsistence and sociality (Federici 2004, p. 71). The loss of land resulted in the mass migration of people into large urban centres where employment was scarce, work was demanding, and wages were low. It also resulted in a drastic loss of autonomy and offered employers the chance to lengthen working days and lower the wages that workers were now fully dependent on (Federici 2004, p. 23). By the mid-19th century, at the same time as an estimated 85% of the earth was owned and managed by European white men (McClintock 1995, p. 5), Britain was facing a crisis of economic inequality that was largely framed as a crisis of population, of job opportunities, or of poor people. As is also frequently the case in our modern-day capitalist structure, the promotion of philanthropy and charity from compassionate individuals was a much more palatable solution than a fundamental shift in the foundation that caused the oppression.

It is in this context that 19th century England saw the burgeoning philanthropic movement of child emigration. Motivated mainly, but not exclusively, by Evangelists shocked by the impoverished and sick children living on the streets, several organizations were created to try to feed, house, and educate orphaned or impoverished children. Since finding employment for these young people was still so difficult, the preferred option became sending them to Britain’s colonies; this surplus population of young British emigrants-to-be were known as Home Children (Bagnell 2001, p. 9). While many were exported to Australia, New Zealand, the United States, or South Africa, given my family history my focus in this paper will be on Canadian Home Children.

From 1863–1939, when the programs officially ended, over 100,000 impoverished children were brought to Canada through child emigration organizations (Cameron 2018, p. 533). The most prominent organizations were led by Annie MacPherson, Maria Rye, and John Barnardo, who, while largely working independently from one another, were seen as the leading figures of the movement. Coordinating with charitable organizations or individuals in the colonies, they were able to set up receiving homes from which settler families could apply for a child, often for domestic or farm labour. While the operations were publicized as the salvation of orphaned British children to loving Canadian families, frequent accounts emerged of physical abuse, neglect, or grueling working conditions for little to no wage at the only marginally regulated hands of the home child’s new family (Brandon 2015; Corbett 2002). It was also discovered that many of these Home Children had living parents or family back in England who had not given consent for their children to emigrate, or sometimes were not even informed until after the fact (Corbett 2002, p. 31).

In fact, it is estimated that only one third of the families of migrant girls from Barnardo's received notification that their child had been sent abroad (Boucher 2014, p. 25).

3. Ella Hillier

My paternal great-great-grandmother, Ella Hillier, was born into a workhouse in Bath, England, around 1873. She was taken into John Barnardo's Village Home For Orphan Neglect and Destitute Girls in 1881. Barnardo later came to run one of the largest Home Child organizations for Britain's colonies. In July 1883, Ella arrived in Canada as one of the 72 girls who made up the very first shipment of Barnardo's Home Child girls (Immigration Records 2013). The young girls were brought to a brand-new receiving home in Peterborough, called Hazelbrae, where, like thousands after them, they awaited a request from an eligible family, at which time they would be sent on a train to their new home/work (Corbett 2002, p. 39). Ella was placed on a farm in Southern Ontario, where she is listed on census records as an adopted daughter, although at this time adopted may merely have referred to a domestic employment contract and was not necessarily an indication that she was truly considered part of the family (Corbett 2002, p. 57). Andrew Doyle, an inspector dedicated to Home Children in Canada in the 1870s, demonstrated this fact through his interview with a Home Child girl, who defined adoption as a system for getting girls to work without wages (Parr 1994, p. 82). The conditions of Ella's childhood on the farm are unknown to me, although my father has some suspicions based on the patterns of neglect she later exhibited to the grandchildren she helped raise, one of whom was my grandfather.

The story of the British Home Child movement in Canada and around the world has recently come into the spotlight, with many historical books, a dedicated advocacy and research association (the BHCARA), several novels and a TV show being created on the subject, as well as Canada officially naming 2010 the year of the British Home Child in commemoration (Home Children 2010). The movement is usually discussed either through an uncovering of hidden abuses and traumas suffered by the children (and the failure of emigration organizations to adequately follow up with and care for the children who were sent away), and/or through narratives of "nation builders", that is, heroic young individuals persevering despite the odds and humbly contributing without acknowledgement to the growth of a new country (Corbett 2002; Brandon 2015; Bagnell 2001; Kohli 2003; Parker 2010). Often, these narratives are combined to offer the story of the strong pioneer who climbs out of urban poverty, perhaps also out of the trials of an abusive foster system, to become a productive member of society (which might be defined by entrepreneurship, owning land, and/or marrying and having children).

These narratives demonstrate how children and child migration were fundamental to imperial nation building. Ellen Boucher explores how cultures of child rearing served as a method of national border creation via exclusion. She writes how "The ideals of imperial Britishness found institutional expression in the training and educational programs provided to child migrants, and supporters could take heart that the schemes were cementing the foundations of the empire for generations to come" (Boucher 2014, p. 13). The Home Child movement can thus be framed as a very effective and intentionally placed cog in the machinery of capitalist, racialized settler colonial expansion.

4. Expansion and Contraction

Settler colonialism is a distinct structure, in which the colonizer seeks land and permanency in their control of new territory (Coulthard 2014; Wolfe 1999; Veracini 2010). A key feature of this structure is what Lorenzo Veracini calls acts of transfer, which aim to replace Indigenous people with settlers, who were once an exogenous entity but now claim rights to permanency and belonging. This requires the elimination of those people and nations who are Indigenous to the land, as their presence obviously delegitimizes the settler project. Settler colonialism thus requires the *expansion* of settler life, land, and population and the simultaneous (and violent) *contraction* of Indigenous life, land, and population.

Rather than attempting (with varying amounts of success) to hide this structure, as is so common in reconciliation rhetoric today, these violent acts of transfer were explicit to early Canadian policy. This is demonstrated, to choose just one example, in the statements of Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs in the early 20th century when he stated: “[t]he happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government” (Tittley 1992, p. 34). More recently, Kristine Alexander aptly points out how the Canadian government (under the leadership of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper) named 2010 the Year of the British Home Child while simultaneously refusing to apologize for the harms occurred from the child migration program. Only a year earlier, Prime Minister Harper famously declared that Canada has “no history of colonialism” (Alexander 2016, p. 397). Through this rhetoric, Canada’s history of Home Children is decoupled from the violence of colonialism, strengthening what Dylan Robinson calls “inherited histories of ignorance” (Robinson and Martin 2016, p. 63).

While Indigenous people were being aggressively removed¹, peaceful, nonviolent progress narratives of hard-working and deserving pioneers domesticating “virgin” land abounded, demonstrating how settler colonialism must prioritize its own “regenerative capacity” above all else (Veracini 2010, p. 3). Early colonial work in Canada was thought to be the explicit (and proud) domain of the European male (Chilton 2003, p. 39), despite the fact that their work was undoubtedly made possible only by Indigenous traders and guides, or by the domestic labour of Black female slaves (Levine 2007, p. 157). Yet, by the mid 19th century, upper-class British women and colonial leaders came to realize the need for a concentrated export of white women to the colonies (Haggis 1990; Levine 2007; Carter 2016; Perry 2001; Davin 1978). These women would serve several purposes: relieve Britain of its surplus of single women while evening out the opposite gender imbalance in the colonies; lessen the perceived dangers of miscegenation as early male settlers were marrying and creating families with Indigenous women (as Sarah Mackenzie writes, a mixed-race population would undermine the pseudo-scientific understanding at the time of a biologically superior white race (MacKenzie 2020, p. 9)); and provide a heteropatriarchal monogamous structure of permanency through the domestic work of cooking, cleaning, and raising families (Perry 2001; Carter 2016). This drive for permanency via domestication was a crucial structure for the acquisition (or theft) of Indigenous land. As Anne McClintock writes, the “cult of domesticity” was a “crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities . . . and an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise” (McClintock 1995, p. 5). Dividing land into private property and incentivizing nuclear family structures, or what James Snell calls the “white life for two” would ensure European dominance (Snell 1983, p. 112) and make it increasingly impossible for Indigenous people to retain access to their lands. White women and girls, while still necessarily remaining subordinate to their husbands or employers, would be powerful players in this strategy.

5. Domesticity and Home Children

It was under these conditions that Maria Rye, the founder of the largely unsuccessful organization called Female Middle Class Emigration Society, turned her focus from educated single women to pauper children, becoming the first to send British Home Children over to Canada (Kohli 2003, p.20). Others, such as John Barnardo, quickly followed suit. Home Children girls were a hopeful solution to the need for low/unwaged domestic help for settler families since, being children, they were neither sexually transgressive nor over educated, and therefore were more easily molded into the Canadian ideal (Parker 2010, p. 8). Yet, despite this fact, there was continued fear from the colonies that Home Children, due to the overcrowded urban poverty they came from, had “inherited tendencies to evil” (Valverde 2008, p. 119), were “human warts . . . tainted and corrupt with moral slime” (Brandon 2015, p. 20) who would pollute the “virgin soil” of Canada (Corbett 2002, p. 58). Bringing Home Children into Canada was thus seen by many as a “practice which lent

itself to the physical corruption of a pure blooded people" (Morrison 2006, p. 32). This sort of rhetoric that conflates poverty and race was a common occurrence; as Valverde argues, the objections to pauper child emigrants were made by those who also objected to black and Asian immigrants. This belief is evidenced in the first few pages of *Anne of Green Gables*, Lucy Maud Montgomery's famous novel that is now arguably one of Canada's most beloved cultural narratives. Quoted earlier in an epigraph to Section 2, the character Marilla Cuthbert states her refusal to adopt a Barnardo child (such as Ella Hillier), calling them "street Arabs" and stating she would only feel comfortable with a child born in Canada. The fact that the British poor were being included with racialized peoples demonstrates cultural perceptions rather than physical criteria for both immigration and the socially constructed racial categories themselves (Valverde 2008, p. 120; Painter 2010). In 1883, the same year that my great-great grandmother Ella Hillier arrived in Canada, John Barnardo made a case for the Home Child's British status trumping their poverty, demonstrating the racial goals of the Canadian nation when he wrote that emigrating children "suppl[y] what the colonies are most in want of, an increase of the English-speaking population" (Corbett 2002, p. 26).

Thus, far from refuting the racialized, classed, and gendered logics of inclusion and exclusion, the philanthropists' pioneering child emigration adhered to parallel criteria for selecting only certain children deemed worthy of emigrating to Britain's colonies. At Barnardo's Village Home For Orphan Neglect and Destitute Girls, my great-great-grandmother Ella, at approximately eight to ten years of age, would have purportedly been chosen for the esteemed "Canada List" based on the following principles: having training in domestic work, having no perceived mental or physical disabilities, and having an acceptable character, determined by being "honest, industrious and capable", "taught to revere the Bible as God's word", and "free from taint" (Corbett 2002, p. 28). Having made the cut, Ella and her young peers would have received further training in preparation for their new lives. To demonstrate his commitment to providing only the most desirable children, John Barnardo vowed to pay for the return voyage of any of his children who showed "moral failure" (Corbett, 28). This performance of careful preening and selection was apparently not a notable contradiction to Barnardo's motto of saving desperate and innocent young children, as if there was a natural hierarchy determining how much saving one really deserved.

Coming from poorhouses and street life, Home Children had few to no belongings of their own. As a Barnardo's girl, Ella would have been issued a standard outfit and trunk which contained only a few items, including the novel *Pilgrim's Progress*, a hymn book, and a bible (Corbett 2002, p. 30). Children were expected not only to labour for little to no pay (there are accounts of contracts between children and families where the word "wages" was crossed out and replaced with "pocket money" (Morrison 2006, p. 30)), but also to help maintain a Christian dominance in Canada; this is demonstrated by reverence for the Bible being a key criteria for immigration, as outlined above, as well as by the fact that Christian families were seemingly prioritized in most applications for Home Children: Ellen Agnes Bilbrough, a 19th century matron of one of Ontario's receiving homes for Home Children, writes that families applying for Home Children needed a minister to write a letter (Bilbrough 1879, p. 24). She also describes her greatest need as being "Christian homes for little children" (Bilbrough 1879, p. 16). In some contracts between a child and their adopted family, it is also stipulated that the child must attend Sunday school (Morrison 2006, p. 30). In this sense, it was a philanthropic and evangelist effort to offer free labour to white Christian families who would raise these labourers to one day be Christian, property-owning, and family-raising citizens. Not surprisingly, there does not seem to be mention of any Black, Indigenous, or other racialized families that were offered Home Children in order to more effectively and successfully reproduce themselves. As McClintock argues, "imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space and its relation to the market" (McClintock 1995, p. 17). Ella and her female Home Child peers were an invaluable tool of domestication, with not only the ability to efficiently

reproduce the families who belonged to a white Christian patriarchal nation, but to one day embody and pass on those same ideals themselves.

6. Building a Nation

A turn to the domestic front, even as the last shots at Wounded Knee echoed in America's collective ear, marked not the end of conquest but rather its renewal.

—Beth Piatote, *Domestic subjects: gender, citizenship, and law in Native American literature* p. 3

By the mid-20th century, Britain stopped exporting Home Children to Canada. Some scholars have implied, perhaps somewhat generously, that this was because authorities came to realize the emotional and physical abuse inherent in the system and so put an end to it (Bagnell 2001). However, seeing as moral critiques of child emigration had always been present, an enlightenment argument appears overly simplistic. Perhaps the underlying reason is that Home Children had contributed thoroughly enough to the Anglo-Saxon colonial project that British and Canadian actors felt it was no longer worth the controversy.

Home Children are now seen to have been builders of the nation, helping work the land to create food for settler families and helping farm wives to raise children and keep a respectable house. Yet, the nation they were (consensually or otherwise) building via domestication was undeniably an intentionally white, Christian, heteropatriarchal society which, if the children survived the abuse and neglect that many suffered, they and their future descendants stood to materially benefit from. Unlike Indigenous people (and with much more ease than Black, Chinese, or many other immigrants of colour) these Home Children would grow up to one day have the ability to own land themselves, even if for the females it was largely, but not exclusively, through their white husbands. This land would then be passed on to their children for generations to come.

Today, Home Children and all their descendants are estimated to make up approximately 11% of the Canadian population (British Home Children in Canada n.d.; Morrison 2006; Bagnell 2001), while the Canadian government estimates that Indigenous people (as Canada defines such a category through what Glen Coulthard calls the logics of recognition) make up approximately 4.9% (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada 2017). Furthermore, the Canadian government claims control of 98.8% of the land in Canada, while Indigenous people currently only control 0.2% (Manuel 2015, p. 8). Thus, the Home Child project was in fact an important factor in the acquisition of territory, which, as it enables both settler expansion and Indigenous (genocidal) contraction, is the defining tenet of settler colonialism (Wolfe 2006).

7. Land Back

The land that settlers (the approximately 11% of us Home Children descendants included) have access to is constantly expanding through development projects and the growth of municipalities and towns across the country, yet Indigenous reservation lands have almost never been allowed to grow. This is most poignantly represented in the case of 1492 Land Back Lane, an Indigenous land defence next to Six Nations reserve, an hour south-west of Toronto, Ontario (where I am currently writing this paper), and two hours north-east of Chatham-Kent, Ontario (where Ella Hillier was sent to work as a Home Child).

In the summer of 2020, Six Nations land defenders reclaimed a piece of land adjacent to their reserve that was slated for a housing development project. This land is one of the rare parts of the Haldimand Tract (an area of land surrounding the Grand River that was given to Six Nations for their allegiance to the British during the American Revolution and to compensate for their own land that was lost during that war) that is not developed into settler towns and municipalities. Titled 1492 Land Back Lane, the land defence at Six Nations lasted a year and, at the time of writing, the two companies running the housing development project have backed out, although the land title issue has not been resolved (Brown and Craggs 2021). The case of 1492 Land Back Lane clearly demonstrates how an increase in housing (aka land) allows an expansion of the settler population and

further limits Indigenous access to land. Skyler Williams, Six Nations land defender and spokesperson for 1492 Land Back Lane, succinctly describes this phenomenon when he says: every other community across the country . . . they've all grown, exponentially, over the last 100 years. Except for reserves. Reserves are the only ones in the last 100 years that have gotten nothing but smaller. And so as those surrounding communities begin to encroach on those lands, to be able to hem us in so that we can't grow, so that we can't expand . . . this is a problem . . . [this] should be a problem for everybody (in Hill 2021).

British Home Children were pioneer laborers on the narrative of the innocent, honest, hardworking hetero-nuclear domestic family that settler colonialism relies on. The settler response to 1492 Land Back Lane has demonstrated a present-day manifestation of this narrative. The mayor of Haldimand County, the local jurisdiction covering the land in question, has defended the housing development, stating that the project "will either employ or house over 1000 Ontarians who will support their families and pay their taxes" (Hewitt 2020, my emphasis). Similarly, the two companies who own the housing development project, Losani Homes and Ballantry Homes, each advertise their business through images of white, heterosexual couples and their young white children laughing together in brand new living rooms, kitchens, or backyards (Losani Homes n.d.; Ballantry Homes n.d.).

To pursue this innocently domestic agenda advertised by the mayor, Losani Homes, and Ballantry Homes, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) moved in on the Six Nations land defenders with excessive force, violence, and funding, firing rubber bullets, dragging a land defender across the ground, and arresting over thirty people (Palmater, Pamela n.d.). While authors such as Tiffany Lethabo King provide an important critique of overly friendly words like domestication, settlement, or disappearance to describe what is essentially genocide (King 2019, p. 45), my exploration of these historical and ongoing narratives aims to expose and critique the genocidal nature underlying the settler rhetoric of domesticity.

As Patrick Wolfe argues, "Land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus, contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life" (Wolfe 2006, p. 387). In this sense, the mere 0.2% of land that Indigenous nations have control over clearly demonstrates the genocidal and structural nature of the colonial state: the ongoing project of Canada has been set up to provide land/life to settlers while systemically restricting Indigenous land/life.

8. Conclusions

While Home Child descendants experience patterns of intergenerational trauma stemming from what was frequently an abusive system of child emigration, we have also been able to access land (and therefore life/wealth/expansion) over generations in a way that the descendants of Indigenous peoples, residential school survivors, Sixties Scoop children², African slaves, or migrant workers have not. In fact, due to the contrapuntal structures of Indigenous land theft and British emigration, many of us are the benefactors of land that was stolen from its original caretakers, whether we are aware of it or not.

The grandson that Ella helped raise went on to marry my grandmother, build a small cottage on unceded Algonquin territory in North Frontenac County, Ontario³, father six children, and grandfather 13 grandchildren. Many of these children and grandchildren have or will go on to own land as well. The Algonquin Nation is currently in negotiations with the provincial and federal governments for parcels of Crown land on their territory. Parcels 199C and 308 have small waterfronts on Brule Lake, just a 20 min canoe ride south of my family's cottage. This small act of taking land back feels both exciting and devastating: if I canoe north from the cottage, I could pass hundreds more acres of Crown land than what parcels 199C and 308 cover. Should it not be the Canadian government who is in need of negotiations, going through the Algonquin legal system to try and secure small parcels that are allowed to remain "Crown" land within Algonquin territory, which was never ceded to Canada in the first place?

As I rest on the dock that is propped up by a purposeful arrangement of stones, I rest on top of these generations of white settlers whose easy access to land was arranged

by the same forces that removed and excluded so many others. As Christine Sleeter writes, critical family history asks individuals to consider the power relations that have historically existed within one's family or between one's family and other groups, as well as how those power relations have travelled into the present day (Sleeter 2020, p. 3). Tracing my own access to land is part of this refusal to inherit "histories of ignorance" (Robinson and Martin 2016, p. 63). As a white, cisgender female entering the age where home ownership and child rearing is currently expected, this critical settler family history project nudges me to consider the space I want to take up in my life, and, more importantly, how to intentionally enter into relationship with space and place (Massey 1994) while carrying the messy history of my ancestors who came here before me.

The injustice done to Home Children, while neither homogenous nor at all comparable to racialized oppressions, still stems from the same capitalist-colonial structure as the genocidal atrocities that continue to be enacted against BIPOC⁴ bodies. The gendered, racialized, classed, and colonial narratives embedded in the creation of Canada are not accidental; they are strategic methods of eliminating common ground on which solidarity between members of an oppressed majority might take place. Sylvia Federici writes about the strict rules that early colonial powers implemented to divide marginalized people, and how these measures actually indicate the extreme *threat* that solidarity across racial or gender divisions would pose to them (Federici 2004, pp. 106–8). This gives some insight into the necessity for settlers to learn about the histories of the land they are on, the intergenerational responsibility that comes with these histories (Robinson and Martin 2016, p. 47), and to support Indigenous nations and frontline land defenders in their ongoing calls for decolonization and land back. I will conclude by positing that if colonialism is not historical but in fact ongoing, then so is the threat that solidarity poses to it.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to the British Home Children Advocacy and Research Association for generously helping me to track down information on my great-great-grandmother, and to my father for the knowledge of our family he passed on. Thank you as well to the reviewers of this article for your thoughtful feedback.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Although I use the past tense here to show a historic trend, the structure of settler colonialism, which violently excludes Indigenous people from the land, is ongoing (Palmater 2014, p. 32).
- ² The Sixties Scoop is the name used for the practice in Canada of removing Indigenous children from their communities and placing them in foster care or in settler families looking to adopt. Thousands of children were removed from their culture, families, communities, and languages in this way, largely in the sixties and seventies, under the philanthropic auspices of "protecting" children (Spencer 2017).
- ³ See the Algonquins of Ontario's website for more information about ongoing treaty negotiations: <https://www.tanakiwin.com/> (accessed on 25 July 2021)
- ⁴ Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

References

- Alexander, Kristine. 2016. Childhood and Colonialism in Canadian History. *History Compass* 14: 397–406. [CrossRef]
- Bagnell, Kenneth. 2001. *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.
- Ballantry Homes. n.d. We Build Dreams. Available online: <https://ballantryhomes.com/> (accessed on 23 July 2021).
- Bilbrough, Ellen Agnes. 1879. *British Children in Canadian Homes*. CIHM/ICMH Digital Series = CIHM/ICMH Collection Numérisée, No. 05813. Belleville: SN.

- Boucher, Ellen. 2014. *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World 1869–1967*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brandon, Rose McCormick. 2015. *Promises of Home: Stories of Canada's British Home Children*. Caledonia: Magnolia Press.
- British Home Children in Canada. n.d. British Home Children in Canada. Available online: <https://canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com/> (accessed on 1 June 2021).
- Brown, Desmond, and Samantha Craggs. 2021. Year-Long Six Nations Protest Forces Cancellation of Major Development in Caledonia, Ont. | CBC News. CBC. Available online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/caledonia-development-cancelled-protests-1.6088130> (accessed on 2 July 2021).
- Cameron, Sally Brooke. 2018. Little Wanderers: The British Home Children in Canada. *International Migrations in the Victorian Era*, 532–54. [CrossRef]
- Carter, Sarah. 2016. *Imperial Plots: Women, Land, and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Chilton, Lisa. 2003. A New Class of Women for the Colonies: The Imperial Colonist and the Construction of Empire. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31: 36–56. [CrossRef]
- Corbett, Gail H. 2002. *Nation Builders Barnardo Children in Canada*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.
- Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Indigenous Americas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Davin, Anna. 1978. Imperialism and Motherhood. *History Workshop* 5: 9–65. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Federici, Silvia. 2004. *Caliban and the Witch*, 1st ed. New York: Autonomedia.
- Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. 2017. The Daily—Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census. Available online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm> (accessed on 25 October 2017).
- Haggis, Jane. 1990. Gendering Colonialism or Colonizing Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism. *Women's Studies International Forum* 13: 105–15. [CrossRef]
- Hewitt, Ken. 2020. Statement from the Mayor and Council RE: Caledonia Protest. *Haldimand County (blog)*. Available online: <https://www.haldimandcounty.ca/statement-from-the-mayor-and-council-re-caledonia-protest-2/> (accessed on 19 August 2020).
- Hill, Sabrina. 2021. A Digital Short | Stories from 1492 | Skyler Williams: Holding Our Ground. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPMahVmCCYA&feature=emb_logo (accessed on 12 February 2021).
- Home Children. 2010. Canada Post. Available online: https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/web/en/blogs/collecting/details.page?article=2010/09/01/home_children&cattype=collecting&cat=stamps (accessed on 1 September 2010).
- Immigration Records. 2013. Library and Archives Canada. Available online: https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/home-children-1869-1930/immigration-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=16310&fbclid=IwAR1udMcqhJrth47qxaURQ_7u_31HxFILEGN-xd2zwXIOfyKBb5RzE87PNw (accessed on 28 May 2013).
- King, Tiffany Lethabo. 2019. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Kohli, Marjorie. 2003. *The Golden Bridge Young Immigrants to Canada, 1833–1939*. Toronto: Dundurn.
- Levine, Philippa, ed. 2007. *Gender and Empire*. Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Losani Homes. n.d. Available online: <https://www.losanihomes.com/> (accessed on 23 July 2021).
- MacKenzie, Sarah. 2020. *Indigenous Women's Theatre in Canada: A Mechanism of Decolonization*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Manuel, Arthur. 2015. *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Massey, Doreen B. 1994. *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.
- Morrison, Andrew N. 2006. *Thy Children Own Their Birth*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. 2010. *The History of White People*, 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Palmater, Pamela. 2014. Genocide, Indian Policy, and Legislated Elimination of Indians in Canada. *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 3. [CrossRef]
- Palmater, Pamela. n.d. 1492 Land Back Lane. Warrior Life. Available online: <https://soundcloud.com/pampalmater> (accessed on 24 November 2020).
- Parker, Roy A. 2010. *Uprooted the Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Parr, Joy. 1994. *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869–1924*. Reprints in Canadian History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Perry, Adele. 2001. *On the Edge of Empire Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871*. Studies in Gender and History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Robinson, Dylan, and Keavy Martin. 2016. *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Sleeter, Christine. 2011. Becoming White: Reinterpreting a Family Story by Putting Race Back into the Picture. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 14: 421–33. [CrossRef]
- Sleeter, Christine. 2020. Critical Family History: An Introduction. *Genealogy* 4: 64. [CrossRef]
- Snell, James. 1983. "The White Life for Two": The Defence of Marriage and Sexual Morality in Canada, 1890–1914. *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 16: 111–129.

-
- Spencer, Dale C. 2017. Extraction and Pulverization: A Narrative Analysis of Canada Scoop Survivors. *Settler Colonial Studies* 7: 57–71. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Titley, E. Brian. 1992. *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Valverde, Mariana. 2008. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925*. Canadian Social History Series; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing.
- Veracini, Lorenzo. 2010. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wolfe, Patrick. 1999. *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*. Writing Past Colonialism Series; London: Cassell.
- Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of Genocide Research* 8: 387–409. [\[CrossRef\]](#)