

Trent University awards Martha Friendly honorary doctorate ^[1]

Format: Speech

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AVAILABILITY

Convocation 2015: Honorary Doctor of Laws, Martha Friendly [Video] ^[2]

Photo Album ^[3]

A note from Martha Friendly

Huge thanks to friends, colleagues and other supporters of universal, quality, affordable child care who sent notes, emails and tweets - I very much appreciate your kind words. Hoping that the next celebration will be for the national child care program so many of us are working for.

Excerpts from Trent University:

Canada's leading child care advocate, Martha Friendly is a highly respected researcher, and a major architect of policy thinking on child care issues. For more than 40 years, she has spearheaded research projects and been a leader in advocacy campaigns, all of which have contributed to the fight for universal, high-quality, accessible, and inclusive early childhood education and child care in Canada.

She is the founder and executive director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU), Canada's only policy research institute for early childhood education and care and has published extensively on ECEC in a variety of academic and community-based venues. She has also been a main contributor to various child care advocacy groups such as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. Before immigrating to Canada from New York in 1971, Ms. Friendly was a researcher on one of the first assessments of the American Head Start program based at Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. Once settled in her new hometown of Toronto, she became involved in child care research. A combination of the research skills and inclinations developed as a PhD student in social psychology, a commitment to child care as a key feminist issue and personal awareness of the value of good child care for families and children contributed to her focus on child care research, advocacy and social policy.

In 1975, she became a research coordinator at The Child in The City Programme, an interdisciplinary research group at the University of Toronto. As an outcome of this project, Ms. Friendly went on to found the CRRU. Under her leadership, the CRRU has grown into a nationally and internationally recognized knowledge producer and mobilizer on early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Ms. Friendly is the author of many scholarly publications including two books on child care policy, most recently, *About Canada: Childcare* (2009), co-authored with sociologist Susan Prentice. As a researcher and an activist, Ms. Friendly has worked collaboratively with other scholars, policy makers, social justice, advocacy and early childhood professional groups towards a common goal of a publicly funded national ECEC program for all families and children. Most recently, CRRU partnered with the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada to organize ChildCare2020, Canada's fourth national child care policy conference. Ms. Friendly was the primary author of the conference's paper, "Child Care in Canada by 2020: A Vision and the Way Forward."

Martha lives in Toronto with her husband, Michael Friendly. They have two grown children and twin two-year-old grandsons.

"Martha Friendly's contributions to social and educational dialogue about early childhood education have immeasurably advanced the debate in Canada. Her dedication to excellent, comprehensive research has put child care on the political and social map." - nominator, anonymous

Speaking of receiving an honorary degree from Trent, Ms. Friendly said: "I'm thrilled to have been chosen by Trent. It's tremendously gratifying that the University has chosen someone who has spent her career on child care policy. I cannot help but think that this may signal that this issue has "come of age" and is a good omen for the future."

Greetings and well wishes:

Just as I opened up an e-mail requesting a greeting for this celebration, I heard Martha's voice on CBC's Current Show. She sounded youthful, passionate, and knowledgeable--all of her qualities evident for the last 40 years. Every time I hear Martha speak I marvel at her persistence and dedication to Canadian families and children's well-being. Martha, you have been my role model in conceptualizing childcare policy for Canada and I am forever grateful for what I have learned and will still learn from you. Dr. Rachel Langford

There is but one Martha in Canada. A tireless champion of quality child care whose work has influenced and impacted many; whose dogged determination, knowledge and opinion never lack for a voice; whose understanding and passion inspires, leads and motivates those around her. Awe inspiring and even more-so, a wonderful person who I am privileged to call a friend. Don Giesbrecht

Recognizing Martha's contributions to ECEC research and advocacy is no easy task. She is one of a kind. I hope the students at the Convocation could know the real Martha. Here are some of things I would let them know:

When a big government announcement is about to happen, you can count on Martha's serene, unruffled response. Her low key tranquil handling calms down her fellow advocates. Martha rarely expresses her opinion until all opinions have been heard. She is keen and committed to process and has enormous amount of patience. It is hard to get Martha to voice her opinion about the latest government inaction. The occasional phone call is focussed, unruffled and might suggest a possible action. And rarely would Martha tell you straight out what the movement needed to do or an action we needed to take. Her American roots of fighting injustice are hard to find.

It is truly an honour to have worked with you over 30 years. We have built a community of solidarity and it is an honour to call Martha my sister in struggle- for universal public child care! Jamie Kass

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