

Marion Elizabeth Moodie (Video Script)

By Madison Dean

Alberta was forged by champions. Our excellence in several diverse areas in our way of life are reflected primarily in the champions in our past.

Alberta is able to provide exceptional healthcare, continues to conserve our idyllic landscapes, as well as get a taste for the allure and harmony in mesmerizing writing all because of pathfinders such as Marion Elizabeth Moodie.

Marion was the first fully trained nurse in Alberta, as well as a trailblazing botanist and a captivating poet, but her story begins in the province of Quebec 157 years ago.

Marion Elizabeth Moodie was born in Quebec City on January 30, 1867 to a family of Scottish and English descent. Her family culture and early exposure to caregiving laid the groundwork for her extraordinary path in medicine and the arts. Her family moved to Calgary, Alberta in 1891, where Marion began the transition to a pioneer lifestyle. Her ability to persevere during this period of transition built her resilience and practical skills, setting the tone for her passions later in life.

Marion's love for medicine began at a young age—caring for family members who suffered from typhoid and scarlet fever—pushing her to fulfill her dream of nursing later in life. Following her graduation from Calgary General Hospital, which was then known as Cottage Hospital, she began her career as a nurse, setting the foundation for many of the nursing practices we utilize today.

While furthering her nursing career in the following two years, Marion developed a keen passion for botany. With this, she turned to collecting plant specimens for the Alberta government over the next decade. Her botanical collections eventually reached major institutions such as Harvard, Field Museum, The Smithsonian, and New York Botanical Gardens. Marion's love of botany and Alberta's landscape led her to indulge in the world of poetry. In 1904, she published her first anthology, *Songs Of The West*, describing the beauty and soul of the Alberta landscape. Her groundbreaking work in healthcare, botany and poetry allowed her to become a revered voice in the realms of both literature and science.

Throughout World War I, Marion elevated her nursing career by serving as a nursing sister, providing care for soldiers on the front lines. Following the end of the war, she relocated to Manitoba to manage a tuberculosis treatment facility, all while maintaining her botanical cataloging and poetry creation. In the midst of her busy life, her creative mind did not pause as she later published an imaginative spin on folklore titled *The Legend Of Dryas* in 1926.

Migrating back to Montreal was a personal sacrifice Marion chose to make. To rekindle her childhood occupation of caring for her relatives, she demonstrated her enduring love for family despite her professional success in Alberta. She would later return to Calgary in 1951.

Marion Elizabeth Moodie passed away on April 26, 1958 in Calgary, Alberta. She left behind an incredible legacy as an innovating nurse, crucial to the present development of Alberta health care; a cornerstone in the botanical research of the alluring beauty of Alberta's precious landscapes; and a mesmerizing poet who flawlessly captured the picturesque nature of the province's early scenery.

Marion's contributions to Alberta continue to be celebrated throughout archival collections and historical records of organizations all across Alberta, as well as the meticulous preservation of her gravesite where she is buried alongside her parents, Janet and Walter, and her sister, Margaret. There are also detailed works and photographs within places such as Glenbow Library and Archives to preserve her legacy.

I use Marion's incredible character to inspire me in a multitude of ways on a daily basis! This includes taking lifeguarding courses so I can protect the lives at my local aquatic center and coaching the younger children on my swim team.

I have always admired the beauty of poetic literature, and Marion has helped me understand that I can still find time for my interests even while leading a busy life. She has also shown me that poetry can be more than a hobby—I am able to publish anthologies, just as she did, to brighten the lives of others through writing.

Marion's love of the outdoors has continually inspired me to enjoy the landscape that Alberta has to offer through hiking, biking, and other outdoor activities. This has encouraged me to make a difference in the conservation of these landscapes for future generations. Thus, I am currently planning on constructing a mini garden with the help of staff at my school. I hope to continue such environmental movements that allow me opportunities in creating gardens for the restoration and protection of biodiversity around the community of Strathmore.

Our province was founded by champions. Incredible women such as Marion Elizabeth Moodie have played an invaluable role in the creation of the Alberta we know today. It does not matter who you are or where you come from—if you pursue your passions just as Marion did, you can make a greater impact on our world than you ever thought possible.

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