

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN ADVOCACY & RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

October 2014 Newsletter

Written and designed by Sandra Joyce & Lori Oschefski

October 23rd, 24th and 25th HOMECHILD the Musical returns to Erin, Ontario



Hilda Williams

Barb Perkins, playwright and composer of HOMECHILD – The Musical, learned about her Welsh grandmother's story from her mother, as she stood on the steps of her home, two toddlers playing at her feet and her newborn in her arms. She told Barb, that her 'Nana' had been taken away from their family, put on a boat and sent to Canada in 1907, then separated from her three siblings after arriving here.

From the later received files sent by the Barnardo organization, Barb found out more: her dockworker great-grandfather, Robert Williams, had been killed in an accident leaving eight children and a pregnant wife behind. At that point, the children were well-fed, living in a row house and were going to school.

After the death of her husband, Barb's great-grandmother, Lewisa, was able to keep her family together for a year. The parish provided a relief fund which enabled her to pay the rent but she needed to find work to provide food and clothing. She attempted to start a business with her brother but that failed.

At this point in time, Lewisa was approached by Barnardo's who convinced her that temporarily taking her 'middle children' off her hands would be best. The understanding was that the two older girls would take care of the three youngest children at home, allowing Lewisa to work and when she got back on her feet, the family would be reunited. Nevertheless, Barnardo's sent the four middle children to Canada and the family was forever torn apart.

Hilda was treated roughly in Canada, according to the records and passed through four different homes. Only one of the four children fared well. For a while, as young adults, the four siblings were able to find each other and live together. Hilda then married an architect and had two children of her own.

Barb's grandmother was able eventually to return to Wales to see her mother. The mother that had never forgotten her children.

After finding out her grandmother's secret, Barb

having been a music teacher and having visited Wales, realized that her love for music must be genetic. She set her grandmother's story to song in 1997 and it was first performed on stage in 2005. All props and costumes were scrutinized to be authentic.

With the musical being performed, Barb Perkins feels she can put her grandmother's spirit to rest. "I know she's saying thank you for remembering us. I can feel it"



Barb Perkins with cast members of HOMECHILD the Musical, Judy Sgro, Lori Oschefski and Sandra Joyce

BHCARA News

Upcoming BHCARA Events in Alberta:
Sandra Joyce and Karen Mahoney will be in Alberta this month for four events:

Wednesday October 15, Strathmore Library - live webcast available to 100 libraries on the RISE network from 7 to 9 pm

Thursday October 16, Surprise Birthday celebration at 5 pm for surviving BHC John Vallance, who will turn 90. Please make a reservation with Bruce Skilling at bruceandjudy@gmail.com. John Vallance is our Honorary Patron for the organization who donated money to set up the organization and the starting of the BHCARA exhibit.

Friday October 17, Presentation at Shelf Life Books in Calgary, starting at 7:30 pm

Saturday October 18, Calgary Public Library 1 - 4 pm. Support Dr. Neil Brown, QC, MLA for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, who is giving our British Home Children a voice in the Alberta Provincial Parliament.

British Home Child Day at Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto

BHC Day hosted by the BHCARA held on September 28th was an outstanding success. We couldn't have asked for better weather, a better atmosphere or a better turn out. Many thanks to our participants and to the many dancers who entertained us during the opening and closing ceremonies and the dinner. The day was filled with laughter, tears and fun.

Regional Director Bob Wilkinson from England made a special trip here to attend. Bob is known to many of our group members as an avid and helpful researcher. Many thanks to Bob for making this trip and all the help given to our members.

Also in attendance was Judy Sgro, MP, York West and former Minister of Immigration. Judy delivered an emotional opening address after which she accepted more signatures for the apology petition. Judy has presented this petition in the House of Commons three times.

In August of 2014 CEO Lori Oschefski met with the historian of the Canadian Museum of History (formerly the Civilization Museum) to consult on a new exhibit expected to open in late 2016. BHCARA artifact collections now on long term loan include the Cecil Bennett collection donated by Wilda Hay, the Winifred Payne collection from the BHCARA and also the Ronald Chamberlain collection donated by the late Doreen Young

The beautiful images shown throughout this month's newsletter were from the exhibit done at Black Creek by Lost & Found artists Michele Woodey and Nerea Martinez de Lecea. The exhibit will be open until October 12th.

More information on their work can be found at: [Found & Lost Facebook page](http://Found&LostFacebookpage) or their web site found at: www.foundandlost.info

OTHER EVENTS:

Thursday
October 23
Presentation at the Dora Keogh's Irish Pub in Toronto
October 26 in the Meaford Museum at 2 pm
October 29 in the Peterborough Library at 7 pm.
October 30 at the Kanata Senior Learning Centre at 1 pm.





HOMECHILD the Musical

Playwright & Composer Barb Perkins

This month's featured BHC is Hilda Williams, beloved Grandmother (Nana) of Playwright and composer Barb Perkins of Erin, Ontario. Barb learned the truth about her Nana's life in 1984 which lead her on this journey.

In 1997 Barb wrote her Nana's story in music. In 2005, written and produced by Barb, HOMECHILD the Musical premiered in Erin, showing in 2009 in Oakville, 2011 in Ottawa and 2013 in Orangeville. We are thrilled to announce that a special presentation of HOMECHILD the Musical will be coming back to Barb's home town of Erin, Ontario on October 23, 24 and 25.

The BHCARA Display along with the Ontario Memorial Quilt will be in the lobby of the theatre on those days.

Stonehome Productions Presents...

HOMECHILD

The Musical

Written by Barb Perkins
Directed by Steve Sherry

Oct. 23, 24 & 25 at 7:30pm
Oct. 25 2014 at 2:00pm
Centre 2000, 14 Boland Dr. in Erin
www.homechildmusical.com

Tickets are \$25
To book tickets please call or visit

Brighten Up
www.brightenup.ca
67 Main St. Erin or 519.833.9258
VISA or MasterCard \$1 surcharge per ticket

Snaps from British Home Child Day at Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto



Watching the HOMECHILD the Musical at the
BHC Day Ceremonies at Black Creek Pioneer Village



Author Marjorie Kohli speaking on the
BHC service in the First World War



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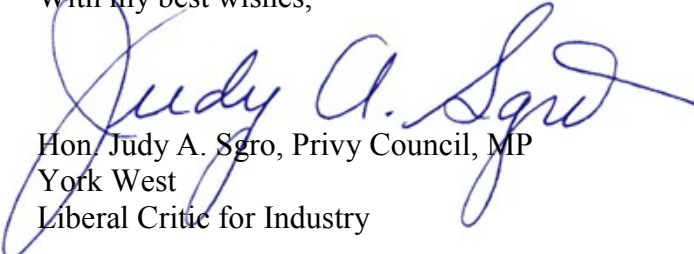
To the Organizers and Participants
of British Home Child Day at the Black Creek Pioneer Village:

What a thrill it is to join you here in this historic place. As you know, today is British Home Child Day, and I am honoured to have been invited to mark this special occasion with you. For so many Ontarians, Canadians, and other citizens of the Commonwealth, the saga of the British Home Children is not merely a history found in obscure textbooks, or one debated by dusty academics. Rather, it is the history of descent, of families. For many, it is the story of how they came to be here, now.

Though the Child Migration Scheme was touted as a golden opportunity for those children facing extreme poverty in Great Britain, it has since become clear that many of the program's participants were subject to great abuse and severe hardship. In Canada, children were rarely adopted in the modern sense. More often, they were "taken on" as indentured labourers and cheap domestic helpers. Though each story is different, we now know that the Scheme regularly amounted to a betrayal: when "temporary" dislocation became permanent, when siblings were separated, and ultimately when families were torn apart. More than one hundred thousand unaccompanied children made the journey to Canada in the hopes of a better life. Though it remains difficult to fathom their courage, today we can salute them for what they endured on our behalves - both as they grew in a strange new land, and later as they fought in the two World Wars.

As a former Minister of Immigration, I had the pleasure and challenge of overseeing the government department responsible not only for immigration, but also for refugees and citizenship. People from all over the world continue to journey to our shores. Today, it strikes me that the diverse stories of the British Home Children are as relevant as ever. In a rapidly changing world, they remind us that we are all, in our own ways, newcomers. As such, we remained united by the Canadian promise of safety and prosperity, and mindful that the wealth of our country derives in part from the diversity and tenacity of the citizens who travelled from afar, seeking home.

With my best wishes,


Hon. Judy A. Sgro, Privy Council, MP
York West
Liberal Critic for Industry