

# BRITISH HOME CHILDREN ADVOCACY & RESEARCH ASSOCIATION JUNE 2016 NEWSLETTER

## Vera Alice Coote A Barnardo Girl

Written by: Eric Lawson, (son)

A girl was born in Royston, Hertfordshire, England, to Alice Maud Coote, aged 28 on December 9, 1912. The father is unknown. Alice had been living with her parents William and Sylvanus Coote but was now out on her own. She had met a man but life was difficult for her and as the years went by, she was not able to care for the little girl whom she named after herself: Vera Alice Coote. As a little girl, Vera lost part of her ring finger on her right hand in the wringer of a washing machine.

Due to complaints, on August 8, 1918, at the age of 5, Vera was taken into care and on October 18 she was placed in Barnardo's Girls Village Home, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex in England. Vera was later placed with a Miss Robinson, 226 Old Heath, Colchester, Essex. On January 25, 1920 she was baptised at St Barnabas' Church in Colchester.

In the meantime Alice Coote married Arthur Wilkins and lived at High Street, Wimpole, Cambridgeshire. They had 4 children: Sylvia (1915), Tom (1917), Doris (1920), Marge (1925). In 1925 there is notation in Vera's file that step-father Arthur Wilkins lived at The Old Lodge, Orwell, Cambridge but Vera had not communicated with him. Then the decision was made to send Vera to Canada. She chose Canada instead of Australia because it was closer and she would be able to return more easily. Vera travelled to Liverpool and on March 27, 1925, sailed with a group of 27 girls on the SS Montclair (Cunard Line) at age 12. Interestingly, later in 1925 the British government decided that no child under 14 should be sent overseas. During the voyage Vera remembered seeing icebergs off of Newfoundland and she thought of the sinking of the Titanic the year she was born. On April 4 the ship landed at St John, New



*Vera at age 12 leaving England for Canada*

Brunswick and the group took the train to Belleville, Ontario, Canada.

Vera was placed on April 13, 1925 with Mrs. Leslie Card, RR 2, Uxbridge, ON, to be employed as a domestic worker. Then on March 27, 1926 she was placed with Mrs. Dan Rogers Jr. in Norwood, ON but left July 5, 1926. The next day she was placed with Mrs. Percy Summerhays, RR 4, Paris, Ontario and stayed there until January 23, 1928. Vera moved to Wooler (near Belleville), Ontario to live with E.M. "Pat" & Lillian Wessels on a Jersey dairy farm. She loved the Jersey cows.

Vera completed Grade 8 but had to work on the farm milking cows and delivering milk. She always wanted to go further in school but was not allowed to. Through a neighbour named Gertrude McColl, Vera met Gertrude's brother, Donald Floyd Lawson. They dated for a couple of years then on September 9, 1939, Don and Vera married at Wooler United Church. Newell Lawson was the groom and Muriel Summerhays was bridesmaid. Number 9 became Vera's lucky number (9th day, 9th month, 39th year).

*Continued pg 2*

AS PART OF  
STRATFORD, ONT  
HERITAGE  
WEEKEND  
ANNIE  
MACPHERSON  
HOUSE TOUR  
SPEAKERS, LUNCHEON AND TOUR

Presented by Architectural Conservancy  
Ontario - guest speakers Lori Oschefski,  
British Home Children and Child  
Migrants of Canada, Thor Dingman  
B.Arch.Sc. - ACO, Stratford Perth  
County Branch and Judy Tye - B.A.,  
B.Ed., Spec. School Librarianship discuss  
the architecture and home children  
stories about the Annie MacPherson  
House. Luncheon and talks concerning  
the history of the Annie MacPherson  
Home for Children and afterwards a tour  
of this very special house. Sunday  
11:30am-3:30pm. Revival House, 70  
Brunswick St. \$45

[Click here for online tickets](#)

## Rotary Club of Etobicoke

Wednesday June 15<sup>th</sup>

Delmanor Senior's Residence

4180 Dundas Street West (@ Prince  
Edward Drive)

Start time 6:45

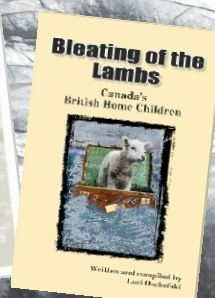
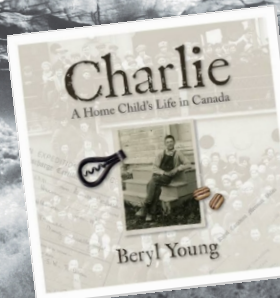
Presentation and fund raising event for  
our Park Lawn Cemetery Monument

## Pier 21 Event Halifax, Nova Scotia

Pier 21 is please to hosting authors Beryl Young and  
Lori Oschefski who will present the story of the BHC on  
Tuesday June 21 2016

Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21  
10:00 to 12:00 in the Windsor Foundation Classroom  
1055 Marginal Rd, Halifax, NS B3H 4P7 - FREE

[RSVP please](#)







*Vera at age 16 in 1928 in Wooler*

Don worked as a herdsman on farms and in 1945 moved to Pickering (near Toronto) to work for Frank Chapman to farm Jersey cows. Don and Vera did not have children right away so they became foster parents for John & Ann Potter for 2 years. In 1946 they moved to Claremont to work on a turkey farm. Donald Eric Lawson was born in Stouffville Hospital on September 11, 1947. Then on October 7 an Auction Sale ended the home farm in Claremont so in 1948, Don, Vera and baby Eric moved to Oshawa for a year. Don finally obtained a steady job with the Ontario Government working at Bowmanville Training School for boys so he moved his family to 79 Elgin St, Bowmanville. They attended St Paul's United Church in Bowmanville. Vera was now a part of a family she missed as a child.

Unknown to Vera, her mother, Alice Coote, died on April 30 1949 in England at age 65. Then on September 29, Elgin Howard Lawson, Vera's second son, was born in Bowmanville General Hospital. Tragedy struck for Vera when on Sunday, January 13, 1957 her beloved husband Donald Lawson after a lengthy illness, died in Bowmanville Hospital of kidney failure. However a friend from the past started courting Vera and on June 20, 1958 Vera married Lloyd Edwin Dorland, a widower, five years her senior. The newlyweds moved back to the Wooler area to live at Maple Lane Farm, RR 1, Codrington, the Dorland farm. Vera and Lloyd moved with Eric and Elgie on June 5, 1959 to live in the house Lloyd purchased from Karl Austin in Wooler. It was as if Vera had returned home. She attended Wooler United Church, sang in the choir and was a member of the Women's Institute, all things she had done years ago with Don.

Vera also kept busy looking after David and Kathy O'Neil in Trenton for Donna O'Neil, Vera's niece. Lloyd and Vera travelled to Florida in the winters with Percy and Daisy Gooding. Vera loved to celebrate Christmas with family, baking, church, and gifts. She remembered receiving only an orange at Christmas as a child in England. In the summer of 1965 Vera visited her sister Maud (b. 1907) and Jim Crowe in Great Yarmouth, England. It was her first trip back to England in 40 years. Vera spent happy summers at Hay Bay Church cottage near Adolphustown. She liked to pick rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries and plums and then can the fruits and vegetables in sealed jars as well as make many pies. In the summer of 1967, her sister Maud Crowe visited Vera in Wooler. It was Maud's first trip to Canada. On December 26, 1970 Vera's son Eric Lawson married Claudette Marie Jean Gosselin at St Anthony's Cathedral in Timmins. Then on January 7, 1972 Vera's first granddaughter Tina Jennifer Lawson was born to Eric and Claudette. It wasn't long until a second granddaughter Trisha Lynn Parsons was born to Eric & Claudette on September 16, 1973. A third grandchild was not meant to be as David Eric Lawson died at birth on Oct 16, 1976 in Sudbury, Ontario. Vera regretted that there was no boy to carry on the Lawson name. Son Elgie Lawson was married to Sharon Sherlock in Vancouver, BC on Dec. 27, 1979.



*Vera becomes Mrs. Lloyd Dorland in June 1958*



*Donald Lawson and Vera Coote in 1939 in Pickering*

Shortly after, tragedy struck Vera again when on January 5, 1980 Lloyd Dorland died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Wooler. Vera decided to sell the house and move to an apartment in Trenton in 1982. There she was close to her niece Donna O'Neil and her family and to the Trenton United Church. In the summer of 1983 Vera received a visit from Jim and Maud Crowe, her sister, who were amazed at the nice home and 2 cars that Lloyd and Vera owned. Maud wished she had moved to Canada when she was younger. In 1985 Vera moved to an apartment at 231 Dufferin St, Trenton. In the fall of 1987, Vera travelled with son Elgie and Sharon Lawson to attend the 50th wedding anniversary of her sister Maud & Jim Crowe in Great Yarmouth, England. Vera visited the Girls Village Home in Barksides for the first time since she left England sixty years before. She walked right up to the cottage she lived in, Jasmine house.

In 1989 Vera moved to a house on First Ave, Trenton and in 1992 she moved to an apartment on Henry St, Trenton. In 1993 she moved to an apartment at 45 Cresswell Drive, Trenton. During this time Vera loved to knit and sew, hook Afghan quilts and write letters to friends. She sang in a Glee Club and visited people in nursing homes and hospitals. She enjoyed driving her own car and meeting people. She helped others whenever she could. She continued to go to the Hay Bay cottage in summers with her granddaughters. Vera loved animals and had a dachshund named Buddy and a Papillon terrier named Skippy. She always had cats living in her house. Vera attended reunions of Barnardo old boys and girls at Glanmore House in Belleville. She received The Guild Messenger "The Magazine for the Barnardo Family Everywhere". In the summer of 1988 issue there is an article about Vera. She also corresponded with and met Collette Bradford who worked for Barnardos in England. In July 1995 Vera planned to travel with her son Eric to London, England to attend the 150th anniversary of Founder's Day at Barnardo Homes. But on May 24 Vera suffered Transient Ischemic Attacks and was placed in Belleville General Hospital. After a month, Vera was moved to Richmond Retirement Home in Belleville and later moved to Hallowell House Nursing Home in Picton. Finally Vera was moved to Helen Henderson Nursing Home in Amherstview where she spent the final three years of her life receiving regular visits from family and friends.



During this time Vera had sent and received letters from a niece, Brenda Charter, who lived in Royston, England who had arranged a family reunion in July 1995 that, unfortunately, Vera was too sick to attend due to her stroke. Sadly on May 22, 1998 Vera died at Helen Henderson Nursing Home in Amherstview at the age of 85. Many people attended the funeral at Weaver Funeral Home in Trenton. Vera is buried in the Friends Cemetery in Wooler beside her first husband, Donald Lawson and his parents Rev. Floyd Augustus Lawson and Grace Muriel Page. Unfortunately, Vera never got to see her four great-grandsons who were born: Aidan Evans (2005), David Parsons (2004), Reid Evans (2009), and Joshua Parsons (2008). In spite of many hardships, Vera was good to everyone and was loved by many people. She always referred to herself as a Barnardo Girl. May she rest in peace.





Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall  
President of Barnardo's

## A ROYAL GARDEN PARTY & BARKINGSIDE TEA

**B**HCARA CEO Lori Oschefski was very honoured to have attended the Barnardo's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Royal Garden Party on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Only four Canadians were invited to this special event, Lori (in recognition of her work with the BHC), Ivy Succe (Hazel Brae Barnardo Home Group), Sidney Baker ([former Barnardo ward](#) and ran a group in British Columbia) and Ali Thompson (appears in the film "[Forgotten](#)"). The tradition of throwing open the royal residences dates back to the 1860s, when Queen Victoria held what were then known as afternoon 'breakfasts'. It has carried on ever since and during the present Queen's reign. The Palace was originally known as Buckingham House and was a large town house built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1703 and acquired by King George III in 1761. It was enlarged over the next seventy-five years and Buckingham Palace finally became the official royal palace of the British monarch on the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. Like a lot of people I have stood outside the palace looking through the railings, but had never been inside.



The Grand Entrance to Buckingham Palace.  
Click [HERE](#) to view a Royal Carriage arriving at the entrance.

Photo credit: The British Monarchy



Lori on the terrace with  
Valerie Smith (right) and her  
daughter

The dress code was "posh wedding attire" and hats were, for us, a must. In our finery we arrived at Buckingham Palace in a coach supplied by Barnardo's, taking our place in the queue down the side of the Palace. Despite the past two days of rain, this day proved to be warm and sunny as we waited to enter, filled with joyful anticipation. Once past the security, where our identification was checked, we stepped through the Buckingham Gates into the front court yard. We were quickly ushered

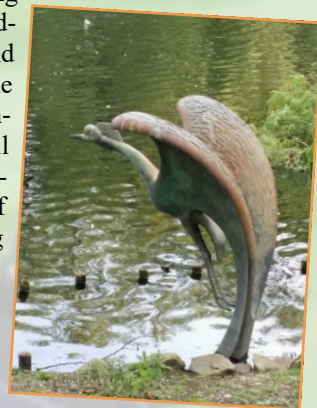
through the stone archway bringing us to the interior court yard and the grand entrance to the



At a typical Garden Party, around 27,000 cups of tea are served, 20,000 sandwiches and 20,000 slices of cake! Generally about 8,000 guests attend, this party was exclusive to Barnardo's with about 5,000 attending.

Guests had the chance to enjoy a cup of tea, cake and explore the Royal garden, a unique opportunity as the gardens are not open to the general public. At 4 PM sharp, The Duchess of Cornwall emerged from the Palace along with Princess Alexandra and The Duchess of Gloucester. They paused at the top step of the terrace while the band played "God Save the Queen". Following this, they descended the steps and mingled with the guests. The Duchess of Cornwall spent a considerable amount of time speaking with the guests

before making her way to the Royal



A sculpture by the large  
19th-century lake

Tent to cut an special 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake with Barnardo's CEO Javed Khan. At 6 PM, the Royal family made their way back to the Palace. The band played the National Anthem again, signalling the end of the party.

Palace. In awe, we made our way to the covered entrance and up the red carpet where many Royals had walked; a place we had only seen in pictures and video's of Royal pageantry events. We filed through a beautifully ornate corridor, the Grand Hall, enclosed from the Palace by two steep staircases on either side. A huge china cabinet stood in one corner filled with precious plates. The corridor opened onto the west terrace of the Palace, overlooking the 42 acre Royal Garden.



Over 40 acres of meticulously  
sculpted parkland that was first  
laid out by James I in 1609



Ali Thompson (left) and Lori Oschefski at Barnardo's  
Royal Garden Party

## Barnardo's donation

While in England, Barnardo's presented Lori Oschefski with a check for £1,000 - which is \$1,925 towards our Park Lawn Monument fund. This leaves us within \$986 of our goal. To donate, click on the image to go to our fund raising page or contact us at [info@BritishHomeChildren.com](mailto:info@BritishHomeChildren.com)

**\$15,014** of \$16k



## Barnardo's office visit, archive tour and Barkingside Church afternoon tea - Friday May 13 2016

Friday May 13<sup>th</sup>, the day following the garden party, Lori and Ali were treated to a tour of the Barnardo's offices and the archives. During this tour, Valerie Smith showed Lori, step by step, the process of how requests for records are put together. Although many of the photos and files have been filmed, some of the information has to come from the original books. Often a child's information requires hand searching through a series of these vintage books.

The site for the Village Home at Barkingside was given to Barnardo as a wedding present, on the occasion of his marriage to Sarah Louise Syrie in 1873. The first three cottages were built there in 1875. The village was constructed, in a horseshoe shape, around a green and was originally just for girls. Eventually 1,500 girls would come to live there. Boy's were housed at the nearby Woodford Bridge. It was only after the Second World War that boys began to be housed at Barkingside, after Barnardo's stopped sending children to Canada.



*Some of the old archive books where our family information is stored. These books have been filmed, so are not routinely hand searched.*

The cottages at Barkingside had floral names, such as Heather, Woodbine, Craven, Daisy, Forget-Me-Not, Honeythorn, Jessamine, Primrose and Myrtle. There was a babies' bungalow, a hospital wing and special cottages for children with TB, polio and vitamin deficiencies.

The church at Barkingside was built in 1892 and is the only specially designated children's church in the Britain. The pews are children sized, the window child height. Even the church bells are designed for children to use! The two pianos which now

sit in the church, were donated by Elton John and Mike Oldfield, composer of Tubular Bells, the music album that helped to make Sir Richard Branson rich and famous.

The village officially closed in 1991. Many of the cottages have been demolished, but the ones surrounding the horseshoe shaped green survive. The Cairn's house, church and the original gates also survive. Today the cottages are being renovated and restored to be used as residential homes. Stepping into the horseshoe shaped ground was like taking a step into yesteryear. It looks just the same as the old vintage post cards! You could all but hear the delightful laughter and play of the girls who lived in the Barkingside Village.

For more information on Barkingside, visit "[The Children's Homes](#)"



*Lori and Patricia Lynn Moore who runs the Facebook group "[Reclaim our BHC](#)"*



*Barnardo's staff and our afternoon tea guests*



*Above right: a tour of the Village, guided by Martine King of Barnardo's*

*Above: our pretty song bird, Patricia Lynn Moore seated at Elton John's piano*



*Lori with Ivy Sucee at the tea*

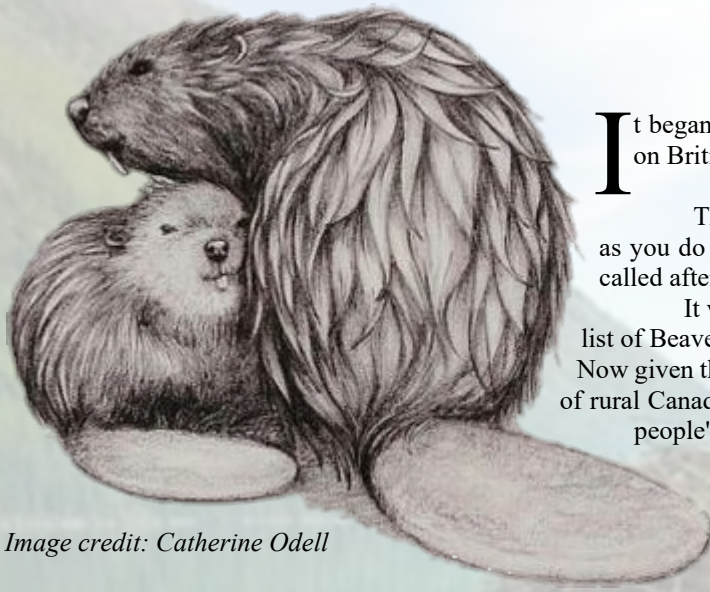


*Our 2016 BHC Memory quilt laid at the alter of the church*



# A Beaver Challenge

By Author & Historian Andrew Simpson



*Image credit: Catherine Odell*

**I**t began as a flippant remark, turned into a challenge and ended as a piece on British Home Children.

The remark was in response to a visit Lori was doing to Beaverton and as you do I asked that innocent enough question "do they really have places called after a beaver?"

It was I have to say a little silly but quick as a flash it sparked a whole list of Beaver named places reeled off by friends in Canada.

Now given the vast open lands the great stretches of woodland and the sheer size of rural Canada I shouldn't really have been surprised, after all names arise from people's experiences.

So if you live beside a shedload of beavers it makes perfect sense to use them to mark out where you live.

In the same way over here just minutes from where we live was Kemp's Corner, so named because on the corner of a busy road junction was Harry Kemp's chemist. It had been there from the very beginning of the 20th century and in that pre mobile age became

a favourite meeting place which had the added advantage of having a clock above the door.

The name Kemp's Corner survived well into the 1960s long after he was dead and the shop had been transformed from a chemist to a fast food take out before becoming a bank.

And today the spot is popularly known as the "Four Banks," which a perfectly sensible name is given that there are now banks on each corner of the junction. And that I think makes the point because a few years ago the city planners designated the spot Chorlton Cross but it never caught on.

In the same way the original name for our township was Chorlton-cum-Hardy which consisted of Chorlton, Hardy and Martledge, which were the three small hamlets where most people lived.

Chorlton had the village green and a 15th century church, Hardy was abandoned in the 1850s because it was too close to the river Mersey which regularly broke its banks and sent storm water across the flood plain, leaving Martledge which vanished in the space of just twenty years as speculators and builders covered the area with housing.

So complete was the transformation of Martledge from rural community to big suburban sprawl that its name had been forgotten in just two generations being replaced with the name "New Chorlton" or the new town, which distinguished it from the area around the green and parish church which became "old Chorlton."

It was a division which lasted a century and has only now itself been forgotten with a huge influx of new residents. But for that century many were quick to point out where they were from and some like my old friend Marjorie who had been born near the village green remained very dismissive of those in New Chorlton. They were as she often said "all fancy cakes and silk knickers" and when she wanted to be particularly scathing would say with a flourish "yes all fancy cakes and no knickers."

But behind that comment was a real one about social divide, because New Chorlton was the home of the new middling people who worked in the city and came home to semi rural Chorlton.

They were the professionals and clerical class and that was why their bit of the township had the banks and the posh shops. We on the other hand retained that rural character and because old Chorlton consisted of those who were not so well all we had were a few basic shops and a Post Office, with the weekly Penny Savings Bank which opened for a few hours on a Saturday in the old school on the village green.

And that has by degree brought me to British Home Children. We tend to assume that most came from the cities and towns which sense, given that as early as 1850 there were more people living in urban areas than rural.

But I wonder about just what the balance was of young people between the two was and in turn that has sent me off again exploring the origins of the scheme.

For many of us, reeling from the discovery of a loved one having been sent alone to Canada it is easy to see the migration programme as a ruthless and cynical policy to clear out those who were poor and destitute. Good for the Poor Law authorities who calculated it was cheaper to send their charges to Canada rather than maintain them here, good for Canadian farmers and wealthy families who benefited from cheap labour and good for all who saw our BHC "as the building bricks of empire."

But history is messy and while this interpretation is a valid one it also ignores that movement which saw the countryside as a haven from industrialization and the horrors of our fast growing cities and towns. Urban area saw life expectancy amongst the working class fall in the 1830s to an average of 17 years in Manchester, which the historian Asa Briggs rightly described as the "shock city of the Industrial Revolution."

This "back to the country" movement had originated in Germany was reflected in various experiments in rural communities and in the craft movement of William Morris and others.

And so for some it followed that if you wanted to give young people a fresh start where better than the open spaces of Canada, and perhaps even in a place named after a beaver.

To read more from Andrew Simpson, visit his blog at: [www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.ca](http://www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.ca)



# More May Quilt showings



Mark, Dawn Sheppard and Dawn. Dawn Sheppard's Grandmother Margaret Knowles is on the quilt. Dawn Heuston designed the Morris square on the quilt.

Through the efforts of Dawn Heuston and Mark McKinlay, president of the Comber & District Historical Society, our beautiful quilt was on show at the Toldo Library in the new Atlas Tube Centre, Belle River, ON. Present for the unveiling of the quilt was Mayor Tom Bain and several descendants with squares on the quilt. From here the quilt travels to Chatham, Ontario where it will showing at The Milner Heritage House with a BHC display from May 28th until June 3rd, open every day from 1-5PM



Joyce Hills with Mark. Joyce is a descendant of Charles Johnson who has a square on the quilt.

**YOU CAN TRACK THE QUILT SHOWINGS ON OUR NEW SITE:**  
**[BHCARA 2016 MEMORY QUILT - QUILT SHOWINGS](#)**

## What this quilt means to our descendants

Dawn Heuston designed the Morris Children square, on which is the Mother and Uncle of World War II Veteran, Tpr. Len Brown. Dawn arranged a private showing for Len, who was visibly overcome with emotions upon seeing his family's square on the quilt for the first time.



Photo credits for this newsletter: Dawn Heuston, Mark McKinlay, Martine King, Lori Oschefski, Gayle Oschefski and Ali Thompson. Thank you to all!



# The British Home Children in Canada

Lecture with authors Lori Oschefski and Beryl Young

Tuesday, June 21, 2016 | 10 a.m.

Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

Free

Between 1863 and 1949 over 100,000 children emigrated from the UK to Canada to become indentured farm labours and domestics. Two of Canada's best known authors on these children known as "British Home Children" will come together in June to share this story and answer questions.



## Les petits immigrants britanniques du Canada

Causerie avec auteurs Lori Oschefski et Beryl Young

Le mardi 21 juin 2016 | 10 h

Musée canadien de l'immigration du Quai 21

Gratuit

Entre 1863 et 1949, plus de 100 000 enfants ont émigré du Royaume Uni au Canada pour devenir des travailleurs agricoles et des employés de maison engagés à long terme. Deux des auteurs canadiens qui ont le plus écrit sur ces enfants, appelés « petits immigrants britanniques », se trouveront au Musée au mois de juin pour partager cette histoire et pour répondre à vos questions.



Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21  
Musée canadien de l'immigration du Quai 21

1055 chemin Marginal Road,  
Halifax Seaport | port de Halifax

Halifax  
seaport Canada