

# Radio play will tell story of Pauline Johnson

The life of famous Six Nations native poet and recitalist, Emily Pauline Johnson, will be the subject of an episode in the CBC Radio drama series called Cranks.

The episode can be heard on Oct. 12 at 4:05 p.m. and will be repeated on CBC stereo on Dec. 14.

Cranks is a series of radio plays attempting to bring famous Canadian personalities to life to "transform them from obscurity to larger than life creations."

The purpose of the drama series is to change the misconception that Canada is devoid of colorful personalities.

The coming episode about Miss Johnson attempts to plunge beneath her written works and surface fame, into what she may have been thinking and feeling as she travelled the country reciting her poems.

The Shadow and The Dreaming: The Concert Pauline Johnson Never Gave deals with the pain she must have felt when her mother died and the man she wanted to marry rejected her.

Written by Erika Ritter, the play starts with a scene after the death of Miss Johnson.

A conversation is taking place between Miss Johnson's partner, Walter McRaye; her sister, Evelyn (Eva) Johnson and Elizabeth Rogers, the president of the Women's Canadian Club.

Eva wants to burn some of her sister's old letters and papers, to protect her reputation. Mr. McRaye tries to prevent this, saying, "there's nothing about Pauline that requires an apology."

The scene then retreats back in time, to the height of Miss Johnson's career as a poet and recitalist. At this point in the play, she's 36 years old.

Miss Johnson explains her back-

ground to Mr. McRaye. She was born in Chiefswood, the daughter of Chief G. M. H. Johnson and his English wife, Emily (Howells).

Miss Johnson tells Mr. McRaye that although her mother is white, "my instincts, my feelings are Mohawk."

While the play is sensitive to Miss Johnson's feelings, it doesn't attempt to deify her.

The play introduces Miss Johnson's former partner, Owen Smiley and her fiance, Charles Drayton. In an effort to get Charles Drayton to marry her, she makes him jealous by "playing him off against her partners." Mr. McRaye and Mr. Smiley get used in the process.

But eventually, Mr. Drayton dumps her, after an announcement of their engagement appears in the Globe and Mail.

This happens in an emotional scene in a train station, where the train carrying her to Brantford has stopped because of a snow storm. She meets Mr. Drayton at the station, and he's upset about the engagement announcement, making it clear his mother doesn't approve of the marriage.

"I can't help it," he says. She lashes back: "Help what? The fact that I'm Indian? Don't trouble. It's my glory, my salvation. Anything Charlie, but to be a white-faced coward like you!"

Finally, she arrives in Brantford, and goes to her birthplace to see her dying mother, who tells her: "You are like me, my girl. Defiant. Of all my children, you have the courage. The courage to embrace your father's race, to be what you are: the red and the white."

She promises her dying mother, (who wants her to stop spending time on trains and in draughty halls,) that she'll stop touring and settle down. But unable to keep her promise, she hooks up with Charlie Wurz, who eventually takes her money and abandons her in California, where the audiences aren't receptive to her work. By this time, her health is failing.

Mr. McRaye finds her and takes her back to British Columbia, where she is warmly received. "Work among people who love you," he tells her. "It lasts longer than anything."

The play stars Linda Sorensen, reading the part of Pauline; Stephen Ouimette, reading the part of Walter McRaye; Barbara Gordon as Eva Johnson and Charmion King as Emily Johnson.

At the end of the play, Eva burns Miss Johnson's love letters, and personal papers.

But her poems survive, and to this day, Canadians have this legacy she left. The play ends with a recital of her farewell effort:

*Sounds of the seas grow fainter,  
Sounds of the sands have sped;  
The sweep of gails,  
The far white sails,  
Are silent, spent and dead.  
Sounds of the days of summer  
Murmur and die away,  
And distance hides  
The long, low tides,  
As night shuts out the day.*

R.S.