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THE
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John Christian Erhardt Memorial School, Makkovik, presents

A Play about Aunt Bertha Andersen

This is a play about Bertha Andersen (1872-1950), who was a travelling midwife, trapper, church elder, and postmistress in Makkovik.

The information for this play was gathered by students in grades 5-6-7 and 8 of J.C. Erhardt Memorial School from people of the community of Makkovik. Students thought of suitable questions to ask friends and relatives and worked with this information in improvizations and a written script to create this play.

We would like to thank all the people who helped us, who have given us information and offered us help in other ways.

The play is acted in 5 scenes

- Scene 1 - En route to Tishialuk
- Scene 2 - The Andersen Home
- Scene 3 - Makkovik Moravian Church
- Scene 4 - The Andersen Home
- Scene 5 - En route to Tishialuk

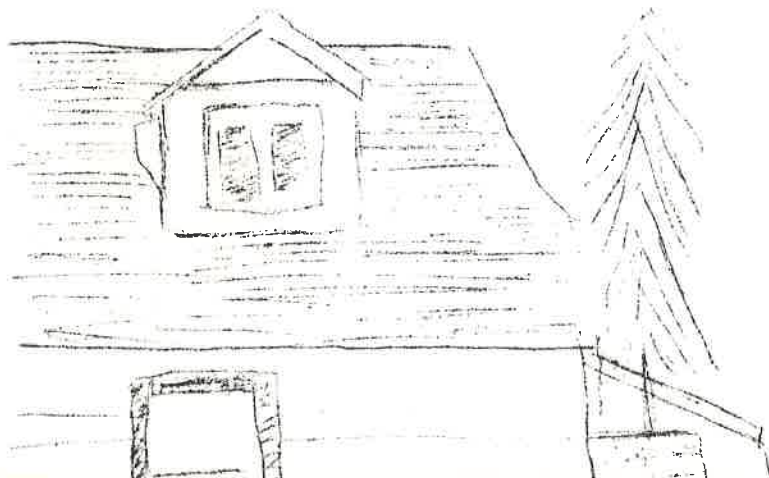
Labrador East Integrated School Board
RESOURCE CENTRE

Cast

Hugh Andersen
Karen Andersen
Ola Andersen
Del Ford
Jacko Jararuse
Susanna Jararuse
Maggie Tuglavina
Blanche Winters
Doreen Winters

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RESOURCE CENTRE**

Scene 1 En route to Tissialuk

Light slowly come up on a team of dogs pulling a komatik from SL to right with Bertha riding in box and being driven by driver. Both occasionally brush the snow away from their faces. Driver whistles and yells at dogs - (noise of dogteam running and barking) Sound falls as Bertha begins talking.

Bertha: (ironic) Here am I being driven in a real Labrador blizzard from Makkovik to Tissialuk - We're on our way to deliver a baby - When we get there - I hope it isn't twins. But yes, it will be twins like in Davis Inlet last week or the post the month before. I've delivered near to a hundred babies on this coast - and only lost one.

When I goes on a trip, I takes along my medicines and powders Dr. Currie sends down form St. Anthony but I put just as much faith in my own medicines. I make them myself - juniper, spruce, bread poultices and a drop of brandy, and I put the most faith of all in the Lord.

Sings) "Frail children of dust
and Feeble as frail,
In thee do we
Nor find thee to fail".

(dogs give a feeble yelp and fall over. Komatik tips over S.R. centre and Bertha falls out of box. She and driver survey the damage and resume).

Ironic) "Thy mercies how tender
Hopeful) How firm to the end
As they) Our maker, defender
Begin work) Redeemer and friend".

Bertha and driver right the komatik and test the snow.

Bertha: Do you think we should camp?

Driver: It's late, snow's bad, and the wind's up. Probably best to put up for the night here and get going early in the morning.

Bertha: (to dogs) Well here's a fine spot you've landed us all in, can't go forward, won't go back - so I guess we'll have to spend the night here - or what's left of it.

(Driver takes dogfood off the komatik, then begins to set up the canvas tent DS from the komatik to shelter them for the night. They crawl in and bundle up in sleeping bags and talk.

Bertha: Yes, I wonder where all those babies are now. There's the Evan's in Ben's Cove, the Saunders in Davis Inlet, the Winters in Hopedale. McNeills in Island Harbour, Jacques in Kippokok Bay, Broomfields in Big Bight and Seal Cove.

Driver: I guess some of those babies are trapping foxes and killing seals now, I guess they've grown into fine young men and women.

Bertha: Yes, and Chard's from Ailluk, they've gone back to Clark's Beach and Bay Roberts, like the Mercers - that's where they come from. And Andersens in Makkovik and Adlavik, and the Mitchells in Makkovik, the families just get bigger and that means more and more work for the midwife.

--- . . . BLACKOUT end of part 1

Scene 2

Aunt Bertha's Kitchen

(Bertha and Driver leave tent, tent stays up, komatik remains, dogs leave).

(Bertha No. 2 moves to her kitchen lights go up slowly and we see her arranging furniture - S.L. up and centre - a table, several chairs, blankets folded neatly). (Opaque projector on the stage and auditorium walls, of old family photographs. Bertha wanders around her home and talks to herself).

Bertha: Our family's moved around a bit since we're all grown up - John and Wilson and myself is all that's left home. Susan's married in Island Harbour - Ellen in Kippakok, Samuel in Island Harbour Bay - Harry and Jim at Adlavik. We're all spread out - and father and mother gone, and poor little Annie Marie.

(Walks a bit in silence)

Father built most of the furniture here - chairs, tables, cupboards, all built from our own lumber. Even my wardrobe - we had the glass come after it was finished. Here's some pictures of our family. Here's Father and Wilson and Sam and Me - and here's mother and the boys.

(Bertha walks a bit in silence)

And here's the family Bible - it's one of my dearest treasures. Grandfather gave it to Wilson - and Wilson reads it every evening before we all goes to bed - and the Moravian text in the morning before breakfast. There's records of all of us here (reads) ---

Samuel 1860, Annie Marie 1862 - She only lived 23 days - Susan 1863. Ellen 1865, Jim 1867, Christina 1870, Me in 1872, John in 1874, William in 1876, Harry 1878, and Wilson 1882. Our whole family history is here.

Here's my work basket, - needles, wool, sinew, thread, pinclashion, material. I buys that when the boat comes - and skins. I love working with skins - Harriet cleans most of them for me.

(Knock at the door)

Who's that. The boys back already? No 'tis Susan Mitchell, come for a yarn, I suppose. Step in Susie.

Susan: I come to see about the mail, Bertha, and to see what you was about --

Bertha: No news on the mail, see here what I've been making - a new pair of skin boots --

Susan: - Nice, too.

Bertha: These are the bedlamers Wilson got out of my nets last week - they're scraped and washed good in soap, and I dried them. See how I got them cut - they're too small to use lengthwise. I'm going to finish the embroidery on the tongue in silk. They'll be a beautiful pair of boots.

Susan: You'll send these to the industrial shop in St. Anthony?

Bertha: No, I'm making those for a friend. Now set a bit and listen to the new hymn, I've learned from the Tune Book.

(Hymn music off - Bertha mimes playing, she and Susan begin to sing, and other people come in to sing as well. When they finish they sit around the table and begin to tell tall tales about hunting - as they speak, one at a time they get up and give "testimonials" to Bertha. Those at the table gradually lose their voices and mime conversation. Bertha joins the table and occasionally laughs a deep belly laugh).

1st Man: I can picture her as always a lady. Everyone thinks of her thinks of her with respect. She's always working.

(resume position and tell tales)

1st Woman: One time my aunt was sick with TB. She was so sick the blood was coming out of her mouth. Now this was in the winter, so no boats could come in to get her. She was laying in bed, too weak to move, the blood only coming out of her mouth. Well, Aunt Bertha went to work, got the temperature in the room right - not too cold, but she made sure there was enough fresh air. And she made food and medicine for her. Well, when they finally come for her, Aunt Bertha had my aunt up on her feet and walking around outdoors. It must have had something to do with Aunt Bertha's partridge broth and friars balsom.

2nd Man: Aunt Bertha was a good hunter. She had her own 22 rifle, that she did all her hunting with. I can recall her bringing home sometimes 15 or 20 partridges. She'd hunt seals nearby. I'd daresay she was good as the men but she didn't go as far away. She always wore a long skirt right to her ankles. You could see her walking off to her traplines on snowshoes, skirt dragging in the snow and the 22 on her back. And when she came back, the bottom of her skirt would be frozen, like lace.

(resume positions and tell tall tales)

2nd Woman: She had a way to talk to people. She would always cheer them up when they was having problems and when they went away they would feel pepped up and more confident.

(resume positions)

Bertha: Susan, you mind the time your dogs got into the fight with our dogs?

Susan: My dogs! Your dogs was loose and started running over our dogs --

Bertha: My dogs!

Susan: Your dogs!

(People at table drop away and lights dim. Four "dogs" crawl toward each other centre stage during the speech and begins pantomiming a fight. As lights go up on dogs, they increase their growling and barking, and Susan and Bertha rush to their respective teams to separate them. Finally they get them at opposite sides of the stage. Their growling and yelping gradually dying away. They creep offstage quietly.

Susan: (exciting) Your dogs!

Bertha: (centre stage, wiping hands proudly) Our dogs!

(She turns her head to listen to the sound of church bells).

Scene 3 Church

(lights dim then raise again up centre. Bertha begins to get herself ready for church - she moves to SL. The sound of the bell fades. She describes the items as she put them on).

Bertha: Sunday dress, navy blue, with a white lace collar and cuffs. Sunday doesn't seem right unless I have it on. My Sunday boots - we frost cured these skins last spring - how white they are now - and I do like that embroidery. Here's the apron. Now my dickey - and my church cap. I'll have to get that bow fixed. Still have the pink ribbon in my cap, guess they'll soon start calling me "the old maid". I haven't worn my white shawl this long time - Easter's soon be here.

Harriet: You ready to go over, Bertha?

Bertha: (checks her ribbon in the mirror by the door). It's getting late. Lucky I managed to set up the Palms for Palm Sunday yesterday.

Harriet: If we don't leave soon the others will already be there. I'm awful glad it's Easter time, makes me know the winter soon be over.

(Harriet and Bertha walk across to upstage center, then enter through the church door into the church. They begin to arrange tables and chairs for church. The organist arrives, begins to play, the rest of the congregation arrives and begins to sing a hymn. They stand as the minister enters from the rear and walks to DS left where he begins to read his text. Children in the front begin to misbehave.

Minister: For thy long-suffering with the sins of men from the beginning even until now.

All: We thank thee, O Lord.

Minister: For the redemption of the world through the shame of the Cross and the pain of the Passion.

All: We thank thee, O Lord.

Minister: For all who have filled up thy sufferings in their own bodies for love of thee and of their fellow men.

All: We thank thee, O Lord.

Lawrence: She's doing alright, Aunt Bertha. She's still small and not eating good yet, but she's fine. Now, hurry up.

Bertha: I must sent that poor woman some medicine when you go back.

Lawrence: Be glad to take it along.

Bertha: (to Steven) How is the Broomfield family in Big Bight?

Steven: They're all fine.

Ralph: Come on Dad, Help Bertha get that bag packed up. (They move towards a mailbag that Bertha has abandon.)

Bertha: This is my job, You done yours in your time. Now I'm going to take my own time to do mine. (Men sit down again. Bertha continues to sort out the mail.

Freeman: What do you have for supper Aunt Harriet?

Harriet: Sealmeat and potatoes.

Steven: How's the trapline, Bertha? Did you get any furs this winter?

Bertha: I got 3 mink and 5 foxes - good ones.

Ralph: You should send them to the Post in Rigolet - you'll get a better price.

Bertha: No, I keep all the furs I get to sew with.

(Men finishes eating, and Bertha finishes the mail. The men pick up the bags and take them outside. They say goodbye and soon the dogs are yelping, loudly at first then fade. Bertha meanwhile, gets ready to go outside. She puts on her coat and snowshoes, slings the 22 over her shoulder and goes outdoors. (lights fade)

Scene 5

Lights come up with Bertha and driver as we left them, huddled in the tent, the komatik behind them and the dogs getting restless at centre stage.

A party of "rescuers" come up to the tent.

1st Man: Bertha? Bertha Andersen - Is that you?

2nd Man: Let's see to the dogs, they're getting awful excited, ought to get a fire going, too.

1st Man: (to Bertha emerging from tent) Have a hard night of it Bertha? You look kind of cold.

Bertha: We spent a cold night of it, we couldn't find enough wood to keep the fire going, but it wasn't too uncomfortable - had a grand game of cards while we were waiting for daylight. Thanks boys for coming out to look for us - we should be able to make good time to Tissialuik, looks like it'll be a fine day. - They sit around the fire and mime a conversation -
Lights dim - END OF PLAY