

Press Release

*John Roberts Heritage Fund/ Cronfa Dreftadaeth John Roberts/
Welshengerie Noyelus Kova*

Heritage fund is keeping alive Welsh Romany language for future generations.

Kitchener, Ontario Canada and Orewa, New Zealand June 5, 2019 – A collaboration between two Romanis of Welsh Romany ancestry in Canada and New Zealand has led to the funding of a heritage project to preserve the Romany language for future generations. As well as breaking free from the legacy of Victorian linguists whose impact has dominated interpretations of Welsh Romani language for too long.

Funded by the John Roberts Heritage Fund/Cronfa Dreftadaeth Telynor Cymru/Welshengerie Noyelus Kova, Shikawa Romanus – Learning Romany consists of 22 modules of Welsh Romani as spoken in everyday life. The program includes history and cultural aspects of Romani life with music, stories, music and poetry created by contemporary Romani artists.

“This project is a perfect fit for the first John Roberts Heritage Fund investment,” says Frances. Adding, “He was the first to write down what had been an oral tradition in our culture for centuries. “However,” says Bob, “While it is true he wrote it down for these Victorians who recorded our chib – language - in doing so they misused the language and in ways it was never meant to be spoken in everyday life.” Frances agrees, “The way forward lies in keeping alive what is left of our Roma/Gypsy language, ethnicity, identity, belonging and culture for future generations, while honouring John Roberts, a proud Welsh Rom.”

Frances Roberts Reilly, President of the John Roberts Heritage Fund and Robert (Bob) Lovell Kamulo – award winning singer/songwriter have created live recordings of a language that was thought dead. They plan an EBook as a companion to the recordings, edited by Joel Therrien PhD. The fund has engaged Kutchibok Design in Cardiff, a Rom owned and operated business for logo and website design for a website where listeners can register, download and study the material.

Bob Lovell learned his fluency in Romanus from his father, Adolphus who was born into the traditional Romany life of travelling with horse and vardo. He was born at an Atchintan – stopping place at the Rom camp in the Upper Race, Pontypool, South Wales. Adolphus went to New Zealand in 1947, stayed and raised a family.

Shikawa Romanus also honours Romany arts. Featured are singer/songwriter Gary Small, Roma poet, Chris Penfold Brown, award winning Welsh TRIPLE HARPIST, Gareth Swindail-Parry, poet and filmmaker, Frances Roberts Reilly and singer/songwriter Bob Lovell Kamulo.

“The Shikawa Romanus project seeks to preserve our language as the primary base for our Romany identity”, says Frances. A commitment made possible by the John Roberts Heritage Fund/Cronfa Dreftadaeth Telynor Cymru/Welshengerie Noyelus Kova.

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