
FRONT COVER DETAILS

Cheri Maracle as the Spirit Woman in the 1995 production of Sun Raiser at the Banff Arts Festival. Performed 4-11 August 1995 at the Banff Centre
Written and directed by Yves Sioui

Photography by Cheryl Bellows, The Banff Centre

BACK COVER DETAILS

Jerry Longboat as the lightning spirit and James Nicholas as the Sun Raiser engage in combat in the 1995 production of Sun Raiser at the Banff Arts Festival. Performed 4-11 August 1995 at the Banff Centre
Written and directed by Yves Sioui

Photography by Cheryl Bellows, The Banff Centre

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOL. 14, NOS. 1 & 2, 1996

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SIGNING OFF: Gerry Turcotte and Luke McNamara v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

FOREWORD: Lester Bostock ix

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: Hart Cohen 1

PART I: MUSIC

1. **KARL NEUENFELDT** 15
Songs of Survival: Ethno-pop Music as Ethnographic Indigenous Media

2. **ELAINE KEILLOR** 33
The Voices of First Nations Women Within Canada: Traditionally and Presently

3. **MICHAEL PATTERSON** 41
Native Music in Canada — the Age of the Seventh Fire

4. **DAVID HOLLINSWORTH** 55
Narna Tarkendi: Indigenous Performing Arts Opening Cultural Doors

PART II: MEDIA

5. **HELEN MOLNAR** 71
Radio: "The Heart and Soul of Aboriginal Aspirations"

6. **LAVINIA MOHR** 89
To Tell the People — Wawatay Radio Network

7. **MICHAEL MEADOWS** 103
Making Cultural Connections: Indigenous Broadcasting in Australia and Canada

8. **PHILLIP BATTY** 119
Imagining Nations Within Nations

PART III: PHOTO ESSAY

9. **NOEL OLIVE/ SLIM PARKER** 133
Excerpt from *The Pilbara Lands and Their Aboriginal People*

PART IV:

TEXT

10. GWAGANAD (DIANE BROWN) Speaking in the Haida Way	139
11. GWAGANAD (DIANE BROWN) AND NORBERT RUEBSAAT The Sky and the Sea Joined Together: Excerpts from Walking-Around-Eating	143
12. GREG YOUNG-ING An Overview of Aboriginal Literature and Publishing in Canada	157
13. IAN CHUNN "Preserving for the Sake of Handing Down": A Profile of Theytus Books	173
14. ALFRED YOUNG MAN First Nations Art, "Canada", and the CIA: A Short Non-Fiction Story	179
15. BERNIE HARDER The English Language Against the Anishinabeg in Canada	207

REVIEWS

from 223

J.J. HEALY	<i>Being Whitefella</i> <i>Pakeha: The Quest for Identity</i>
DEE HORNE	<i>Cattle Camp</i> <i>Bridge of Triangles</i>
WARWICK WILSON	<i>Immigration and Refugee Policy</i>
ANTOINETTE HOLM	<i>Mapping Ourselves</i>
JAMEELA BEGUM	<i>Oppositional Aesthetics</i>
JAMES HARDING MCPHILLIPS	<i>Kam Yan. ABC Television</i>

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

245

International Journal of Canadian Studies

Call for Articles – Open Topic

The Editorial Board of the IJCS has recently decided to broaden the format of the Journal. While each future issue of the IJCS will include a set of articles addressing a given theme, as in the past, it now will also include several articles that do not do so. Beyond heightening the general interest of each issue, this change should also facilitate participation in the Journal by the international community of Canadianists.

Accordingly, the Editorial Board welcomes manuscripts on any topic in the study of Canada. As in the past, all submissions must undergo peer review. Final decisions regarding publication are made by the Editorial Board. Often, accepted articles need to undergo some revision. The IJCS undertakes that upon receiving a satisfactorily revised version of a submission that it has accepted for publication, it will make every effort to ensure that the article appears in the next regular issue of the Journal.

Any questions about this new policy should be addressed to:

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Revue internationale d'études canadiennes

Soumissions d'articles hors-thèmes

La *Revue internationale d'études canadiennes* vient d'adopter une nouvelle politique visant à modifier quelque peu son format. En effet, la *Revue* continuera à offrir une série d'articles portant sur un thème retenu, mais dorénavant elle publiera aussi des articles hors-thèmes.

Le Comité de rédaction examinera donc toute soumission qui porte sur un sujet relié aux études canadiennes indépendamment du thème retenu. Bien entendu comme toute soumission, celle-ci fera l'objet d'une évaluation par pairs. La décision finale concernant la publication d'un texte est rendue par le Comité de rédaction. Une fois qu'elle aura reçu une version révisée qu'elle jugera acceptable, la *Revue* essaiera, dans la mesure du possible, d'inclure cet article dans le numéro suivant la date d'acceptation finale.

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ELAINE KEILOR THE VOICES OF FIRST NATIONS WOMEN WITHIN CANADA: TRADITIONALLY AND PRESENTLY

Within the geographical area now known as Canada, the Indigenous peoples (referred to as Native, Amerindians and Inuit, or more commonly now as the First Nations) had varying customs with regard to the role of women as participants and presenters of music. In societies deemed to have matrilineal or matrilineal characteristics, women were likely to have more prominent public opportunities to perform as a musician. However, even this general assertion is open to interpretation. Moreover, it was only in 1987 at the Society for Ethnomusicology Conference that a panel discussion entitled "Gender as a Determinant of Style in American Indian Music" began seriously to question the assumption that "men appear to have played a much greater role in ceremonial life than women" (Nettl, 1986, 461). Except for the publications of Diamond dealing with several First Nations groups in Eastern Canada, sparse attention has been paid to date to the participation of women in musical events. As part of the burgeoning growth of activity by First Nations musicians today, commentators have drawn attention to the number of First Nations women who are expressing publicly their Aboriginal heritage in music as well as in the visual arts and through literature.

This essay will briefly examine the evidence for First Nations women participating in public and ceremonial presentations traditionally and suggest that the contemporary female performers are reasserting these practices which were largely complementary with men. At the same time some female musicians of the First Nations are extending these

ogitchian's song). They keep it up all night". The Netsilik Inuit perform their drum songs with a woman followed by a female chorus who provide the music for a dance by a male (Cavanagh, 1982, 40). These strictly split gender examples of complementarity can be contrasted with situations where the sexes freely mix for the performance. These are less common, but among the Copper Inuit the drummer/dancer can be female or male and the chorus can be led by the wife or the father (Cavanagh, 1982, 40-41).

Such an example as the last one may be the result of shifting practices over the years due to borrowings from other First Nation groups. In 1935 Fine Day told Mandelbaum (IH - DM.82) that the powwow, *pitcticwin* — "Moving Dance" — "came from the Earth Lodge people [Stoux] about fifty years ago.... In the powwow the men are in one line and the women in another around the drum. The men form one segment of the circle and the women the next". Gradually within Canada the powwow in a version which includes the performance of different dances, each of which is usually for a specific group — traditional men, traditional women, fancy male dancers, women shawl or jingle dancers and so on — has spread from the Plains areas into the central and eastern regions of the country, either as a competitive event in dancing and musical performance, or as a social community event. At a workshop on the powwow held in the 1980s in Regina a Cree elder stated: "And now I see things go a little farther.... This is what our elders used to be afraid of in the old days and even the last couple of years I see women singing at these dances" (IH - 444). The consternation over the increased female participation on the part of some groups may be connected to the beliefs of how the dance or the drum were given to a particular group. For instance, the Sioux Grass Dance with its big drum, four male singers/drummers, songs, and dances for males, was given to a widower to comfort him for the loss of his beautiful wife (IH - 056). Similarly the Anishabe peoples including Eastern Cree, Algonquin, Ojibwe, Saulteaux, Ojawa, and Nipissing have a legend, one version of which is published in Diamond, Cronk and Von Rosen (1994, 37-38), that has the drum given to an Anishabe woman. According to a Cree consultant a woman would not actually drum because "women are already considered sacred.... They already have [power], and so they don't touch that drum" (Diamond, Cronk and Von Rosen, 1994, 35).

boundaries beyond those terms in ways that could in part be considered a reflection of the equity movement.

TRADITIONAL MUSICAL PARTICIPATION BY FIRST NATIONS WOMEN

In all cultures women participate in certain types of private music such as the singing of lullabies to their children, or for work activities. As an example, Saulteaux mid-wives had a special kind of drum which they used to accompany their songs at a birth (personal communication from Lorne Carrier, 1995). Because of the personal and private nature of this musical repertoire most ethnographers have not had the opportunity to witness its performance or have chosen not to discuss it, either through their own assumption of its insignificance or that of the culture under study. Among the Innu (Montagnais) First Nation, discovered the repertoire of lullabies or *bede atashu* to be considered "unimportant by both men and women" (Diamond Cavanagh, 1989, 59). For the purposes of this essay women's participation in these types of repertoire is recognized, but concentration will be on their type of participation in publicly performed repertoires.

Each First Nation has differing culturally based ideas of males and females participating as musicians in a public situation. For many First Nations within Canada this is frequently a complementary relationship traditionally. That is, a male performer or performers would begin the musical presentation, but then a chorus of women would enter. Such a performance practice can be documented among several Inuit First Nations, including those of Baffin Land, Caribou, and Iglulik (Cavanagh, 1982, 36-41), and certain Amerindian First Nations of the Plains area, and North Pacific Coast (personal communication from Paula Conlon, 1995). A description of "A [Sioux] Buffalo Dance" which took place in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in August 1878 is described in some detail in a newspaper account (Morton mss. C550/1/31.5, University of Saskatchewan Archives) and includes the statement: "The squaws on the outside of the circle joined in the singing with the bucks". For certain songs the sound performance would only be done by male musicians, but the women would be dancers. For example, the Cree Caribou Dance — *wawaskesu-cimwin* — "was danced only by the women, the old men sang" (IH - DM.33). In other examples the opposite situation would be the case. In 1934 David Mandelbaum (IH - DM.42) interviewed the Cree informant Fine Day who described the "*ewapawaphticighk* — "Sitting Up Until Morning" — dance as follows: "The women do not dance; they only sing (the [House people]

Ojibwe's medicine lodge functions, Vennum has stressed that "women served as priests in exactly the same capacity as men" (1989, 16). He goes on to argue that historical forces such as the missionisation efforts of Euro-Canadians, culture contact particularly with more Western First Nations and the subsequent adoption of much of their repertoire and performance practices led to the subsequent decline in the female participation rate for publicly performed music (Vennum, 1989, 21).

Even though women either never performed this repertoire traditionally or gradually refrained from doing so, they managed to retain the knowledge of much of this music even through the upheavals caused by settlement on reserves, government edicts banning certain practices and drastic changes in life styles (Keillor, 1995, 108-09). Accordingly women of the First Nations have in recent decades played an ever-increasing role in bringing the "desired continuity" of tradition to their own peoples and to a widening circle. In certain cases this has meant the re-assumption by women of traditional performance practices, while in other situations women have taken the lead in returning tradition-based musics to their areas. An example of the latter is Margaret Paul, the drumkeeper of the St. Mary's Chanters, a drum group from the Maliseet Reserve in New Brunswick which has been performing in social and spiritual events since 1979 (Cronk, 1990, 13).

Not only did women manage to retain some knowledge of their own musical traditions within trying conditions, but their circumstances imposed knowledge of Euro-Canadian musics from outside of their parent culture traditions upon them. Beginning almost with the first encounters of Europeans and Indigenous peoples within what is now Canada, missionization through music was a central force (Keillor, 1995, 109-11). The documentation indicates that women were often the best students of these Euro-Canadian musics and that heritage is evident in the frequent role played today of First Nations women leading the singing of hymns during religious services. Instruction in church-run schools also often included musical instrument training on string, wind, and/or keyboard instruments. Cora Sanderson, a Cree born before 1900, attended school in La Ronge, Saskatchewan:

We were taught the music; we played the organ.... I played the organ ... for over thirty years ... for the Anglican services, burials, weddings.... I remember when Mrs. Angus McKay used to come over and sing with my dad and my mother and I used to play for them because they wanted me to play on my own little organ and I loved that little organ. (IH - 099/100)

CONTEMPORARY PARTICIPATION OF FIRST NATIONS WOMEN

Even though the word "traditional" has been used in the previous section, it must not be viewed as connoting something from the past that never changed. Even the varied views that have been presented indicate that similar sound presentations could have different aspects of participation according to different concepts of complementarity geographically times. Williams has defined tradition as "a *desired continuity*" (1981, 187). With regard to powwow intertribal performances, some participation by women as singers backing the predominant male drummers/singers has been documented periodically within Canada throughout the twentieth century (Diamond, Cronk and Von Rosen, 1994, 34). An all-female drummers/singers group apparently emerged in Western Canada in the early 1970s (Haton, 1986, 213). Their lead was subsequently followed by several all-female groups formed in Western Canada, the Dakotas and Minnesota. Presently the Crying Woman Singers, twelve women led by lead singer Celina Jones of the Thunderbird Reserve near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, are well-known on the powwow circuit (Green and Bass, 1995, 1). The Six Nations Women Singers of Ohsweken, Ontario from Seneca, Onondaga, and Cayuga cultures create their own Shuffle Dance Songs accompanied with a cow horn shaker and small water drum. For twenty-five years they have sung these at the "sings" held by the singing societies of their Iroquois community, but for the past ten years have also sung in public these songs which have been primarily sung by men for women dancers (Green and Bass, 1995, 11).

These public examples of actually playing a drum have occurred simultaneously with women publicly performing in areas where this practice either had not been done or had been discouraged. Among the Dene First Nations a group of male singers/drummers customarily perform at their public events. Just recently an informant told me that an all-female singers/drummers group had performed on certain occasions during the late 1970s in Rae. At the 1994 Folk on the Rocks Festival in Yellowknife, Rosemarie Wedzin provided the music for the traditional closing drum dance:

For the first time (in recent memory), the beat everybody danced to came from a woman's hand.... [She] chanted proudly over her caribou-hide drum, reclaiming a place once occupied by her grandmother. (Pinto, 1994, 68)

This example and its interpretation indicate that women were known to play important roles as musicians and even play drums in certain cultures, but that tradition had become muted. With regard to the

SUMMARY

These strong voices of First Nations women are bringing healing to their own people as well as reaching out to a wider circle around the world. To do this, they draw on the strong heritage of their cultures which through thousands of years in this geographic space of Canada have developed musical expressions rooted in the land and the needs of its inhabitants. While some of these female voices continue that tradition in their songs, others expand its possibilities often through syncretistic performances and composition.

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It was this background of knowing the parent cultural traditions as well as becoming familiar with various Euro-Canadian musics that has made the present fluorescence of women from First Nations backgrounds possible in the Canadian musical scene today.

Undoubtedly Buffy Sainte-Marie from Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, was and remains a trend-setter in this movement. At the age of twenty-one in 1964 she was named Best New Artist by Billboard Magazine for her album *It's My Way*. From that auspicious beginning, her song *Universal Soldier* became one of the anthems of the 1960s peace movement, and she continued exploring to bring out the first totally electronic vocal album *Illuminations* in 1967. She won an Academy Award for the movie score song *Up Where We Belong*, and participated as a cast member for five years on the TV show *Sesame Street*. Her CD *Coincidence and Likely Stories* has been hailed as "the most compelling political pop music from America" (Friese, 1994, 7), while France presented her with the Charles de Gaulle Grand Prix as the Best International Artist of 1993. Many of her songs such as *Starwalker* deliberately combine elements and performance style of her parent culture tradition with contemporary pop music. Today she is involved with her *Cradleboard Teaching Project* and *Kids From Kanata* in order to inform and involve First Nations children within Canada in their parent cultures and its expressions.

Elizabeth Hill of Iroquois culture, and Alanis Obomsowin of the Abenaki Nation, have become known for their solo songs expressing points of view from their cultural heritage. Susan Aglukark, the most successful Inuit contemporary musician to date, makes a point of dealing with the difficult situations of her people as well as Amerindians of Northern Canada. In fact her *Song of the Land* has assumed the status of a northern national anthem. Using idioms of pop-rock and blues, Laura Vinson of Alberta and Jani Lauzon of Ontario are Métis singers who express the concerns of their mixed background as well as emphasizing Native material in their public presentations. Lauzon includes solos on the Native end-blown flute which traditionally was used only by males within Canada for courting or signalling purposes (Conlon, 1983). Tracy Riley of Yellowknife, with her haunting ballads, and Ecca Janus of the Yukon, with her gospel-based material, have become more well-known within the past two years. Of Ojibwe background, Shania Twain, now a star of New Country with her album *The Woman in Me*, a double platinum seller in the United States, was the 1995 winner of the Canadian Country Music Awards for single, album, video, songwriting and country song of the year (Chodan, 1995, 10).