

Grand River Rainbow Historical Project

www.grandriver-rainbowhistory.ca/

celebrating the lives and times of rainbow folk in Grand River country

Rainbow Chorus Events (1995-)

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WRITTEN BY:
DIANE KILBY

NARRATION

1. Mi'kmaq Honour Song (Meegmaw)

(Note: Narration after song)

The original homelands of the seven clans of the Mi'kmaq Nation included all of the Maritime Provinces of Canada including Cape Breton and the Gulf Islands. They were the nation in the North America closest to Europe.

The Mi'kmaq were not surprised by their first contact with the Europeans. For generations, their elders had shared their visions of a blue-eyed people who would arrive from the east on floating islands and disrupt their lives.

It is the Mi'kmaq way to respect and honour all things because all things have a spirit and all things are connected.

It is the Mi'kmaq way to share resources and knowledge freely and to expect nothing in return.

It is the Mi'kmaq way that no one can "own" the land because the land is given by the Creator and everything given by the Creator is to be honoured and shared. The Mi'kmaq welcomed the newcomers.

In contrast, the Europeans developed the legal concept of *Terra Nullius*, meaning a land that is empty of people. They wanted to justify their claim to own all the land and validate their pretence that no other people had ever been here.

These opposing values are our legacy. We are bound to this land, our home, in complex ways that haunt our histories, our spiritualities, our emotions, our politics and our identity - all that we are.

Yet nothing exists only in the past - life is a cycle and a cycle is one of many circles pivotal to so much in Native spirituality and in the natural world. Tonight we offer you a song cycle of our land and our home.

WRITTEN BY:
Diane Kirby

2. Home I'll Be

Rita McNeil is synonymous with her home village of Big Pond, Cape Breton, she has made this village on the shores of Bras D'Or Lake famous through her songs of love and pride of place. Yet, if you search the web for "Rita McNeil", you will find a lot of fat jokes. It seems that for some, it is easier to laugh at her size than it is to respect her voice, her abundant song-writing talent and her success in overcoming economic poverty, McNeil's first public performance was at a woman's consciousness raising group. It seems that she was so shy and so self-conscious that she found it easier to sing than to talk.

Like many other Maritimers, McNeil came to Ontario to seek her "place" in the world. What she found instead was a lesson in being a lonely single mother on welfare - at times unemployed and at others, working low-paying dead end jobs - and longing for home in Cape Breton. A longing she paints eloquently in her images of her beloved land her pledge to come home.

3. The Gowans are Gay

This is a Scottish ballad that dates from the 16th century. When we chose the piece, we didn't really know who or what the Gowans were. We were enchanted by a whole clan of gay Gowans:

Chorus members:

Hi I'm Marg Gowan. I'm Dave Gowan. Hi I'm Mark Gowan. I'm Colleen Gowan. No I'm Colleen Gowan. I'm Van Gowan and...

ALL: the Gowans are gay!

We have since learned that Gowans are daisies.

ALL: Awwwww

Canadian composer John Beckwith arranged this version of the Gowans for the Elmer Iseler Singers to perform in the Sharon Temple series.

Sharon, a community near Newmarket Ontario, was founded in 1812 by the Children of Peace, a pacifist Quaker sect. For more than a hundred years, they believed and practiced co-operative farming: they shared their resources and their land allotment with those who had none. They were suspicious of capitalism, believed in public education, welcomed newcomers and established the first homeless shelter in Ontario. They believed that home was in community and that all were welcome.

4. Song for the Mira

The Mira River in Cape Breton Island is the longest river in Nova Scotia and is considered one of Canada's most scenic and nostalgic geographies. It is home to Allister MacGillivray, a singer-songwriter who has authored several folios of traditional Cape Breton music, preserving much of what might otherwise have been lost.

MacGillivray wrote song for the Mira while he was touring from one town to another with the Irish folk group, Ryan's Fancy. His song is satiated with aching for and celebration of the traditions and landscapes of home.

Like his sister in song, Rita McNeil, MacGillivray has since shunned the spotlight and has returned to his Cape Breton home.

5. Cent Mille Chansons

There are a hundred thousand love songs and this is one of the most beautiful. A different landscape is celebrated here; a landscape of magic castles and starlit boats and stars dimmed by the ocean of passion in your lover's eyes.

Cent Mille Chansons was a huge European pop sensation when Frida Boccara interpreted Eddy Marnay's lyrics in 1968. Marnay, an Algerian born francophone who died this January at the age of 82, had written songs for singers like Edith Piaf, Nana Mouskouri and Barbra Streisand. But it is his relationship to another singer that charmed us. In 1978, when he was looking for a new direction, Marnay came to Quebec where he met a 13 year old with what he called "la voix du Bon Dieu", the voice of God. He was so taken with the talent of a young Celine Dion that he wrote most of the lyrics of her first three albums.

And somewhere there is a rare recording of Marnay in duet with Dion singing Cent Mille Chansons.

6. O Lovely Nightingale

Canadian composer Healey Willan (1880-1968) played a pivotal role in the foundation of the formal Canadian musical establishment through his long tenure with the Arts & Letters Club of Canada, the Anglican Church of St. Mary Magdalene, the Toronto Diocesan Choir School and the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. Willan was a prolific composer of choral, organ and church music. He was intrigued by musical tones and by medieval and renaissance church music and has scored the 15th century manuscript "O Lovely Nightingale" as an irregular psalm tone.

Willan, who immigrated to Canada from England in 1913, wrote his life here: "I have a sense of home, of absolute completion...doing the work I want to do and the work I feel I can do".

7. They Call It Canada

Freddy Grant wrote this patriotic jingle of pride in 1952. Canada had emerged from World War II with a stronger national and international identity. There was a boom mentality:

- A baby boom (Canada's population jumped from 14 million to 18 million in the decade after the War and the suburbs blossomed)
- An oil boom (oil was discovered in Alberta in 1947)
- A nationalistic boom (Newfoundland joined the Confederation in 1949; CBC television was founded in 1952; the first Canadian Governor General, Vincent Massey was appointed in 1952)
- An industrial boom (Canada changed from an agricultural country to an industrial one, albeit heavily subsidized by loans from American corporations)

There was much of which to be proud. BUT not everyone marched "side by side" and not everyone enjoyed equal opportunity in Canada in the middle decades of the last century:

- Aboriginal kids were being torn from their families and sent to residential schools (the last closed in 1988)
- African Canadian kids attended segregated schools in Nova Scotia and Ontario (the last did not close until 1969)
- Canada's Immigration Act gave preferential treatment to citizens from Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. There were quotas on immigrants from non-European countries and immigrants from China and other Asian countries could not bring in their spouses or families.
- Natives on reserve, Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians could not vote in federal elections.

- Only white gentiles could own land in Ontario and in Nova Scotia.
- It was illegal for married women to work for the federal government.
- Women were forced to give up good paying jobs to returning veterans and social roles were tightly restricted.
- Gays and lesbians were fired, prohibited from living together, barred from immigrating, criminalized and persecuted.
- In order to join the Canadian Armed Forces during W.W.II, Indians had to give up their status and identify as English, French or Scottish. Yet when they returned home after the war, they were not entitled to the low interest loans for housing and education given to white soldiers. Why? Because they were "Indian".

Yet, Freddy Grant was proud to be a Canadian. Freddy Grant was born Fritz Grundland in Berlin shortly before the 1st World War. He left Nazi Germany for Britain in the mid-30s only to be detained in internment camps there and in Canada during the war. Grundland became a naturalized Canadian in 1947. He had found a place where he belonged; he had found a home.

8 In Flanders Fields

no narration but Bob will talk and have 1 minute silence for victims of violence

INTERMISSION

MARG SPEAKS

9. O Canada

Narration after O Canada

The daughter of one a post war immigrant to Canada sings alto in our Chorus. We want to thank Bonnie DePaul and her mother for sharing this true story with us.

In 1954, Bonnie's grandparents, her mom and her aunts and uncle, arrived in Canada from Scotland just weeks before Christmas. Their new home was large and sprawling and housed recent immigrants - at least 2 per room. Because they were the only family, they were given 2 rooms AND a small kitchen for their family of six. Only her grandfather seemed excited about living in this cold, wintry country. The rest were homesick for their friends and family in Scotland. Her grandmother was especially wary of the owners, a quiet Japanese Canadian family; she had heard stories of the horrors of war, She cautioned her children to tiptoe past their door and avoid any contact.

Christmas Eve was especially bleak. There was no money for presents, other than a doll for the youngest lest she think Santa couldn't find her in Canada. The carols on the radio only served to add to their longing for home.

Bonnie's mother says: "after supper on Christmas Eve, we were a quiet group as we sat around thinking of home. My father suggested a game of cards and my mother burst into tears. I could feel the tears in my own eyes and had there not been a knock on the door I believe most of us would have joined her in crying. Standing at the door was the Japanese family from downstairs. Their arms were full of presents and best of all they were carrying a Christmas tree. They came in and we watched as they set it up and decorated it with lights. We did not have electricity in Scotland and the sight of the Christmas lights entranced us."

Other neighbors brought presents; tea was made and the New Year's shortbread brought out. Everyone shared. Bonnie's mother and her aunt each received a 5-strand pearl necklace straight from Woolworth's and wore them all day. They suddenly felt quite Canadian! It was then that her mother knew that she and her family would make a home in Canada.

10. That's the Way It Is

no narration

11. Rise with Pride

The struggle for lesbian and gay rights is a story of determination, setback, resistance and celebration. It is a story of our coming out and coming home.

We are proud of who we are. We are proud of our loves and of our families. We are proud of our two-spirited friends. We are proud of our allies in the Chorus and in our lives. We are proud to have found a home in Waterloo-Wellington.

The Rainbow Chorus is especially proud of Canadian composer and chorus member, Terrilyn Coward. We are honoured by the gift of this song. This will be the Canadian premiere of her song.

12. Sing All Ye Joyful

Canadian composer Ruth Watson Henderson is the accompanist for the Toronto Children's Chorus. For six years in the 1960's she was an organist-choirmaster in Kitchener. She has received commissions from the Guelph Spring Festival, the Amadeus Choir and the Elora Festival among others. She has won international prizes for her compositions.

The lyrics of this song are by J.R.R. Tolkien. You will find it in the final pages of "*the Hobbit*", after the dragon is slain.

60 years before the adventures of Frodo and Gandalf and the other characters in the *Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit from the Shire, went off on an uncharacteristic adventure in the company of dwarves. In this journey, as often happens when we leave home, he came to learn much that he had not expected about himself and his place in the world.

On his journey home, a physically and emotionally exhausted Bilbo Baggins recuperates at Rivendell, the home of the elves. The elves welcome the "wanderer" to their community with this lullaby.

13. Magnetic North

Graeme Wearmouth moved to the Yukon in 1971 when he was 6 years old. He now lives in Vancouver where he composes choral music and film scores. He was commissioned to write Magnetic North for the opening of the Yukon Arts Centre in Whitehorse in 1992. He was 27 years old.

There are 2 North Poles. True north and magnetic north. Magnetic compasses point to magnetic north- a mineral deposit in the High Canadian Arctic. Magnetic North is not a fixed point; instead it is constantly moving. IN the last 100 years Magnetic North has wandered approximately 600 miles north to its present location near Ellef Ringes Island.

As Wearmouth points out, our perceptions of the North are shifting as well - some of us see the rivers or the mountains and some of us see only the gold for exploitation. And some of us see the people who have lived there forever. Regardless of how we see it, there can be a place for everyone. Regardless of how we see it, we can share this place but we must remember that all of us have an obligation in protecting the land - in making it last.

14. O Siem

Susan Aglukark is Inuit and was born in Churchill Manitoba. She spent her child hood moving through the Northwest Territories before settling with her family in what is now Nunavit. Nunavit is a special Canadian territory as its legal creation returned the governing of the land to its native peoples. Aglukark sings in English and in Inuktitut, her native tongue. Aglukark says that when you leave your homeland you lose your innocence and that she wants to play a role in giving dignity back to her people with her songs. She has certainly celebrated her people in the spotlight of the pop music world. Like Aglukark, we believe that we are all family and that we have now come full circle, knowing that there is no end and that the circle will continue.