FIRST NATIONS POPULAR MUSIC IN CANADA: IDENTITY, POLITICS AND MUSICAL MEANING

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, First Nations popular music is examined as a polysemic sign (or symbolic form) whose meaning is mediated both socially and politically. Native popular music is a locus for the action of different social forces which interact in negotiating the nature and the meaning of the music. Music is socially meaningful in that it provides a means by which people construct and recognize social and cultural identities. As such, First Nations popular music functions as an emblem of symbolic differentiation between Canadian natives and non-natives.

Native pop music plays host to a number of political meanings embedded in this syncretic musical form. Struggle over meaning is mediated within the music itself: in the lyrics, in the music, in the juxtaposition of musical styles, and between music and text. Mediation on all of these levels is further influenced by the mass media. Meaning on individual, local and national levels is dependent on the socio-political positioning of both the performers and the audience. Because socio-political positions are themselves fluid, political meanings are also in constant flux. As a polysemic sign vehicle, First Nations popular music is a locus for these various meanings and a site for the construction and deconstruction of political discourse.
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INTRODUCTION

In the last five years, the output of syncretic popular music from within the Canadian Native community has increased dramatically.\textsuperscript{1} The unprecedented success of the Innu group Kashtin and the rejuvenation of Robbie Robertson's career as a solo musician have attracted a flurry of media attention. Moreover, such Native musicians as Susan Aglukark, Lawrence Martin, Shingoose, The Seventh Fire, and Don Ross, to name only a few, are quietly making headway into mainstream Canadian culture.

The production and proliferation of First Nations popular music is essentially linked to the social and political climate from which it springs. The growing migration of Natives into urban areas, combined with the prominence of radios and televisions in even the most remote rural Native communities and reserves, has resulted in a far greater exposure to mainstream Canadian music and culture for a large majority of Canadian Natives.

Recent ethnomusicological studies have suggested that music may function not only as a mere reflection of cultural change, but as an active

\footnote{Throughout this thesis the terms "First Nations", "Native", "Native American", "Native North American" and "Indian" are used synonymously. The use of these terms have yet to be standardized in either the academic community or the Canadian Native community (although the term "First Nations" is now commonly accepted as the politically correct term in Canada, while "Indian" has fallen into disfavour in academic circles). The musicians I spoke with during the course of this research showed little preference for any particular terminology and freely used these terms interchangeably.}
contributor to the process.² Viewed in this way, we are able to define the musical production of a particular social group as a dynamic social process rather than as simply a social product. The syncretic musical form of Native pop music provides a way for Indigenous peoples to construct an understanding of their modern social circumstance.³ These popular music forms often serve as a locus for the construction of, and struggle over, political and social meanings. As Karl Neuenfeldt has noted, "[I]ndigenous peoples create, reconstruct and employ popular music and its myriad icons as a means of making sense [of their world] via artistic expression, social mobilization, political negotiation and as a currency of symbolic exchange and a site of symbolic competition" (Neuenfeldt 1991,95). Symbolic exchange and competition are at the heart of syncretic forms of Native pop music, which combine stylistic, structural and textual elements from diverse musical cultures.

Florent Vollant of the Innu group Kashtin has stated, "It's almost impossible to be a Native performer and not be political" (Stoute 1992). This is a telling statement considering that the lyrics of Kashtin's songs are almost entirely devoid of any overt political messages. Such a statement points to the idea that simply the existence of a Canadian Native duo, singing popular

² See Guilbault (1993a), Feld (1982), and Seeger (1987), among others

³ Frans Birrer (1985) has discussed the fact that the definition of "pop music" itself as a field for study is a difficult task. For the purposes of this paper the term "pop music" is being used in the way that it is often used in the popular press: ie. commercially produced music intended for mass consumption which draws stylistically from various popular genres (eg. rock, folk, country and western, and reggae).
music, making recordings, and succeeding in the mainstream commercial pop music industry is in itself a powerful political symbol. But what exactly is being communicated, and how does this communication take place? One common theme which was touched upon in almost all of my conversations with Native musicians was the hope that the performance of their music would result in a greater understanding of the contemporary Canadian Native condition. I believe this idea is communicated both lyrically and musically through the manipulation of the symbolic codes surrounding both mainstream popular music as well as traditional Native music.

Symbolic meanings are rarely fixed or static; rather, they are socially negotiated and politically constructed. In the case of "pop music", the creation of meaning is played out to a large degree in the popular media and academic press, forums where Native peoples' voice has been heavily suppressed and marginalized. An important question to this investigation is the extent to which both Native producers and consumers (i.e., the fans) of pop music challenge or subscribe to the meanings produced by the popular media. In this way, Native pop music can be seen as a polysemic sign (or symbolic form) whose meaning is mediated both socially and politically.

This research is based on a series of interviews with Native musicians conducted during the summer of 1995 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Those interviewed include a number of local Vancouver musicians, several musicians from the B.C. interior and Alberta, and nationally known recording artist and
founder of First Nations Music (an all-Native record label), "Wapistan" Lawrence Martin. While a great number of Native musicians create and perform popular musical forms in a style indistinguishable from their non-Native counterparts, the focus of this study will be on musics which combine mainstream popular music forms with traditional Native music practices, or which lyrically express a "Native perspective" (Young Man, 1992). These syncretic musical forms are far more pregnant with opportunities for symbolic manipulation and/or political controversy.

Musical activity at both national and local levels are discussed and compared. The first three chapters of this thesis deal with nationally known musicians such as Kashtin, Susan Aglukark, Lawrence Martin, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Robbie Robertson, and Shingoose. These musicians can all be termed "professional" as they have all produced commercial recordings that have been nationally distributed. Social and biographical information about these musicians is presented as their music is discussed. The fourth chapter deals with the production of Native pop music on a local level as Native musical activities in Vancouver, B.C. are examined. The musicians discussed in this chapter are "amateurs", in the sense that they do not make a living solely from musical performances. The concluding chapter provides insight into how national and local levels interact in the negotiation of cultural identity and musical meaning.

This thesis is organized according to a series of theoretical issues which
become relevant in an examination of Native pop music. Chapter 1 examines social discourses surrounding the music on a national level. This chapter discusses the importance of categorical definitions of Native popular music and the problems inherent in defining cultural authenticity. Chapter 2 identifies a number of stylistic symbols existing in Native pop music. Here we examine how these symbols function in the construction of social identity, and the resultant tensions between cultural unity and cultural plurality. The music is discussed as a means for constructing an ethnic boundary delineating Natives as a distinct, unified, yet multi-faceted cultural entity existing colonially within Canada. Chapter 3 examines strategies of symbolic manipulation in the texts of Native pop music. The discussion focusses on how music is used as platform for the expression of political grievances and to further public awareness of Native issues. This involves the manipulation and subversion of a number of symbols employed in the mass mediated representations of Native culture and history. Chapter 4 examines the social context surrounding the production of Native pop music on a local level. Native musical activities in the city of Vancouver, B.C. are discussed. Chapter 5 provides some closing remarks and locates Native popular music within the larger sphere of popular music production.
CHAPTER 1

LOCATING THE FIELD OF STUDY

Literature Review

Rather than providing an exhaustive bibliographic examination of the existing research on acculturative responses in Native music, this review is intended more as an annotated sampling of the literature. The purpose of the review is to locate the present research within the larger field of Native North American music studies. The field of ethnomusicology has followed anthropology in its interest in the processes of acculturation. This interest is particularly apparent in the literature on First Nations music in North America. Acculturative studies in Native North American music generally focus on either inter-tribal acculturation, or acculturative responses resulting from Native/non-Native contact. While the former type of study has attracted the attention of scholars such as James Howard (1983), Willard Rhodes (1952) and William Powers (1968), considerably less work has been devoted to Native/non-Native acculturation. Studies of Native/non-Native acculturation which do exist can be further subdivided into two general categories:

1) Native practitioners of non-Native music.

4 There are many lengthy bibliographies of Native North American musical research currently available. See, for example, Guédon (1972), Frisbie (1977), Lee (1979, 1993), and Myers (1993).
2) Syncretic musical forms resulting from Native/non-Native contact.

Two of the more detailed studies falling under the first category are Naomi Ware's (1970) report on the music of the Salt River Pima in Arizona, and Robert Witmer's (1972, 1982) research with the Blood Indians of Alberta.

In her discussion of Pima music, Ware proposes that, rather than referring simply to measurable stylistic changes in music, the meaning of "musical acculturation" should be extended to include "all effects" which non-Native musical behaviour has on Native musical life. Viewing acculturation in this way, she submits that the "pattern of musical acculturation is remarkably parallel to the patterns of acculturation in other areas of contemporary life" (Ware 1970, 101). Ware reports the existence of three non-native musical groups active on the Salt River reservation in 1965, including a brass marching band and "at least two rock and roll groups" (ibid, 105). She argues that while she saw little evidence of Euro-American influence on the traditional music of the Pima, the performance of non-Native music by a younger generation of Pima represents a significant acculturative change in the musical life of Natives in Salt River.

Robert Witmer's (1973, 1982) study of the musical life of Blood Indians provides us with an extensive examination of social issues surrounding the musical performance of non-Native musical styles by Natives. Over the course of his fieldwork on a southwestern Alberta reserve, Witmer compiled a list of "some fifty adult Blood who were recognized on the reserve as active
practitioners of white music," as well as "perhaps as many as 700 or 800...(non-performing) enthusiasts of white music, [many of them] teenagers and young adults" (1973, 66). Witmer also documented the variety of musical styles which were popular among the Blood noting,

...a high degree of consensus among [Blood practitioners of white music] in their current musical tastes and performance practices: country-western music and gospel music are the musical types most enjoyed, and they comprise the major portion of the repertories of most of the informants (ibid, 77).

The work of Ware and Witmer give valuable insights into the existence and practice of non-Native musics by Natives, pointing to the idea that such practices exist as a prevalent and vital part of Native musical life. Further, Witmer's discussions with a musician who claimed to be an original member of a Blood brass band formed c. 1911 suggests that non-Native music has been a part of Native musical life for quite some time.⁵

Both studies demonstrate that Native musicians place minimal value on stylistic originality, the emphasis falling instead on the precise copying of non-Native music and musical styles. Witmer found only one musician who composed his own music in the rock and roll idiom (ibid, 79). Thus, the emphasis of performers of non-Native music was on recreation rather than on originality. Contrary to these finding however, are a number of other studies which indicate that many Native musicians create and perform music that

⁵ Anne Lederman (1988) reports that Scottish and French Canadian fiddle music was being performed by the Saulteaux and Metis of Manitoba in the early 1800's.
involves a blending of both Native and non-Native musical styles.

There exists little documentation before 1950 of syncretic Native musical styles which were the result of Native/non-Native cultural contact. Native music scholars in the first half of this century were concerned more with "preserving" traditional Native musics rather than documenting all forms of Native music. Studies from the later half of the century however, show an increased interest in syncretic musics which were earlier thought of as corruptions of "authentic" Native musical styles (Rhodes 1962, 9). Many of these studies discuss the various ways in which Native musical styles have changed through the adoption of non-Native musical characteristics.

The widespread influence of Christianity throughout the Native North American community has had a major impact on Native musical acculturation. As a result, Christian hymns have often been the subject of syncretic transformation. In one of the earliest papers on acculturation in North American Native music, Willard Rhodes (1952) reports the existence of a number of Christian hymns composed by Sioux and Kiowa musicians. He describes the melodies of these hymns as,

...symmetrically patterned into phrases to fit the conventional four-six-eight line verse form of Christian hymns, retain[ing] something of their simple charm in their irregular phrase lengths. They are characterized by a rhythmic formula of a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth, sometimes lengthened to an eighth note followed by a dotted quarter or smoothed out into a triplet figure in which an eighth note is followed by a quarter, and the over-all high-to-low "collapsing" melodic line so typical of the musical style of the Plains area (ibid, 129).

Bruno Nettl (1966, 131) has similarly noted the existence of a number of
songs which feature Native melodies with English words. Conversely, Nettl (1966, 131), Richard Preston (1985, 24), and Lynn Whidden (1985) have all noted the existence of Christian hymns in which the hymn's melody remains unchanged while the English text is translated into a Native language.

Scholarly research has also documented the existence of a number of Native musicians who create and perform their own music using secular Euro-North American popular musical styles and forms. Lynn Whidden undertook fieldwork in Eskimo Point, North West Territories in 1975. In discussing the music of Charlie Panigoniak, Whidden (1981) questions her own previous statement that "the two musical styles of the old (traditional Inuit music) and the young (modern popular white music) generations live side by side with no influence on one another" (ibid, 34). In comparing two of Panigoniak's songs, one written in a "country style" and one of "questionable style", with a traditional drum dance song, Whidden observes that Panigoniak's song of questionable style exhibits many of the same stylistic traits as the drum dance song. Whidden concludes that "Charlie's fundamentally different approach to the use of time in music [leads one to believe] that this is not a traditional song, a song in a traditional style perhaps, and definitely a skillful blend of old and new elements" (ibid, 42).

David McAllester, perhaps the most prolific scholar of Native North

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6 Alan Thrasher (personal communication), as well, has reported hearing the gospel hymn "Amazing Grace" sung at a Sioux Powwow, with drumming vocables added and in a "tumbling strain" arrangement.
McAllester (1984, 28) notes that "country music is a great favourite with Indian people", and reports the existence of "some thirty or more country and western bands on the Navajo reservation alone". Further in the same article McAllester discusses the song "Proud Earth", written and recorded by Navajo musician Arliene Nofchissey Williams. Labelling the song an "Indian message record" because of the uplifting message of the text, McAllester describes the music as a mix of both Native and non-Native elements:

Musically, there are Indian elements such as the use of steady, repetitive drumbeat and vocables, as well as European-American elements such as a string orchestra, harmonies, interpretive dynamics, and a text in English (ibid, 59).

In an earlier article, McAllester (1981) examines a number of "new Indian song genres...that are almost wholly Anglo with slight Indian retentions" (ibid, 437, italics in original). This article focuses on a number of Native musicians who have composed and recorded music in the style of country and western, gospel, or rock, but which include lyrics that reflect their own Native heritage or which utilize a Native language. McAllester concentrates mainly on the textual themes of various songs and limits his discussion of musical style to impressionistic descriptions. He uses a similar approach in a later article (McAllester 1994), which reviews the music of Navajo flautist, Carlos Nakai. The bulk of the discussion in this article centres around the liner notes included in the packaging of Nakai's commercial recordings.

Apart from the work of these scholars, Native peoples' use of popular
music genres have been documented through a number of recordings issued since the late 1960's. In the United States, many of these recordings have been released by small, Native-run record companies such as Dine, Waltiska, Powwow and Soundchief (McAllester 1981, 445), as well as larger labels (owned and operated by non-Natives) such as Canyon Records and Indian House. In Canada, there are a number of smaller labels such as Dancing Light in British Columbia, Sunshine Records in Manitoba, as well as larger ones like the recently formed First Nations Music in Ontario. There has also recently been a proliferation of Canadian Native musicians signing recording contracts with large multinational recording companies.\footnote{For example, Kashtin and Tom Jackson are under contracts with Sony Music. As well, the recordings issued by First Nations Music, an all-Native record label, are currently being distributed by EMI.}

Scholarly documentation is too scarce to form any definite conclusions about the historical development of the performance of non-Native music by Natives. General conclusions are difficult to draw because the impact of non-Native music on Native people's musical life is unique for every community. However, we can say that the proliferation of recordings by Native musicians of non-Native or syncretic musics that now circulate within the larger North American Native community represents a significant and fundamental change in the musical life of First Nations peoples. As McAllester points out, "any Indian music of which we have recordings is, by definition, in a new context from that of traditional culture before Anglo contact" (McAllester 1981, 451).
Further, the mass distribution of these recordings alters how the music is used, how it functions, and what the music means to the Native community.

Questions of use and function have been only peripherally addressed in previous literature. Witmer and Ware presented solid social data but focused only on non-Native musics that were mimicked without innovation. Studies of various syncretic Native musics have focused mainly on stylistic analyses of the music in an effort to catalogue a series of Native and non-Native musical "traits". However, music must be viewed as a dynamic and ever changing process which is "inextricably enjoined with its cultural context" (Myers 1993, 409). In this way we may understand the link between specific social phenomena and specific musical phenomena, and how conceptualizations about both of these give social, cultural, political and symbolic meanings to musical products and behaviours.

A number of recent ethnomusicological studies have begun to probe issues of musical meaning for individual cultural insiders. Studies of First Nation's musicians include Navajo Blessingway singer Frank Mitchell's autobiography (Mitchell et al. 1978), Judith Vander's musical biography of five Shoshone women (Vander 1988) and Gordon Smith's work with Micmac fiddler Lee Cremo (Smith 1994). Smith's work is particularly relevant to the present study as his paper focuses on the various meanings surrounding Lee Cremo and his music in both the Native and non-Native community. Questioning ten Natives and ten non-Natives, Smith found that perceptions of Cremo's music
varied widely between the two groups. The comments of non-Natives focused mainly on Cremo's musical style, while the Native informants spoke of Cremo as an important symbol of cultural identity and survival. Smith concludes that "[t]he various assessment of Lee Cremo...illustrate how an individual's work can provide a focus for quite varied social agendas" (Smith 1994, 552).

Following Smith's work, the present research is an attempt to address some of the social processes involved in the creation of new musics (and subsequently new meanings) by Native musicians.

**Defining the Authentic**

In a study such as this, one is immediately confronted with the problem of locating and delineating the field of inquiry. Grenier and Guilbault (1990), in investigating the relationship between anthropologist and the anthropological "other", argue that the ethnography of the "other" has been problematized "by the penetration of the world economy, mass communication, and issues of identity and cultural authenticity" (Grenier and Guilbault 1990, 382). The issue of authenticity is particularly relevant to Canadian Native pop music as it has been the subject of a vigorous debate which has been played out in the popular press over the past three years. Both the Native and the larger Canadian music communities have struggled with the definition of "authentic" Native music.

In a national newspaper article on the topic (Taylor 1993), Buffy Sainte-
Marie is quoted as stating, "[Native popular music is] not just somebody with a tan and a guitar...[it] is not just a racial category". Further in the article she argues, "there are distinctive elements to Native music, and the genre sometimes known as 'pow-wow rock' can be identified by its use of drums and an insistent beat".\(^8\) Hence Sainte-Marie is defining the parameters of Native popular music on the basis of musical style rather than race. However, later in the same article Shingoose offers,

My influences were the Beatles and the Stones, like everybody else...When you start to get more responsible and you see your people suffering, there is an awakening. What makes me different, if I am different? It leads to a mingling of traditional and contemporary. It's conceptual rather than sound \((ibid)\).

Shingoose seems to be suggesting that it is a particular process or approach which defines the genre. CBC radio producer Philly Markowitz statement that "Native music is steeped in the tradition of the protest song" \((ibid)\) suggests that it is the political content of the lyrics which distinguishes the Native music.

The ways that musical producers (the musicians themselves) and consumers (journalist and the "fans" of the music, both Native and non-Native) define and interpret Native pop music varies according to social, cultural and political positioning. The struggle over interpretation is significant because trying to define the authentic through an identifiable "sound" is a political

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\(^8\) "Pow-wow rock" is a term created in the popular press which refers to syncretic forms of Native popular music which combine stylistic elements of traditional Native music and North American rock.
strategy, "a resource through which relations of power at local, regional, national, and international levels can be addressed" (Cohen 1994, 117). At its simplest level, a musical style is defined by criteria established and agreed upon by a particular social group. However, because the music functions as a locus for self-definition, the issues of who controls the definitions and what criteria are valued and endorsed as "authentic" become of paramount importance.

The argument over authenticity came to a head with the creation of a new "Aboriginal music" category by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS). CARAS is responsible for the annual presentation of the "Juno" awards, Canada's national music awards. The Juno award for Aboriginal music was created in 1993 and first presented in 1994. The creation of the award in itself has numerous political implications. Some have suggested that its creation may lead to a "ghettoizing" (Sakamoto, 1993) of Native music by categorizing all of the musical output of all the various First Nations groups under one category.

I spoke with Lawrence Martin, a Cree musician from Northern Ontario, about the categorization of Native music. He expressed mixed feelings on the subject:

LM: I don't know if [Native popular music] needs to be categorized. Yesterday, I went to a northern store and I looked for the album [his 1995 C.D. "The Message"] in the main section, but it wasn't there. But

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9 A more detailed biographical sketch of Lawrence Martin appears on pages 26-27.
there in the corner, they had this Native section, where they've got their Native artists. And I said 'oh that's kind of nice'. But at the same time I'd like to be part of the mainstream instead of just being categorized 'just' Native. And I know Sam's [Sam the Record Man, a Canada-wide retail music chain] in Toronto, and HMV [another Canada-wide retail music outlet] are now looking at creating Native sections. I don't know if that's good or not...I mean do you have a Black section or a White section?[laughs]...I don't know if you can go by race because your talking about music, and with music, you want to go with style. You don't want [categorization] by race. So I think I'd rather not see that. I'd rather see everybody mixed in to everything else.

CS: So would you rather be known as a Native musician, or just as a musician but also a Native?

LM: More I guess, first as a musician...but a musician that is Native...Just like when you go overseas and you realize, you know, that you're from Canada right? You know, are you there as a Canadian or as a musician? Or a Canadian musician...? [laughs]. So I guess it just feels kind of weird to have to debate on that, especially when we're from here...

CS: So you won the Juno last year. How do you feel about that, do you think that's an important step to have an Aboriginal music Juno.

LM: At this point I guess it is. Although I said earlier, I don't like to see albums being categorized in Native sections in the music stores. But I guess this is a... I mean the Juno is just a huge publicity profile and I think that it's important in that way. And it's important, I think, to take a look at it as an opportunity just to...again just to be out there to say something. This is why I wanted to use my Native language when I received the award. That in itself, to me, was a statement.

Martin's ambivalence is exemplary of the polysemic symbolic power of such a categorization. On the one hand, the creation of the Juno puts a "badge" on the music, defining it as separate and unique from the rest of the Canadian cultural mosaic. In this sense, the category can have a positive effect for those whose cultural politics dictate an assertion of difference between Native culture and Canadian culture as a whole. However, Martin's comments
suggest that he is not completely comfortable with this distinction as it can result in being labelled out of the "mainstream". While he is of Cree heritage, he is also Canadian and wishes to be recognized as such.

This points to the complex nature of Native identity within Canadian culture, where Natives wish to be recognized as both distinct but equal in the eyes of both the Canadian government and the general public. As well, Martin is careful to point out that he believes aboriginal music should be differentiated by musical style or cultural content, but not by race. The eligibility guidelines for the Aboriginal Juno category echo this desire.

Eligible music styles include all traditional Aboriginal music, Social Pow Wow Drum (e.g. Sioux, Assiniboine, Cree, Ojibway and Blackfoot, etc.); all Hand Drums (e.g. Inuit, Dene, MicMac, West Coast, etc.); Inuit Throat Singing; Traditional Flutes; Metis, Cree and MicMac Fiddling. In addition, fusions of all genres of contemporary music that incorporate the above and/or reflect the unique Aboriginal experience in Canada, by virtue of words or music [italics added].

A controversy over the presentation of the 1994 Juno award for Aboriginal music came about because one of the four nominees for the award, Sazacha Red Sky, was not of Native descent. Furthermore, she won the nomination for "The Prayer Song", a song which she learned from B.C. Native leader and Hollywood actor Chief Dan George. Questions of authenticity then became mixed with accusations of appropriation. Dan George's son, Leonard, attempted to have the nomination withdrawn and accused Ms. Red Sky of

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10 From the 1995 "Juno Awards Submission Procedure: Category 26" application form.
"violating a trust [as she] had no right to record his family's prayer" (McCallum 1994). Lawrence Martin, stated, "Someone from a different culture taking a song that belongs to a particular clan isn't right" (ibid). Later when I spoke with Martin he added,

There's protocols that they have to watch out for. You ask for the song, you give tobacco...You give an offering to get that song given to you, giving you the right to use it. This is why I think last year, during the Junos, the year that I won, that one non-native lady was a part of this controversy, where she said she was the grand-daughter of the late Chief Dan George and she was given that song in a dream, or whatever that story was. And to a lot of people, they thought: 'here's a white person coming in again - here they come again, trying to exploit the situation [laughs], without even asking...

The preceding citations all serve to illustrate how contextualization is pivotal in the mediation of political meaning. The lines dividing Native and non-Native popular music are becoming increasingly blurred. However, while this boundary is stylistically flexible, it is a boundary that is passionately defended. Authenticity is a powerful "discursive trope" (Stokes 1994, 6) used by both musical producers and consumers. The important issue is not what defines "authentic" Aboriginal music, but how the concept of authenticity is used in the construction and maintenance of social and cultural identity.

Mediation of the authentic takes place within the historical and contemporary complex of power relations. Given the colonial history of Canada with respect to Aboriginal peoples, the appropriation of Native musical styles by non-Native musicians becomes a highly charged political activity. At the same time aboriginal musicians freely adapt North American and Afro-American popular
musical forms feeling that these forms are a valid part of Native cultural heritage.

A common question that I asked many of my musical informants was: "why do you play the music that you play?" In many cases, the reply was simply that they were playing the styles they listened to while growing up. During the course of my research I spoke with local Vancouver blues musician Clyde Roulette. Roulette is a Cree musician from Alberta who makes his living playing blues music in the club circuit of the Greater Vancouver area and touring the North American summer blues festival circuit. His musical repertoire includes blues standards written by people like Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters, although the arrangements are worked out by either himself or the whole band. I asked him what attracted him to this particular style of music. He responded:

...Most of the music we play comes from a Cherokee bass player named Bill Black who was the bass player for Elvis. We loved that music - but the fact that he was a Cherokee made it more meaningful. A lot of black slaves from the South lived on or around the reservations down there and they picked up on the drumming and the chanting that was happening there. In "Rollin' and Tumblin'", Muddy Waters - who was part Native - does this Native chanting thing in it. Nobody knows that, but Natives know that that's what he's doing. So when we play this music there's a connection to our own people. You've got to know your history and you've got to have a connection to your history. When we play this music, there is a connection to our history.

While Native musicians are hesitant to define Native pop music by bloodline alone, its definition also lies outside any simple stylistic considerations. This perhaps points to the idea that the shifting nature of the
definition of Native pop music is tied to its political function in the Native community and in the larger multi-cultural Canadian community.
CHAPTER 2

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

Musical Meaning and the Politics of Identity

Aboriginal politics are largely about the continued assertion of difference; they are in a great measure a politics of identity concerned to ensure that distinctive Aboriginal cultures find a respected place in Canadian society. The concern to ensure that aboriginal ways of life - which include ties to land-based subsistence economy as well as to languages, spiritualities and cultures - continue to have relevance in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. This means that Aboriginal politics are cultural politics (Kulchyski 1994, 61).

My argument for the political functioning of First Nations pop music is to a large degree based upon an analytic perspective. Of all the musicians with whom I spoke, none considered themselves to be "political" musicians. Even Lawrence Martin, whose lyrics are overtly political, has said that while it was his hope that his music helped people and helped to further Native causes and raise public awareness of his people (speaking specifically about the Cree and more generally about all First Nations peoples), this was not his main motivation for creating and performing music. However, Martin also admitted that in performing syncretic blends of Native and Western popular music, political statements were being made. Due to the polysemic, symbolic nature of music, an artist's intent can often differ from what is actually being communicated. Maquet has noted,
...[O]ne may understand what a symbol designates without learning a code. For instance, a painting with red and yellow hues evokes the light and warmth of the sun, even if the painter does not want to refer to the sun (Maquet 1971, 33).

Without knowing the code of the artist or musician, one can interpret a variety of meanings through the employment of different codes. Hence, musical signs existing within a piece of music have the potential for not one, but many signifiers, as the receivers of the music (the audience) project meaning onto musical signs. In this way, particular emotive or intellectual responses to music are individually and socially mediated and constructed.

Simon Firth expresses a similar idea in speaking of "disjunction"- that is, the "gap between the overt superficial statement of action and its underlying meaning" (Firth 1973, 26). This is not to say that the musicians themselves are completely unaware of the symbols that they manipulate or their meanings; simply that the intended meaning is seldom the only meaning. The meaning of a musical symbol is thus influenced, both individually and collectively, by social, cultural, and political positioning.

For particular social or cultural groups, musical styles operate as sign systems indexing specific ethnic traditions and values. This supposition is based on a theory of style formulated by Keil (1987), Feld (1988), Turino (1989) and Meintjes (1990). "Musical style in this sense is an intuitively felt social feature expressing, forming, and representing a social coherence system" (Meintjes 1990, 43). Stephen Feld (1984) suggests that through "interpretive moves" the listener is able to link the stylistic elements of music to one's own
unique set of social, cultural and musical circumstances within a particular historic moment. The interpretation of musical events takes place within "contextualizing music frames" (ibid, 12). These frames are based upon an individual's ideas about musical values (as expressed through stylistic or performance preferences), identity (ideas about the sameness or difference of musical character), and/or coherence (i.e. how the organizing principles within a piece of music mimic organizing principles in other social fields) (ibid, 12-13). These "contextualizing music frames" serve to shape individual and social interpretation of musical products and events.

Political meanings exist on a number of levels within Native pop music. Political messages may exist either overtly or covertly in the text of a song. They may also exist in a song's musical style, structure, form, or may be encoded in the juxtaposition of music and text. Each of these levels intermingle with one another in the communication network of a song. Metacommentaries which surround First Nations popular music, such as

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11 I very consciously use the term political "meanings" rather than political "messages" in opposition to Neuenfeldt who states,

In the context of politicized indigenous popular music, in order for the message to be received and reacted to it has to be sent in a form that can be decoded more readily: ethno-pop songs. They provide a medium within which communication can take place (Neuenfeldt 1991,97).

I am inclined to agree with Jean Jacques Nattiez who states that "communication [is] no more than any particular case of various modes of exchange, only one of the possible results of symbolic process" (Nattiez 1990,17). The construction of meaning on an individual level is influenced by one's socio-political position within Canadian society.
commercial packaging, distribution, and mass media representations, serve to further inform and influence the interpretation of music as a symbolic entity.

First Nations pop music thus functions as a means by which the modern Native Canadian is able to construct his/her social and cultural identity. Identity is constructed through a blending or juxtaposition of the musical signs of both mass mediated popular music forms, and the chanting and drumming of traditional Native music. The integration of a number of stylistic elements from traditional Native music and cultural heritage into modern popular styles serve as "ethnic markers" (McAllester 1981), recognizable by both Natives and non-Natives, although their meanings will not necessarily be the same for the two groups. One of the most obvious "ethnic markers" in Native pop music is the use of Native language. Significantly the three most commercially successful and well-known Canadian Native musicians, Lawrence Martin, the group Kashtin, and Susan Aglukark, each sing many or all of their songs in their own native language.

The Music of Lawrence Martin

The music and life of Lawrence Martin perhaps best exemplifies the complexities of self definition for the modern Canadian Native. Lawrence Martin was born in 1945 on the Moose Factory reserve in the small Northern Ontario town of Moose River. The son of a Cree mother and Irish father, he was raised by his Grandparents, who worked on a trapline. As his
Grandparents spoke very little English, Cree was Lawrence's first language. He first began to speak English at the age of 11, a time when he first attended grade school in North Bay, Ontario. He proceeded remarkably quickly through the school system and entered High School at the age of 14.

It was also at the age of 11 that he first began to play the guitar. This was at the urging of his aunt, who wanted someone to accompany her as she played French-Canadian jigs and reels on the banjo or mandolin. He continued playing guitar and singing throughout high school and joined or assembled a number of country music bands which would perform occasionally in the local bars of North Bay.

After graduating high school he worked at a variety of odd jobs - in the mines, on the railway and in construction - before returning to school to earn a communications degree. Soon afterwards, he took a job with Wawatay Native Communications, a media organization which provides radio and television broadcasts as well as newspapers to approximately 50 reserves and Native communities throughout Northern Ontario. While working full time with Wawatay, he continued to perform in local bars in the evenings playing a mix of his own music and the popular country music of the time.

In 1993, at the age of 37, Lawrence travelled to Nashville to record a "demo" tape of some of the music he had written. While in Nashville, he met with country music producer John Stewart. Upon hearing Lawrence's music, Stewart suggested that Martin focus more on his Native heritage by
incorporating Native drumming and chanting into his music and singing about Native issues. Following this advise, Lawrence later returned to Nashville to record the songs that would make up his first C.D., *Wapistan is Lawrence Martin*. In 1995 he released a second C.D. entitled *The Message*.

On Lawrence's first recording, four of the twelve songs have lyrics which are sung in Cree (two songs from the album are instrumental). The first song on this C.D., "Elders" (see the Appendix, Musical Example 1), is a powerful blend of country-rock and Native chanting with lyrics sung in both Cree and English. Martin is very aware of the significance of singing in his Native language and considers it as a way of directly speaking to his own people. During an interview between Martin and myself he spoke about the use of Cree in his music:

> Some of the Cree songs that I have on the album - those Cree songs talk about how good it feels to be Cree, and how good it feels to be part of the creation and be part of the environment as the seasons change. I talk about that as opposed to anything political. None of my Cree songs are political at all because what I think in Cree, and what I speak in Cree, I usually think in terms of the elders and how they see the world. And many of them, I would say 95% of them, are not politically oriented. To them, we have a lot to be thankful for. So in my Cree songs I focus on that. But at the same time, I repeat a lot of the lines in the Cree songs intentionally in the hopes that people, the young people, when they listen to it, they can pick up the words and relearn the language again. So it's not that I don't know that many words in Cree [laughs].

Clearly, when Martin sings in Cree his main concern is what his use of the language represents to the Native community. In Lawrence's music, the presence of the Cree language acts as an ethnic marker which signals a difference between Native pop music and non-Native pop music. The
language itself becomes a powerful symbol of Native cultural autonomy.

Martin, along with many Native leaders, believes that the relearning of Native languages by the next generation is a key component of establishing Native autonomy and instilling a sense of pride in Native people's cultural heritage. When Martin sings in Cree, it affirms the fact that he can function within the spheres which have been traditionally controlled by the dominant culture (i.e. the industry of popular music), while remaining proud of his Native heritage.

Many of Martin's songs also include Native drumming and chanting blended with his country-rock style. Again, the song "Elders" (Appendix, Example 1), provides us with an example of how these two unique musical styles are structurally integrated rather than simply juxtaposed. The song begins with an 8 bar chant over the chord progression i/VII/i.\(^{12}\) The chant is in many ways typical of Plains singing style, which is defined by Nettl as exhibiting a "terrace-like melodic contour, gradually descending and levelling off on a long low tone" (Nettl 1965, 170). The chant in "Elders" follows a similar contour, beginning with an E above middle C and gradually descending to the E an octave below the starting note. The rhythm of the chant is set in a complex relationship against the 4/4 meter of the instrumental accompaniment. While not shown in the transcription (for reasons of legibility), many of the notes are consistently sung slightly *behind* the beat of the bass and drum

\(^{12}\) Interestingly, this chord progression is commonly found in a number of Irish fiddle tunes (e.g. "The Battle of Aughrim" or "Cooley's Reel"), which perhaps indicates the influence of Irish music on Martin's musical thinking.
accompaniment. This gives the feeling that the melody is dragging slightly. As well, the longer held notes are sung with a rhythmic pulsing using a quarter-note triplet figure. This pulsing triplet figure becomes more pronounced towards the end of the melody (see Ex. 1, bars 6 through 8). The slight rhythmic drag and triplet pulsing are also typical of Plains dance music, and more recently, of powwow style chanting. Further, the chant's use of "vocables" is similarly consistent with Plains and powwow styles.

All of these musical characteristics serve as signs denoting traditional Native musical style. However, the chant is distinctly modern as well. Most obviously, it is harmonized with a Western triadic progression. This feature links the chant to Western musical traditions. Hence, the chant is simultaneously characteristic of both Native and Western musical cultures. In recasting a traditional sounding chant in a modern country-rock style, the song becomes a new sign vehicle representing the modern Native cultural circumstance. When asked about the inclusion of Native chanting in his music, Martin commented:

I use the chant to challenge society; to just sort of rub it in a little bit and say, "this is Indian stuff eh, yeah this is Indian stuff" [laughs]. This is the Hollywood Indian, but with a different sound. It's not that 3/4 time [taps 3/4 beat on table -one TWO three, one TWO three]. The chanting encompasses a lot of different notions. Different reasons - the healing for the young people, and to inspire the young Native people to feel good about their music. When they hear a chant happening, I want it to make them feel good. It's cool we can sing it anywhere, we don't have to just hide in the bush and do our powwow ceremonies. So I want to get that message across. As well, I want society to understand and accept the music as part of the Canadian mosaic. [By using Native chant in the music] we're becoming cool...we're becoming popular. Just
like any other kind of people in the world [referring to other "world beat" musical groups]. We're sort of the last ones to become cool [laughs]. So there's a lot of reasons for it.

In recasting Native musical elements in a pop music setting, Martin's music also serves the important function of contesting stereotypical images of Native culture. The misrepresentation of Native culture in the mass media, and the appropriation of First Nations mythology and iconography in Western visual art and literature, have recently drawn the attention of a number of scholars as well as First Nations writers and artists.\(^\text{13}\) Valda Blundell (1985, 59) notes that a common Native stereotype includes the notion of Natives as a "dying race" who live in "two worlds": the world of the tribal past, and the modern world where they appear anachronistic.\(^\text{14}\)

Lawrence Martin is very aware of the problem of Native identity in the public mind:

I think more and more now it's not just the cultural stuff we need to focus on. We've got a lot of people who think Indians are still stuck in a particular era and they're still running around with loincloths and headdresses, and riding horseback. But that's not the Indian of today. The Indian of today could just be sitting in a hotel room doing

\(^\text{13}\) Many Native artists share a similar concern. The works of Gerald McMaster, Joan Cardinal-Schubert, Shelly Niro, and Bill Powless, to name only a few, often focus on contesting the anachronistic and frozen images of Natives that have proliferated throughout popular culture, from professional sports teams to children's toys.

\(^\text{14}\) Similarly, Ward Churchill(1992), lists three categorical stereotypes of Native Americans which Hollywood films have historically propagated:

1) Natives are portrayed as "creatures from another time"
2) Native culture is subjectively mediated through a Eurocentric point of view
3) distinctions between the diverse cultural heritages of the many different native tribes is either ignored or confused.
interviews, or fighting out court battles and conducting businesses, or being artists. They could be everything and anything that is happening elsewhere around the world. I think a lot of people forget that.

An important function of Lawrence's music is its ability to reclaim the power to define Native cultural identity. Adaptation of Euro-North American cultural forms does not diminish Native identity. Like all cultures, First Nations people and culture are in a constant state of growth and adaptation. Native pop music is both a reflection and an active contributor to this process.

Lawrence's music also provides a forum where some of the conflicting racial and ethnic aspects of modern Native identity are worked out. In Martin case, his music is a reflection of his mixed Cree and Irish heritage:

The area I come from, the Hudson Bay area, a lot of the Irish and the Scottish and French came up that way and they brought their music with them. The Cree people adapted to this music fairly quickly. And the elders used to tell me that the Crees would be playing with their hand drums along with the French or the Irish people as they were playing their fiddles. And over the years, the fiddle has been really popular with the Cree people in the James Bay area. And so today, when you go up there, you still hear a lot of these jigs and reels and everybody's still square dancing. There's probably more square-dancing than there are powwows up there [laughs].

The fiddle tradition among James Bay Cree may date as far back as the Seventeenth Century, a time when the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts were first established in the area (Preston 1985, 23). Thus, while Martin recognizes the non-Native origins of Scottish, Irish and French fiddle music, these musical traditions have nonetheless become an important part of the Cree musical heritage. When Martin incorporates these styles into his music, he does so insisting that it is still his music. Martin is comfortable with the
mixed and varied aspects of his cultural heritage and he views his music as a way of promoting pride in the complex character of Native heritage.

The thing about [my] music is I try and use it to help our people heal. Because we've come through an awful lot of hardships in the last hundred years...all the changes that have happened. So we have to overcome what's happened. And it can't just come out in anger. We have to heal as individuals, from inside, and try to deal with all these syndromes, from the residential schools and everything else that has happened...racism, the Hollywood Indian movies, books and comics and everything...My music's a counteractive, to help the young people. Especially when you hear about all these suicides that are happening at a really high rate in Native communities. It's pretty scary. And to me a lot of it has to do with how people feel inside. I mean, you can live in any kind of environment, but if that feeling is really deep within you that you're no good - people telling you these kinds of things - it really starts to hurt a lot. It affects you. So what I'm trying to do is talk about these issues. But at the same time I'm saying "hey, you know, you're a beautiful person. God, the Creator, gave you this life and you have a mission to do". So I've always been thinking that way.

The Music of Kashtin

Kashtin are the musical duo of Claude Mckenzie and Florent Vollant, both Innu from northern Quebec. They sing all of their music in their native tongue of Montagnais, a language spoken by only about 10,000 people in eastern Quebec and northern Labrador (Gembarsky 1991). With the release of their first album in 1989, Kashtin became the first of a new generation of Canadian Native musicians to experience a significant degree of success within the mainstream Canadian music industry. To date, Kashtin have released 3 albums: the self-titled Kashtin (1989), Innu (1991) and Akua Tuta (1994). The song "Akua Tuta", from the album of the same name (See the Appendix,
Example 2), is in many ways typical of their musical and lyrical style. The use of both acoustic (acoustic guitar, fiddle, drum kit and Montagnais hand drum) and electric (electric guitar and bass guitar) instruments, the unison singing of melodic lines (eg. measures 14-18 and measures 24-30), and the use of a simple triadic chord progression are all stylistic traits found in much of Kashtin's music. Musically, Kashtin sound very similar to many of their non-Native counterparts in the Canadian popular music industry. However, the ubiquitous presence of the Montagnais language in Kashtin's songs has set them apart from their non-Native musical peers and has served to capture the attention of the Canadian record-buying public.

The presence of the Montagnais language in Kashtin's music acts as an ethnic marker which is itself a polysemic sign that is interpreted by individuals according to the "contextualizing music frames" mentioned in the opening of this chapter. The Montagnais language juxtaposed against the setting of Western pop music promotes a symbolic differentiation between the self and the other for both Native and non-Native listeners, marking Native culture as opposed to or at least distinct from the dominant North American culture (represented by Western pop music).

Kashtin are very careful in speaking about the political nature of their music and have gone to great lengths to distance themselves from any direct political statements. In a 1990 interview Vollant stated,

...we don't try to make political statements. We want to reach people through our music, that's what we came out of the reserves to do.
If people put as much effort into defending Native rights as we do communicating through our music, everything should be okay (Godfrey 1990).

However he has admitted,

It's almost impossible to be a native performer and not be political. We prefer to do it by showing native culture in a positive way. We aren't interested in making aggressive, confrontational music because that's not the spirit of what we do (Stoute 1992).

Most obviously the presence of Montagnais in Kashtin's music is a source of pride and expression of power for those who speak and understand the language. Kashtin is very conscious of what they represent to their own community.

They have strong attachments to their roots [Vollant] says, because "the reservation is like our family, you know. We started to do our music here. Our brothers, our sisters, our parents, our friends, our first fans are here" (Jones 1992).

The presence of a Native language in such commercially successful pop music is also a source of pride for the larger Native community, something of which Kashtin is also well aware. Vollant has said that the pride generated among Native peoples is one of the most satisfying aspects of their success: "People of all Native nations are proud of what we've done. They support us completely" (Delean 1990).

For non-Natives, the presence of a unintelligible foreign language adds to the appeal of the music. The presence of their language acts as a marker locating the "exotic other" in a familiar Western pop setting. Despite their Canadian origins they have been described by the popular press as "world
beat" (Gembarsky 1991), a popular music genre of the 1980's and 1990's
involving the syncretic blend of ethnic traditions and western pop.
Commenting on the commercial success of Kashtin, Shingoose noted, "the fact
that no one understands what they are saying adds to their mystique" (Taylor
1993).

In stating that he wants all Natives to be proud of Kashtin's success,
Vollant is using his music and his social position to serve the political goal of
strengthening a symbolic distinction between Native and non-Native culture.
The symbolic differentiation between Native and non-Native culture allows for
the grouping together of the various First Nations peoples as a single cultural
group, united by a "repository of shared feelings, history, and collective identity
that marks the social group as a distinct entity bound by common will"
(Meintjes 1990, 63). Native musicians themselves are often in agreement with
the promotion of a pan-musical/cultural identity as it serves to broaden their
consumption base, allows the music to reach a wider audience, and assists in
the "healing and restoration of pride in Native culture", goals expressed by
Native musicians like Kashtin. In this sense, Kashtin are in agreement with
the notion that the various stylistic ethnic markers can come to symbolize a
collective Native identity.

However, this type of symbolic representation also has the negative
effect of minimizing cultural differences between different First Nations groups
in the eyes of the general public. This was exemplified most clearly when the
music of Kashtin was banned by a number of Montreal radio stations in the summer of 1990. That summer, a tense confrontation developed between the people of the Mohawk Nation and the Quebec government. In an effort to block the expansion of a golf course onto land which they had claimed Aboriginal title, Mohawks erected a barricade on a dirt road leading to the proposed expansion site. This evolved into a lengthy armed stand-off between Mohawks and the Quebec police. The confrontation was labelled "the Oka crisis" by the Canadian press. This tense political situation brought about the boycott of Kashtin's music by a number of Montreal radio stations during the time of the crisis. Vollant's comments regarding both the crisis and the radio boycott were guarded and ambivalent.

We are in solidarity with the Mohawks, but violence makes people fearful, and we do not agree with taking up arms in violence (Godfrey 1990).

Vollant was also careful to point out the historic cultural differences between the Montagnais and the Mohawks:

The Montagnais are nomadic people who are known for being peace loving...The Mohawks on the other hand, throughout history have been very warlike, and always on the front line of national issues. Everyone must understand that we are different, and we have the right to our differences (ibid 1990).

Kashtin's shifting position on the representation of Native identity is typical of how the meaning of Native popular music is constructed and mediated by context. It comes as no surprise that various social actors affix different individual, social and political meanings to music. However the
comments of the members of Kashtin exemplify the dynamic nature of meaning production. Different symbolic meanings were highlighted, suppressed and manipulated by Kashtin as they reacted and interacted with mass mediated responses to the music, and shifting state of political relations between First Nations groups and Canadian government institutions.

The Music of Susan Aglukark

Aglukark is a 28 year old Inuk from Arviat, a small village located on the west coast of Hudson's Bay in the North West Territories. As her father was a Pentecostal minister, her musical background came mainly through her association with the Christian church. As a result of her close ties with the church, Aglukark has had very little exposure to traditional Inuk musical ceremonies (Waboose 1995, 15). While her music is a blend of country, folk, rock and pop styles, a number of her songs feature the use of a traditional Inuk hand drum. Aglukark also sings many of her songs in the language of Inuktitut. Her first C.D., Arctic Rose, was released independently in 1992. As a result of the success of this album, she was signed to a lucrative recording contract by EMI Records, and has since released a second C.D. entitled This Child in 1995.

Apart from her cross-Canada tours in support of these two albums, her public performances have included the singing of the Canadian national anthem at a hockey play-off game in Edmonton, and the performance of the
FIGURE 2: A publicity photo of Susan Aglukark, promoting the release of her 1995 album, *This Child*. Courtesy of EMI Music Canada.
gospel standard "Amazing Grace" at the close of the federal Aboriginal conference in 1992 (She recorded an a cappella performance of "Amazing Grace" for her Arctic Rose C.D. as well. See the Appendix, Example 3). Both of these songs were performed in Inuktitut. As well, during a concert shown on the CBC television program "Ear to the Ground", she performed a traditional Inuk chant set in a typical country-rock blues style. In blending the "traditional" and the "ethnic" with the modern and the mainstream, Aglukark's music projects a vision of a new Native identity which is a combination of two cultures. In singing songs like "Amazing Grace", which has obvious ties to the Christian church, and the Canadian national anthem, Aglukark projects a Native "voice" into social institutions which have been historically hegemonic.

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony to describe "the precise political, cultural and ideological forms through which, in any given society, a fundamental class is able to establish its leadership as distinct from the more coercive forms of domination" (Bennett et al. 1981, 187, italics in original). Hegemonic domination is realized through various "sites of hegemony - education, the various forms of 'high' and 'popular' culture, and their 'cement' in ideology, popular beliefs and 'common sense'" (ibid, 187). These "sites of hegemony" reproduce a "dominant ideology" which is established as a universal "common sense" view of the world. Gramsci was attentive in distinguishing between "force" (domination) and "consent" (coercion) as the two basic forms of social control. Within a "civil society", the manufacture of
"consent" is the defining component of hegemonic domination. Consent, however, is not promoted simply through "ideological domination" but through *negotiation* as well. As Graeme Turner points out,

...the dominant group has to engage in negotiation with opposing groups, classes, and values - and that negotiation must result in some *genuine* accommodation. That is, hegemony is not maintained through the obliteration of the opposition but through the *articulation* of opposing interests into political affiliations of the hegemonic group (Turner 1990, 211-212, italics in original).

Negotiation between opposing groups is initiated not only by the dominant group, but also by the marginalized group. Aglukark's rendering of the Canadian national anthem acts as a symbolic vehicle for the ideological negotiation between Native and non-Native Canadian cultures. Her performance functions as an aesthetic expression similar to the one Blundell describes in reference to the use of the Canadian flag at intertribal powwows.

Given their subordinate position within Canada, symbolic expression of native national patriotism...provide an ideological basis for aboriginal access to Canada's dominant political discourse. That is, Natives have attempted to legitimate their claims for better treatment through these reminders of their commitment to nationalistic values (Blundell 1993,58).

Aglukark's performance of "Oh Canada" is a symbolic expression of her combined identity as both a Native and a Canadian. Similarly, her version of "Amazing Grace" merges together her identity as a Native and a Christian. Inuktitut performances of these songs are symbolic expressions of Native peoples involvement in Canadian politics and the Christian church. As such, their participation in these social institutions necessarily requires the
consideration of specifically Native concerns.

The Negotiation of Identity within a Hegemonic Structure

Echoing Turner, Louise Meintjes points out that,

...in order to regulate subordinate groups, the dominant class is forced to reformulate itself constantly so that its core values are not threatened. In reformulating itself, it necessarily takes on some of the features of the subordinate group that it suppresses (Meintjes 1990, 68).

This reformulation is part of the process of negotiation, and subsequent accommodation, between white Canadian society and marginalized Native groups. The absorption of Native popular music into the Canadian mainstream music industry is an example of how a dominant group negotiates with a subordinate group within a hegemonic structure. The Canadian recording industry has reformulated itself to accommodate Native music through the creation of labels (Guilbault 1993b, 43). Significantly, it was a white Nashville producer who suggested that Lawrence Martin create the First Nations Music record label as a way of marketing his music. The creation of all-Native record labels assist in defining the music within a single category and therefore as a single commodity subject to market control of the dominant culture. Further, all-Native labels ensure Native music's placement within the rapidly expanding market niche of world musics. Commercial control of the music is important because many of the large multinational recording companies have recognized
the revenue-earning potential of world musics.\textsuperscript{15} Lawrence Martin's experience with First Nations Music exemplifies the music industry's interest in commercial control:

EMI approached us and said: "If you guys [Lawrence Martin and Wawatay Native Communications] started up your own label, EMI would be able to distribute your products for you". So that's how we got First Nations Music off the ground. And so right away we became a Native label, but a sort of sub-label of EMI. We then began looking around for Native products. But as soon as we started doing that, we were getting calls from Sony and BMG [another large multinational phonogram company] saying: "Well what's going on here? Where can we get our Native music?"

In controlling the distribution of Native pop music, production of the music is brought under control of the dominant culture, further enforcing the hegemonic relationship between the Native and the dominant non-Native society.

The process of asserting a Native identity into the Canadian national music markets necessarily requires that Native musicians adopt the language of the dominant system. Native musicians are thus required to conform to the stylistic requirements of an increasingly universal pop aesthetic (Frith 1989, 2). Basic elements of popular music include the use of simple western harmony, a lead vocal supported by instrumental accompaniment, typically including guitar (electric and/or acoustic), bass guitar and drum kit, use of simple duple

\textsuperscript{15} Wallis and Malm (1984, 74) refer to the major transnational phonogram companies CBS, EMI, Polygram, WEA and RCA as the "Big Five". These five companies control approximately 60 percent of the world's retail sales of recorded music in free market economies. Four of these five companies have created or acquired a number of subsidiary world music record labels in a response to the growing interest in various world musics.
meter and a dependence on the mass media (Nettl 1985, 85). As Wallis and Malm (1992) point out, "the music industry is...at the forefront of a move towards global standardization of cultural products [as a] handful of global phonogram companies are constantly increasing their degree of control over manufacturing and distribution resources" (ibid, 7).

Lawrence Martin has similarly experienced pressure to conform to the aesthetic standards of certain pop music genres.

LM: When I'm playing music, chanting is a part of it. The chanting just needs to be part of the song. And I don't want to compromise to the point of taking all the chants out just to please the radio programmers. Because this is my music. So even the second album [Message], I was asked [by the producers] to compromise on some of the chants. There was a bit more emphasis to go with a more commercial sound, but I didn't want to go too far with it.

CS: Do you think that's going to be a problem with the music. Are people telling you that you're not doing Native music?

LM: Oh yeah, certainly from both sides. It's from the country music critics who are saying: "well it's not country enough". And them from the First Nations side, they are saying well it's too.. it's too white or it's too country, it's not Native enough.

During my research I had the opportunity to speak with a number of Native musicians in Vancouver. One of the questions I always asked was what they thought of the Canadian Native musicians like Kashtin and Susan Aglukark, who were very much in the public eye at the time. The following discussion is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Native musicians Jimi Sidler (Ojibway) and Anthony Favel (Cree), two members of the
Jimi Sidler: With Kashtin and Susan Aglukark, I would definitely say that, since I've known Kashtin, and I hung out with them years ago when they came to Vancouver in the late [19]80's early [19]90's, well since that time they got involved in the machine [Mr. Sidler uses this term to refer to the popular music recording industry]. And the machine has a whole other agenda for the artist. A tip of the hat to Susan Aglukark because she's on her path and she's doing her thing. She's got that Native drum thing, I like that. And it's a tip of that hat in the music business that you can do that now. But to me it's very pop oriented. Some people say: 'do the pop and then you can go ahead and do your own thing'. On the other hand, there are a lot of artists who have compromised their own integrity.

CS: Do you think that that's what Susan Aglukark and Kashtin are doing?

JS: There's no doubt about it. When I knew Florent Vollant [of Kashtin], his vocal wasn't polished like that [like it is on his latest album Akua Tuta, 1994], the [traditional Native] drumming was far more extensive and the [Western pop] rhythm section was always a bit laid back there [in the mix]. I know that the influence of the Beatles was always there but it wasn't like it is now. Today you've got [the Western pop influence] right out front. I'm just not that interested in having Native music superimposed by pop and that is what I find happening. I'm not just talking about Susan Aglukark or Kashtin, I'm talking about what the machine [the music industry] has done to particular elements [the traditional Native elements] of the music.

CS: So you're saying that the music industry is taking away some of the rough edges and some of the interest of their styles and smoothing out those edges to make it more palatable to the general public?

JS: Right...to the general public...I just don't think that represents or identifies some of the more greater aspects of the greater community of Aboriginals. The last time I saw Kashtin I just about walked out. It was way too polished and waxy and glossy.

CS: What do you think, Anthony, about Aboriginal groups like Kashtin and Susan Aglukark?

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16 For further biographical information, see Chapter 4.
Anthony Favel: Well Kashtin have obviously given up some of the powers that they had in their own independence...like the pureness of them as a group coming out of their own community...it's sincere. Susan Aglukark, she's probably been singing all her life. She was as innocent as her first album was. And then her second album you can see the difference. The innocence of the traditional community lost it's importance to her. There was a true innocence on the first album with that traditional drum and that sort of back bush mentality of staying simple and true to nature. And then the industry came in and imposed their own standards. All of a sudden these organizations are dictating and giving you an ultimatum. And that to me is wrong, because you wouldn't see that in a traditional drum group. These people [in traditional native drum groups] out there in the Native communities are competing for notoriety, but they're doing it out of the sheer guts of knowing that they've trained all year long. They're out there doing the music with the dancers and they're doing something for the community - the greater community. They are there to show their stuff and share that with the community.

CS: You don't see people like Kashtin and Susan Aglukark fulfilling the same function for the community.

AF: They do, but you've got to pay them.

Lawrence Martin has emphasized the importance of including chanting and Native language, and Native themes in his music. Consumers of the music, like Sidler and Favel, similarly list the use of traditional instruments, a "rough" or "unpolished" vocal quality and the "purity" or "innocence" (Sidler's and Favel's terms) of the music as essential stylistic features of Native pop music. These features were said to be diminished as a result of national and international market pressures. All of these musical signs index the concept of "difference" between Native pop music and non-Native pop music. This musical difference functions as a symbol of cultural difference. The various stylistic markers are defended so passionately not simply because their loss is
a diminishing of musical/artistic integrity, but because it also represents a loss of cultural integrity. While recognizing the positive aspects of the fame of Native musicians, Sidler and Favel also see the relationship between Native musicians and the music industry as harmful to Native cultural politics.

Thus, reactions to Native popular music can be divided into two broad oppositional categories: 17

1) Native popular music may be seen as a promotion and reaffirmation of cultural identity in the highly visible public sphere of popular music.

2) The music may represent a loss of cultural identity, or at least a diminishing of it, as traditional Native musical elements are grafted onto popular music forms in such a way that the traditional elements are perceived to occupy a subordinate position within the music structure.

Often, reactions are a mixture of these two responses, as the symbolic meaning of Native popular music is negotiated within the Canadian Native community, and between the marginalized Native society and the dominant non-Native Canadian community.

17 These two categories were first suggested by Guilbault (1993, 34) in reference to "world beat" music in general.
CHAPTER 3

MUSIC AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS

Variations on a Textual Theme: The Symbol of Wounded Knee

A large part of the power of Native pop music is that it allows Natives access to the mainstream communication network. Expression of Native issues and concerns couched within commercially accessible music allows their voice to be heard by a large number of both Natives and non-Natives. Among the dominant themes in Native pop music are: cultural identity and pride, concern for the well being of Native communities (both locally and nationally), the continuity and change of traditional beliefs and values, contemporary political issues and problems, and Native spirituality and world view. Many of these themes may exist simultaneously within a single song. The following pages will examine how these themes are expressed through the multiple levels of meaning in Native pop songs.

Political content in the lyrics range from the subtle to the overt and from rage to reconciliation. Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee", Shingoose's "Loved Ones" and Robbie Robertson's "Ghost Dance" serve to illustrate various communicative strategies. All three songs deal with the historical and contemporary relationship between Natives and the dominant Euro-North American culture by referring to the massacre of unarmed Natives.
by the U.S. military at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on December 29, 1890.

It is no coincidence that these artists have all chosen to sing about Wounded Knee, as it is a well-known and well-documented event in U.S. government/Native relations.\(^\text{18}\) As a result, Wounded Knee has become a powerful "condensation symbol" (Jhappan 1990, 19) for many First Nations musicians, writers and artists.\(^\text{19}\) According to Jhappan, condensation symbols are defined by: a) a malleability which "allows for a multiplicity of definitions" which are "condensed" into one symbolic event, b) a tendency "to induce emotional responses and to provoke value judgments", and c) an imprecision which "gives the appearance of commonality while masking significant differences in interpretation between various users" (ibid). It is this last characteristic which makes Wounded Knee such an effective and fertile symbol of Native/non-Native political relations. It is significant that all three musicians mentioned above are Canadian, yet they are singing about American historical events. In singing about Wounded Knee, these musicians are using the historic political relationship between the American government and Native Americans as a symbol of the Native colonial situation throughout North America. Thus, despite the differences between Canadian and American government policies regarding each country's indigenous populations, Wounded

\(^{18}\) The events of 1890 are documented in Dee Brown's book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Brown 1970) and James Mooney's well known 1896 monograph, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Mooney and Wallace 1965).

\(^{19}\) The term "condensation symbol" was first used by Murry Edelman in *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1964), pp.5-7.
Knee is employed to symbolically represent a solidarity between Native Americans and Native Canadians. This symbolic solidarity is achieved by defining the events of Wounded Knee as typical of the oppressive political policies of both the Canadian and American governments. However, while each musician sings about Wounded Knee as a significant event in the historic relationship between Natives and Non-Natives, Wounded Knee as a symbol is capable of a number of different interpretations, each of which invokes a different emotional response.

The Music of Buffy Sainte-Marie

Buffy Sainte-Marie is a Cree musician and songwriter from Saskatchewan. She began her long and successful recording career in 1964 with the release of the album *It's My Way*. She became known nationally as a political folk singer with the mainstream hit "Universal Soldier". While she has written or co-written a number of songs which do not deal directly with Native issues (like the 1982 Oscar-winning "Up Where We Belong"), she has always championed Native causes and has remained politically active (Dudley 1987, Kelly 1992). Sainte-Marie recorded the song "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" for her 1992 C. D. *Coincidence and Likely Stories*. The album makes use of state-of-the-art technology and production techniques to project a very modern sound. The song itself discusses the second confrontation between Native peoples and the U.S. government which took place at Wounded Knee in
1973. This event and the one from 1890 are linked by the song’s title and chorus, which recall Dee Brown’s well-known book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970). The angry and confrontational mood of the song is typical of the protest song genre which Sainte-Marie has often employed.

"Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee"
*(Buffy Sainte-Marie)*

Indian legislation on the desk of a do-right Congressman
Now, he don’t know much about the issue so he picks up the phone and he asks advice from the Senator out in Indian country
A darling of the energy companies who are ripping off what’s left of the reservations.

I learned a safety rule
I don’t know who to thank
Don’t stand between the reservation and the corporate bank
They send in federal tanks
It isn’t nice but it’s reality

Bury my heart at Wounded Knee
Deep in the Earth
Cover me with pretty lies
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee.

We got the federal marshals
We got the covert spies
We got the liars by the fire
We got the FBI’s
They lie in court and get nailed and still Peltier goes off to jail

Bury my heart at Wounded Knee
Deep in the Earth
Cover me with pretty lies
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee.

My girlfriend Annie Mae talked about uranium
Her head was filled with bullets and her body dumped
The FBI cut off her hands and told us she’d died of exposure

Bury my heart at Wounded Knee
Deep in the Earth
Cover me with pretty lies
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee

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We had the Goldrush Wars
Didn't we learn to crawl
and still our history gets written in
a liar's scrawl
They tell ya
"Honey you can still be an Indian
down at the Y
on Saturday nights"

Bury my heart at Wounded Knee
Deep in the Earth
Cover me with pretty lies
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee

(Buffy Sainte-Marie - Chrysalis
Records F4 21920, 1992)

Buffy Sainte-Marie is employing Western popular music conventions to
voice an alternate interpretation of historical events, an interpretation which
has been traditionally mediated and/or suppressed by the dominant Euro-North
American culture. Sainte-Marie sings, "...and still our history gets written in a
liar's scrawl." Her lyrics provide a revisionist reading of historical events from
a "Native perspective." The Native perspective "requires that the dominant
point of view - the Westernized parochial, provincial, linear perspective - be
rethought from the point of view of how North American Indians perceive
important questions of their culture, history, politics, religion, language, music,
art and so forth" (Young Man 1992, 195).21 Revisionist readings of history by
Natives serve a dual function of contesting or displacing Euro-American

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21 Of course this issue is more complex than this. There are any number of
varying points of view within the larger North American Native community. The
point here is simply that Sainte-Marie's point of view is a Native perspective as
opposed to a non-Native perspective.
historical narratives while simultaneously asserting Native history as being of equal validity and importance. Sainte-Marie's interpretation of the events at Wounded Knee serve to point out the discrepancies between history as manufactured by the dominant North American culture through textbooks and the media, and the perceived realities of life for First Nations peoples.

The Music of Robbie Robertson

Robbie Robertson is a mixed blood Mohawk musician who has enjoyed a great deal of success and notoriety within the North American music industry. He began his musical career in the 1960's as a member of the rock group "The Band". Like Sainte-Marie, Robertson has written a number songs which do not deal specifically with Native issues. However, in 1993 he agreed to produce a soundtrack for The Native Americans, a made-for-television documentary which detailed the history of Native peoples in America. For this soundtrack, Robertson gathered together and collaborated with a number of Native pop musicians from both Canada and the United States. The result was the C.D. 

Music for The Native Americans.

Robertson expressed the idea that this C.D., on which the song "Ghost Dance" appears, was in part an attempt to draw attention to the large number of talented Native musicians in North America and how they have been

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22 This group became famous for their collaboration with Canadian blues musician Ronnie Hawkins and later, with Bob Dylan.
underexposed in the media. He has also expressed the idea of being a cultural ambassador in a number of radio interviews (Gzowski 1994, Gaberau 1994). Robertson seems more conscious than Sainte-Marie of trying to tap into the commercial mainstream and, as such, his treatment of Wounded Knee concentrates more on reconciliation and healing. The song "Ghost Dance" makes only oblique references to the Wounded Knee incident and instead focuses on Native pride and power. The commentary in the booklet accompanying the C.D. fills in more historical information about the event, but Robertson is careful not to be overly accusational.

"Ghost Dance"
(Jim Wilson and Robbie Robertson)

Crow has brought the message
To the children of the sun
For the return of the buffalo
And for a better day to come

You can kill my body
You can damn my soul
for not believing in your god
And some world down below

(chorus)
You don't stand a chance against
my prayers
You don't stand a chance against
my love
They outlawed the Ghost Dance
But we shall live again, we shall live again

My sister above
She has red paint
She died at Wounded Knee
Like a latter day saint

You got the big drum in the distance
Blackbird in the sky
That's the sound that you hear
When the buffalo cry

(Crazy Horse was a mystic
He knew the secret of the trance
And Sitting Bull the great apostle
Of the Ghost Dance

Come on Comanche
Come on Blackfoot
Come on Shoshone
Come on Cheyenne
We shall live again

Come on Arapaho
Come on Cherokee
Come on Paiute
Come on Sioux
We shall live again

(Robbie Robertson - Capitol Records
8 28295, 1994)
Robbie Robertson's treatment of the subject is substantially different from Sainte-Marie's. He refers to Wounded Knee by singing more generally about the Ghost Dance religion.23 Robertson sings in the chorus "We shall live again", echoing a central belief of the religion that by performing the Ghost Dance, the spirits of the dead would rise and live again. Robertson uses the Ghost Dance as a metaphor for the resurrection and renewal of Native cultures in present-day North America. At the end of the song Robertson cites a number of different Native tribes - Comanche, Blackfoot, Shoshone, and Cheyenne - all Plains culture tribes of the American mid-West, and again sings "We shall live again". This list reflects the popularity of the Ghost Dance religion among Plains tribes in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. In singing about the Ghost Dance as though it were part of a common cultural history, the music functions to promote inter-tribal solidarity. Robertson reinforced this idea by repeatedly making reference to the power of "inter-tribal unity" in the liner notes of his C.D.

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23 The Ghost Dance religion and it's accompanying ceremony was initiated by Wovoka, the Paiute prophet, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. It was created in response to the ever increasing settlement of the western United States, the extermination of the buffalo and the eviction of countless Native tribes from their ancestral lands. The dance itself was performed in the belief that it would invoke supernatural aid in ridding the land of White settlers and restoring Native culture to an earlier and more prosperous era. The Sioux's practice of the Ghost Dance at Standing Rock resulted in the U.S. government sending in military troops to the Pine Ridge Reservation. This resulted in the historic massacre of 1890.
The Music of Shingoose

Shingoose is an Ojibway musician currently living in Toronto, Ontario. The song "Loved Ones" is found on his 1988 album *Natural Tan*. The Wounded Knee symbol is used more generally by Shingoose to draw attention to the historic and present day colonial situation of Natives in North America. He focuses not so much on historical event itself as the more general social injustice that the event has come to symbolize. The appeal seems to be directed at the non-Native public in the hope that some of the social injustices suffered by Natives will be brought to the attention of the Canadian public. Shingoose draws comparisons between the two historical events at Wounded Knee and their significance in Native/non-Native relations:

In [19]73 was the Wounded Knee occupation in South Dakota and that kinda grabbed my attention and I realized that "Hey, there was more to this than what was portrayed in the movies and books" and so on. And that was when I really started getting interested in the struggle of the First Nations. Well, ever since then I've embarked on a career to discover that portion of myself and then to write songs about it and become kinda like a cultural ambassador, in that sense. (Neuenfeldt 1991, 103).

As Noel Dyck (1986) points out, "Although many issues generate deep concern and attract considerable attention, not all social problems become public ones" (*ibid*, 31-32). Shingoose appears to be attempting to use pop music to bring Native concerns to the forefront of public consciousness in order to create controversy and stimulate public discussion about Native issues.
"Loved Ones"
(Shingoose)

Try to remember Wounded Knee back in 1890,
It may be something you'd like to forget.
I know I haven't got over it yet.
Mass murder in the first degree, one I can't believe.
How could it happen here or was it just a bad dream?

(Loved ones) Don't bury me (Loved Ones)
at Wounded Knee.
(Loved ones) Don't know why (Loved Ones)
they had to die.

Do you remember the cold hard winter when you first arrived?
How you repaid us, you lied and betrayed us,
the ones who helped you to survive!
A hundred years have slipped away but time is all
that's changed,
who would have thought it would end like this?
Say it's just a bad dream.
Down in the south the fight is on over land and ore.
Up in the north, they're flooding us out, no
one's keeping score.
Guilt and shame, won't change a thing but it's a place to start.
I'll share the blame if we can heal this broken heart.

(Shingoose-Headband Music)
(Headband Records HC-8801, Canada 1988)

In "Loved Ones", Shingoose draws parallels between the historic
injustice of Wounded Knee and the current state of Canadian
Native/government relations with regards to land claims and land use. Thus,
Wounded Knee becomes a symbol of the contemporary treatment of Natives by
the Canadian government. In asking the listener to remember and
acknowledge Wounded Knee, Shingoose is asking North Americans to take
responsibility for the actions and policies of their government, both historically
and in the present. Responsibility is a key issue in the construction of a public problem, as the assignment of responsibility shapes the subsequent handling of the problem in both public and political spheres (Dyck 1986, 32). He sings, "How could it happen here?", urging the listener to question how government policy towards Native North Americans led to the events of Wounded Knee, and the degree to which the government should be held responsible and accountable.

Dyck points out that ideas about the causes of public problems involve both cognitive and moral judgements: "Without both a cognitive belief that a given situation can, in fact, be altered and a moral judgment that this ought to happen, a situation is not at issue and, hence, not a public problem" (ibid).

Shingoose ends the song singing, "Guilt and shame won't change a thing, but it's a place to start. I'll share the blame if we can heal this broken heart". The problem of the treatment of Natives by the government is addressed as a public problem, which is therefore the concern of both Natives and non-Natives. Shingoose is suggesting that the recognition of this problem is the first step towards a solution.

**Ironic Meanings**

The above examples have illustrated how various meanings are generated in song texts through the manipulation of the Wounded Knee symbol. However, a song's symbolic meaning is complicated, and in some cases
subverted, by the accompanying text. Tensions between the text and the music allow for the possibility of parodic or ironic meaning. Shingoose's song "Elijah" exemplifies this type of parodic manipulation of symbols. The song is a humorous and whimsical recounting of the events surrounding the demise of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990. The Accord, which dealt mainly with Quebec's desire for recognition as a "distinct society", was stopped in the Canadian legislature due, in part, to Elijah Harper's "no" vote. His actions came to symbolize "not just Meech Lake's failure, but also the perceived failure of Canadian society and governments to address both the unresolved issues of [Native] rights and land claims and the overriding moral issues [surrounding the status]...of Indigenous peoples within modern Canada" (Neuenfeldt 1991,104). Shingoose set the lyrics of "Elijah" to "Kawliga", a song written and performed by the American Country musician, Hank Williams.

"Elijah"
(Shingoose)

Elijah was a Cree 'Injun raised in "Mother Nature".
Fell in love with politics and joined the legislature.
Elijah, Elijah stood there and never let it show that he would be the one to just say no.

He always held an eagle feather wasn't one to talk.
Politicians hated him and hoped someday he'd walk.
Elijah, Elijah, stood there and never gave a sign that he meant to say no all that time.

    Good old Elijah hero of the day
    Good old Elijah finally got a say
    Well, is it any wonder that Mulroney's face is red?
    Elijah, no is all he said.
Then one day a man named Brian did his level best to get old Elijah just to say "yes".
Elijah, Elijah never thought he'd be the one, to kill Meech Lake without a gun

Elijah Harper MLA from Rupertsland united Indian nations to make a final stand.
Elijah, Elijah you'll go down in history you said no to Meech to keep us free.

Good old Elijah hero of the day
Good old Elijah finally got a say
Well, is it any wonder Mulroney's face is red?
Elijah, no is all he said.

(Shingoose-Headband Music)

"Kawliga"
(Hank Williams and Fred Rose)

Kawliga was a wooden Indian standing by the door
He fell in love with an Indian maiden over in the antique store.
Kawliga just stood there and never let it show
So she could never answer "yes" or "no".

He always wore his Sunday feathers and held a tomahawk
The maiden wore her beads and braids and hoped someday he'd talk.
Kawliga, too stubborn to ever show a sign
Because his heart was made of knotty pine.

Poor old Kawliga, he never got a kiss
Poor old Kawliga, he don't know what he missed
Is it any wonder that his face is red
Kawliga, that poor ol' wooden head.

Kawliga was a lonely Indian, never went nowhere
His heart was set on the Indian maiden with the coal-black hair.
Kawliga just stood there and never let it show
So she could never answer "yes" or "no".

And then one day a wealthy customer bought the Indian maid
And took her, oh, so far away but ol' Kawliga stayed.
Kawliga just stands there as lonely as can be
And wishes he was still an old pine tree.

Poor old Kawliga, he never got a kiss
Poor old Kawliga, he don't know what he missed
Is it any wonder that his face is red
Kawliga, that poor ol' wooden head.

(Milne Music Inc.)

Shingoose's subversion of "Kawliga" can be analyzed and understood as an example of what Linda Hutcheon defines as a "postmodern parody". Hutcheon suggests that postmodern parody, "evoke[s] what reception theorists call the horizon of expectation of the spectator, a horizon formed by recognizable conventions of genre, style, or form of representation. This is then destabilized and dismantled step by step" (Hutcheon 1989, 114). In manipulating the symbols of the dominant culture, a postmodern parody "offer[s] a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it" (Hutcheon 1988, 35). Simply by participating in the field of popular music, Native musicians like Shingoose are in a sense complicitious with its discursive practices. However, in manipulating the symbols and conventions of country music, Shingoose is able question and contest the symbolic meanings of "Kawliga"'s stylistic conventions and lyric subtext. As Hutcheon suggests, parody "uses the reappropriated forms of the past to speak to a society from within the values and history of that society, while still questioning it" (Hutcheon 1989, 12). This allows for an ideological critique of "how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive
from both continuity and difference" (ibid, 93).

The lyrics of Williams' "Kawliga" concern a wooden "cigar-store Indian" statue and his love for an "Indian maiden" in an antique store. The racist subtext of the song is revealed in such lyrics as "Is it any wonder that his face is red", and in the stereotyped image of Kawliga wearing his "Sunday feathers" and holding a "tomahawk". Shingoose subverts Williams' song by replacing mute and stereotyped character of Kawliga with Elijah Harper, a Native whose voice was heard loudly and clearly by the Canadian government. The following chart lists the inverted characteristics of Elijah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kawliga</th>
<th>Elijah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>silent and voiceless</td>
<td>given a voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stereotyped</td>
<td>modern &quot;real life&quot; Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powerless</td>
<td>powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object of pathos:</td>
<td>object of pride:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&quot;poor old Kawliga&quot;)</td>
<td>(&quot;good old Elijah&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawliga's face is red</td>
<td>Mulroney's face is red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These inversions serve to highlight and challenge the racist representation of Natives in Williams' song. Using Hutcheon's terms, Shingoose evokes the "horizon of expectation" of the listener through the use of the chord progression, melody and narrative structure of "Kawliga" and then uses these conventions to critique the ideology of the song by "ironically signalling difference at the very heart of similarity" (Hutcheon 1988, 26).

The genre of Country music itself, with its socio-historical ties to white America and mythic iconography of "Cowboys and Indians", is also coopted and subverted by Shingoose, as a Canadian Native becomes the hero of the song.
Use of the Country genre is also significant because of the great popularity of Country music on the Native reserves across Canada (Whidden 1984). By singing a country song about a Native hero, Natives are able to locate an image of themselves in a genre where they have been historically marginalized.

Shingoose is very conscious of this process of symbolic manipulation and suggests that it is an inherently "Indian" strategy. He has stated,

...a lot of people say, "Well, are you an Indian folksinger or are you an Indian musician?", or something like that. And I say, "Yes, I'm an Indian" and "Yes, I'm a singer". So, I mean, I guess that means I'm both, but in other ways it's probably not quite accurate. There's ways to look at it. I think that if you want to try and reach an audience you have to go with what's happening and I think that's very much an Indian thing. I mean, they looked in their environment and they used what they needed and took what they needed and left the rest. Now, for me to get an idea across, if I just took out a drum and I did it in an oral tradition it would be labelled a "cultural oddity", would never get played on the air. I'd be in the "Ethnic" bin somewhere in row 99 somewhere [in a record store]. So, to try to connect to a certain market you've got to use the symbols, the mythologies, all the things that connect you with a certain audience. Music is universal and you use what you have to use in order to get the message across... (Neuenfeldt 1991, 106).

The use of parody is an effective communicative tool for Shingoose (and other Native musicians) because it allows him to address controversial social or political issues in a humorous and non-confrontational way. Ruth Phillips has noted,

I am endlessly amazed at the control that Native people exert over their critique. It is extremely controlled. Partly, it's been imposed on them by their particular historical experience--and/or something in the Native tradition that has survived as a value, as a way of dealing with people in groups, is fundamentally non-confrontational, I think. There's a great emphasis on talking things out and arriving at consensus. And I think what they're doing is talking things out with us now (Ryan 1991a)
The critique in Shingoose's song is subtle and controlled. Through the use of parody and humour, "Elijah" challenges the listener to question the stereotypes of Williams' "Kawliga" without being overtly accusational. In this way, "Elijah" promotes alternate ways of experiencing and understanding the world, and is used as a political strategy to further awareness and understanding of key political issues. Joseph Epes Brown has similarly noted the importance of humour as a means of communication in Native culture:

In traditional societies...the role of the clown serves an enormously important purpose in that it opens a door...into a realm of greater reality than the ebb and flow of everyday life. And this is accomplished, I think, essentially by two means. There is first of all the element of shock.... Secondly, once that awareness, that alertness and openness has been achieved through the initial shock, then it is possible to communicate on another level through the use of humour. (Douling 1979, 54).

Shingoose has echoed this idea, commenting that he uses humour,

...to try and get people to ask those questions: "What does it mean?" "Why do you use it [humour] in that form?" "What were you trying to say?" I use [humour] to provoke curiosity. In that curiosity is the doorway to understanding...(Ryan 1991b).

Hutcheon points out that "the use of parody to critically engage the discourse of a dominant ideology is a typical strategy of the 'ex-centric' or marginalized peoples" (Hutcheon 1985, 35). The Canadian First Nations population "in the aggregate constitute a subordinated minority whose political demands and aspirations far exceed the formal political power at their disposal" (Jhappan 1990, 19). As a politically disempowered social group, popular music provides Natives with an important forum for the expression of political grievances or social injustices; a publicity-seeking strategy with the
intent of capturing national and even international attention. Humour and parody are effective critical tools of marginalized peoples precisely because of their subtlety. The parodic manipulation of public symbols has a critical edge without being aggressive and accusational. As Beverley Gartrell notes,

The major political asset of the colonized group becomes the ideology of the colonizers and the colonized's own skill at manipulating the symbols of their dominators; the threat of material sanctions is replaced by the threat of political embarrassment, through pointing up discrepancies between professed ideology and actual behaviour. To those accustomed to the more brutal world of classical colonial situations (or South Africa), where struggle is often based on the threat and often use of force, this seems a strange kind of politics, whose substance seems to consist solely of the insubstantial stuff of rhetoric. What power can a tiny minority yield? Unable to exert material control over the environment of the powerful, it can only challenge the self-concepts of both bureaucratic and political office-holders and the citizens of the nation, an appeal to the legal rights institutionalized in an earlier phase. The resulting power is tenuous and fluctuating, for it is based on ideologies themselves changing, and it depends on the receptivity of some audience--elements in the wider society willing to listen to the message being sent to the dominated group (Gartrell 1986, 10-11).

Fostering the "receptivity of some audience" is a key concern of political pop songs. This receptivity is fostered through the use of popular music styles.
CHAPTER FOUR

NATIVE POPULAR MUSIC IN VANCOUVER

This chapter will focus on some of the relevant social aspects of the Native musical community in Vancouver and how this local community interacts with, and is effected by, music produced on a national level (as discussed in the previous three chapters). There are over 43,000 Natives living in the Greater Vancouver area. However, despite these large numbers, Native musical activity maintains a relatively low profile in the city. Throughout the year, local bars provide the main public venues for Native musicians performing popular music. In the summer, large outdoor music festivals such as the Vancouver Folk Music Festival and the "Under the Volcano" festival feature a number of Native musicians. However, to my knowledge, there are no venues in the city which feature strictly Native performers. As a partial response to this situation, a pair of concerts were organized by local Native music enthusiast Gunargie O'Sullivan (Kwakiutl) which featured a number of Native musicians living in the Greater Vancouver area. These events were named "Red Jam Slams".

24 The "Greater Vancouver Area" refers not simply to the city of Vancouver but to the outlying suburbs which surround the city. Winnipeg and Montreal are the only Canadian cities with higher Native populations (Statistics Canada 1991).
The "Red Jam Slam"

The Red Jam Slam that I attended took place on a warm Saturday on June 24, 1995, a date chosen to coincide approximately with the Summer solstice. It was the second event of its kind - the first was held six months earlier and had been much smaller, both in audience attendance and in the number of performers. The second event was a marathon thirteen and a half hour concert beginning at noon and ending at 1:30 A.M.. This event featured 15 different musical acts and involved close to 40 Native musicians. The venue was the lounge of a downtown hotel, a location known within the Native community as a "Native bar".25 During this event, I was witness to a multitude of performers and styles including: folk musicians, self-styled singer-songwriters, Chicago style blues, country, hard rock, heavy metal, drum groups, jazz-rock fusion, and a rap group. Some were "cover" bands performing popular country and rock music from the 1960's and 1970's. Others played music in a rock or blues style which they had written themselves but which mimicked the mainstream commercial North American forms heard on the radio and seen on television.

Performances by the various musical acts generally lasted between thirty minutes and an hour. Between the performances, Gunargie O'Sullivan (or one of the other organizers) would take the stage to address the audience. These

25 This was a term used by many of those in attendance to describe the bar. The bar is not owned or operated by Natives, however the clientele is to a large degree (although not exclusively) Native.
announcements took the form of brief biographical sketches of previous or upcoming performers, raffle draws for prizes such as t-shirts, baseball caps and posters, and information regarding upcoming events in the Native community.

Attendance at the Red Jam Slam was quite sparse for the first four to five hours of the event (audience numbers fluctuated between 12 and 50 people). However, as the evening progressed, attendance rose significantly and by 9:00 pm the bar was nearing capacity (approximately 250 people). The audience was noticeably pan-generational as well as socially and racially varied. The age of audience members ranged from people in their late teens and early twenties to those in their seventies. In the first hours of the event, the audience was a mix of both Natives and non-Natives. However as the evening advanced, the audience became more predominantly (indeed almost exclusively) Native.

Biographical Sketches of Native Musicians at the Red Jam Slam

Jimi Sidler

Jimi Sidler (age 40) is an Ojibway Native born on Manitoulin Island, located at the Northern end of Lake Huron in Ontario. He was orphaned at a very young age and adopted by a Dutch immigrant family. Jimi subsequently spent his youth on the family's farm in Southern Ontario. He grew up never knowing his parents and did not discover his Native heritage until 1987.

Sidler began playing the guitar and singing at the age of 12 after
becoming interested in the music of Van Morrison and Bob Dylan. Although he has taken an occasional guitar lesson, Jimi is basically a self-taught musician. Leaving home at the age of 15, Sidler travelled across North America for several years "living the life of a troubadour" (Sidler's description) and playing music on the streets in order to pay for food and shelter. He arrived in Vancouver in 1980 and, during the 1980's and early 1990's, participated in a number of different musical groups, mainly performing rhythm and blues "cover songs" in bars throughout the Greater Vancouver area. Jimi also wrote and performed his own music during this period and gave solo performances at a number of different Native and non-Native charity events and Band council meetings.

Jimi is currently a member of the Vancouver musical group "Indians and Dogs", a large ensemble whose membership includes himself (singing and playing guitar), one other guitar player, between 2 and 4 saxophone and horn players (depending on the event and who is available), two drummers (one playing a drum kit, the other playing miscellaneous percussion), a four person female drum group who play hand-held Native frame drums and sing, and Anthony Favel (see below) who sings, and plays a number of wooden end-blown flutes. The group's membership is a mix of both Native and non-Native musicians and the music performed is an eclectic mix of contemporary styles, incorporating traditional Cree powwow drumming and chanting with jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock.
Anthony Favel

Anthony Favel (age mid-30's) is a Cree musician from Saskatchewan. While attending residential school he sang in the choir and received his first lessons on flute, saxophone and clarinet. As well, he has sung "traditional music" from an early age. He said, "the singing and the traditional music [that I perform] goes back to my childhood. It goes back probably to when I was about two or three years old. The Sundance area was just about 60 meters away from our house". At the age of 18 he joined a powwow drum group and began formal training in powwow drumming and singing style. For the next several years he spent his summers touring with the drum group and performing at various powwow festivals throughout Canada.

Anthony came to Vancouver in the early 1990's to attend the Emily Carr College of Art. He joined the music group "Indians and Dogs" in the summer of 1994. In this group he plays a number end-blown wooden flutes from North and Central America, Asia, and Africa and performs traditional Cree style chanting and drumming.

Tim Michel

Tim Michel (age early-40's) is a Shuswap Native born in Kamloops, B.C.

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26 The Sundance is the central ritual of traditional Cree religion. The Sundance is an annual, communal summer festival which can last for a number of days. During this event, dancers pledge to dance in the hot sun for the duration of the festival (between 2 to 4 days). See Fletcher (1883), Black Elk (1971) and Mails (1978) for historical and modern day accounts of the Sundance ritual.
During his youth he lived both in the city and on a neighbouring reserve, where his father taught at a residential school. He came to Vancouver in 1980 for the purpose of studying computer sciences at the University of British Columbia. Upon graduation, he accepted a job in Calgary, where he worked for a number of years. He returned to Vancouver after pursuing a series of government contract jobs in Alberta and in the interior of B.C. When I spoke with him in the summer of 1995, he was working as a computer consultant and writing technical manuals. As well, he worked part-time as an actor, appearing in a number of films and television shows produced in the Vancouver area.

Tim has been playing the guitar and singing for the past six years. He has had no formal musical training with the exception of "three months of guitar lessons 24 years ago". He had little interest in music during his childhood and described himself as rather "amusical" ("I was one of those kids the nuns in school told to 'mouth the words' [during choir practice]"). He began learning the guitar by playing the music of Harry Chapin, Hank Williams, Jim Croce, and other folk and country musicians. His current repertoire consists mainly of songs he has written himself.

Tim has little training or knowledge of Shuswap traditional music with the exception of a song taught to him by his grandfather. He calls the song a "Thanks Song" and it is sung in the Shuswap language with the accompaniment of a small hand drum. He has also written a song called "The
Family Song” which is also sung in Shuswap in a traditional chanting style.\textsuperscript{27} He performed this song at the Red Jam Slam where I first met him.

Tim does not try to incorporate traditional Shuswap musical styles into his folk-styled songs, but has said that he would like to incorporate more traditional stories into his music. He would also like to write more songs in the Shuswap language but is constrained by his own limited knowledge of the language. Tim also feels that he can't sing in Shuswap using "Western-European melody and chords" because the language is too dissimilar to English. While he views his folk-styled songs as separate and different from traditional music, he sees some of his songs functioning as a continuation of Shuswap musical tradition because they continue the oral tradition of storytelling.

The Red Jam Slam was one of the first public performances that Tim had given. He writes and plays music mainly for his own pleasure and has no aspirations to become a professional musician.

Mary Longman

Mary Longman (age: approx. mid 30's) has been playing the guitar since the age of 17. A Saulteaux Native who was born on Gordons Reserve in Saskatchewan, Mary's interest in music was sparked by her father who was a

\textsuperscript{27} Although he admits to having created the song, he refused to claim that he had "written" it. Tim described the his song-writing process by stating that the song "just came to him".
"bluegrass musician". She studied art at McGill University in Montreal and at the Emily Carr School of Art in Vancouver. She currently lives on a reserve near Merritt in the interior of B.C. where she teaches visual arts at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, a school whose curriculum reflects a strong emphasis on Native culture. Mary is also a successful visual artist whose artwork has been displayed in galleries throughout Canada.

Mary's musical tastes favour "modern Native stuff" including Buffy Sainte-Marie and The Seventh Fire (a rock group from Ottawa whose membership includes a mix of Native and non-Native musicians), as well as white pop musicians such as Jane Arden and Sarah McLaughlin. Her current musical repertoire consists of a number of songs which she has written herself, as well as a few "cover songs". Like Tim Michel, she has little knowledge of traditional Native music. However, she has said she tries to incorporate "traditional themes and values" into her songs. Describing her songs as dealing with "the day-to-day realities faced by Native people today", she hopes that her music will help to effect changes in how Native peoples view themselves. Considering herself fortunate to have a successful career, she expressed the wish to give something back to the Native community by sharing her knowledge through her music and her teaching. Mary performs on an irregular basis and views her music as strictly a hobby.
FIGURE 3 (top): Indians and Dogs performing at the Red Jam Slam. Photo by Chris Scales.
Social function

Exegetic statements regarding the social function of the Red Jam Slam varied among organizers and performers. Principle organizer Gunargie O'Sullivan regarded the event as an opportunity for a paid public performance by both amateur and professional Native musicians. As well, she viewed the Red Jam Slam as a public showcase for the many talented Native musicians in Vancouver. Co-organizer Donald Morin (who is also a member of the musical group "Indians and Dogs") considered the event to be more of an uncensored forum for the expression of Native political concerns. He stated, "the Red Jam Slam is about giving Natives a 'voice'. It's about giving Native musicians a chance to perform without having to concern themselves with commercial pressures".

I believe that local events like the Red Jam Slam serve a social function similar to that of nationally distributed recorded Native pop music. Public musical performances by Native musicians serve to bring the disparate elements of the Vancouver Native community together and function as a site for social integration. The Red Jam Slam served as a valuable mechanism for assembling members from various social, tribal, and racial backgrounds of the Vancouver Native community. At this event, band and tribal affiliation were minimized, while expressions of pan-tribal solidarity were emphasized. Further evidence of social integration was the minimal value the organizers of the Red Jam Slam placed on the musical ability of the participating musicians.
This was expressed in the equal distribution of revenues generated by the event among all of the participating musicians, regardless of musical ability or professional status. This disregard for professional status was not shared, however, by all of the participating musicians. Members of the musical group "The Tribe", one of the few professional acts performing at the event, lobbied the organizers unsuccessfully for a larger share of the profits, claiming that their presence at the Red Jam Slam increased the attendance and overall success of the event.

Anthony Favel of Indians and Dogs, described how Native musicians performing at such events serve an integrative social function:

Anthony Favel:...going from [performing in a traditional powwow drum group] into contemporary music with traditional music in mind - you can still reach those transcendental moments where you're rescuing people, or providing them a place to be at peace. And when you see people and how the music effects people, you realize it's very special. And that service you're providing is a fulfilment that you get from within, but that comes from the public. And what we've been doing the last year or so, with Donald and Jimi [members of Indians and Dogs] and the Hussies [an all-female Native drum group that often performs with the band] is sort of an evolution - a bringing together of several different Nations, both Native and non-Native. And it's really quite beautiful, the harmonies that we've come together with. Because we've all come from different Nations, we've all got different backgrounds, we've all got different musical...you know, we've been trained differently or we enjoy different music, apart from what we play. And that adds a very special dynamic to what we do, what we share, what we've learned - to accept each other and give each other freedom.

CS: So you think that the band that you're in now is similar to the drum groups you've participated in by virtue of the fact that the band is fulfilling the same service of bringing a community together?

AF: It can and has. It's very special, and the public doesn't really know it until it's gone, because people always come back to us after a show
and ask "when are we going to see you again, when are we going to see all of you up on the stage again". That's been a very regular occurrence these days. And that's really special to know that people really want to see you. But it's not commercial. It certainly had nothing to do with commercial value. It has to do with just getting together and making some music for people, with no political or social agenda...[laughs] although there can be.

While musical groups like Favel's "Indians and Dogs" maintain that their music contains no explicit political messages, Favel admits that despite the intentions of the band members, their music is often used as a political symbol by those who hire them to perform. Favel's comments highlight the imprecise symbolic meaning of Native pop music. Music making in a public, secular sphere served to further inter-tribal and inter-racial communication. The performance of popular music at the Red Jam Slam was an effective facilitator of this because it was understood by many of the performers and members of the audience as simply "entertainment". As entertainment, pop songs are ideally suited to serve as a form of public address. While Favel insisted that the music of Indians and Dogs was not overtly political, many other Native performers at the Red Jam Slam sang songs which dealt with Native political issues. The performance of pop songs allowed the performers to address explicitly Native political and social issues within the social structure of an "evening of entertainment".

However at the Red Jam Slam, while audience members were receptive to political statements in song, other expressions of political concerns were met with indifference and, in some cases, hostility. At one point in the evening, a
raffle was held for the presentation of a poster depicting a scene from the "Oka Crisis". The master of ceremonies prefaced the draw by reading a statement, written by the poster's producers, which expressed the wish that all Natives nations in Canada offer support and strength to the Mohawk Nation by standing behind them in solidarity during their time of struggle. The reading of the statement was interrupted several times by the repeated screams of "No politics!" by one of the audience members. It seemed that for this audience member, the overt reference to a political event (the Oka Crisis) had crossed some imaginary boundary separating acceptable and unacceptable channels of political discourse. Thus political pop songs were acceptable expressions of political dissent while spoken statements, such as political speeches, were not.28

28 Other examples of less overt political statements occurred throughout the evening. Over the course of the evening there were a number of raffle prizes given away. Near the end of the evening, when the drawing of ticket numbers failed to produce any more winners, t-shirts and posters were handed out to the first people who approached the stage with a Indian Status Card. This suggests that the value of an Indian Status card in the eyes of the organizers and audience members was reduced to the card's ability to enable their owners to win a free t-shirt or baseball cap.
CONCLUSIONS

Ethnomusicology has long been interested in the homology between cultural values and musical values. What is valued in music is thought to be an indicator of what is valued in a culture. With this in mind, what conclusions can we draw from the increasing production and usage of popular music styles by Native Canadians? From the vast array of musical styles employed by the various musicians participating in the Red Jam Slam, and by the wide variety of music recorded and distributed on a national level, one may conclude that it is not simply any one pop style that is valued more than any other. However what is valued are those elements which make the Native popular music distinct from non-Native popular music. I believe that Native musicians and audiences base evaluations of Native popular music not only on stylistic elements, but on functionality as well. Questions about functional value include:

1) Political effectiveness of the music - does it address the political and social concerns of Native Canadians?

2) The ability of the music to bring the Native community (local or national) together in solidarity.

3) The ability of the music to benefit the Native community (locally or nationally) and future generations through expressions of Native pride and healing.
Popular music is an effective medium in achieving these goals by acting as a "Lingua Franca" (Guilbault 1993, 37) for all Native Canadians, allowing communication to occur between different Native communities across Canada and North America. This kind of widespread communication serves to redefine ideas about Canadian Native identity and community. As Reebee Garofalo points out,

"[i]t is in this dialectic of the global and the local...that new ethnic identities begin to emerge - identities conceived not as essential, stable, static representations tied to a fixed place, but as a moveable, developing, relational process of identification that links the traditions of the past with all the dislocations of the world system (Garofalo 1993, 25).

The profusion of musical styles in Native popular music is an indicator of the various musical and social spheres in which the modern Canadian Native participates. First Nations peoples in Canada are at once members of local, national and global communities. Nationally distributed recorded music, mediated by the popular music industry, serves to redefine social identity in such a way that Canadian Natives come to recognize and define their local culture through its interaction with the larger Canadian non-Native society. Local perceptions of community are thus influenced by nationally distributed recorded music which, in turn, helps to redefine local identity.

At the Red Jam Slam in Vancouver, media coverage of the event was of great importance to the organizers. Gunargie O'Sullivan made a point of notifying all of the local television networks about the time and place of the event (which resulted in news coverage of the event by one of the networks).
and other Red Jam Slam organizers videotaped and recorded the entire event for posterity. These recordings were subsequently broadcast by Gunargie O'Sullivan as a series of radio programs on a local cooperative radio station. These actions were explained to me as simply ways of getting more exposure for the musicians and, in general, to raise the profile of Native music and musicians in Vancouver. However, these actions were also the result of a tacit recognition by the organizers of the larger Canadian community of Natives who are linked through the telecommunications network of television, radio and the mass production and national distribution of recorded music.

These kinds of processes are not unique to Native popular music. In speaking about the modern state of popular music, Richard Middleton notes:

New collisions arise all the time, both between synchronically coexisting songs and styles, and between historical points of reference. Internal quotation and allusion, ironic mixes of styles, revival of older songs and styles, have become common in the 1970's and 1980's. More than ever musical meaning is generated within a field, not a discrete work; and the non-autonomous aspects of this field lead one to think in terms of a complex system of socio-musical ecology (Middleton 1990, 95, italics added).

Will Straw echoes this idea in his definition of a "musical scene":

A musical scene...is that cultural space in which a range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with one another within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization...The manner in which musical practices within a scene tie themselves to processes of historical change occurring within a larger international musical culture will...be a significant basis of the way in which such forms are positioned within that scene at a local level (Straw 1991, 373).

Straw's "musical scenes" are similar to Middleton's "field" of musical
practices in that they both describe a situation in which local and individual musical practices are inextricably tied to musical practices operating on national and international levels. Further, the manipulation of musical styles within a particular musical "scene" or "field" is dependent upon pre-existing political and socio-historic links between musical style and meaning. Thus, the process of stylistic manipulation creates opportunities for new and sometimes revolutionary symbolic links between musical practice and social identity. Within the field of Native pop music, pre-existing popular styles are constantly being coopted, imitated, reconstructed or subverted in ways that allow for the expression of new and/or alternate renderings of Native identity and historical and political representation.

The cross-fertilization of styles I found in Native popular music in Vancouver is not surprising. The cosmopolitan nature of urban living gives urban-dwelling Native musicians exposure to a myriad of different musical and cultural practices from which they may selectively adopt, mimic and/or transform. However, the pervasive nature of twentieth century mass media has allowed for similar processes to take place in even the smallest and most remote villages. Susan Aglukark, Lawrence Martin and Kashtin all grew up and started their musical careers in small northern communities. This, perhaps, is further evidence of the transcendence of the Native music "scene" over both geographic and conceptualized local spaces. As Jody Berland points out:
There is a social discourse in sound, which, by addressing us, combines and disperses us, and so reconstitutes us as social audiences. And there is a broad political discourse about sound, which negotiates the constitution and deployment of collective subjectivity (Berland 1987, 346).

The mass production, distribution and subsequent mediation of Native popular musics reconstitutes and redefines ideas about collective Native identity in Canada on both a local and national level. Political discourse surrounding the production of the music (in the form of mass media representations) serves to further mediate meaning according to individual socio-political positioning.

Theoretical Implications

When I first began research in the field of contemporary Native music, I was plagued with questions of what to include in my research. However the more I tried to narrow down the scope of my research according to the music itself (stylistic traits, form or structure), the more I encountered exceptions to the artificial boundaries that I, and others who had written about the music, had constructed around the music. The result of this process was the revelation that I was not the only one caught in this interpretive limbo of definition. Two important questions emerged: 1) what were the processes involved in defining the music, and 2) how did they related to social processes? Therefore, rather than concentrating on the music of First Nations pop musicians as an analytic object, this study has focussed on the social processes
which surround the music, as these are the processes which, in turn, shape musical meaning.

In the course of this study, the frequent use of direct quotations of Native musicians, and other individuals involved with the music, reflects my desire to give the producers and consumers of the music their own voice in the definitions of musical meaning. In a scathing critique of the academic literature on Native North Americans, Gerald Visenor writes:

Native American Indian literatures are unstudied landscapes, wild and comic rather than tragic and representational, stories with narrative wisps and tribal discourse. Social science theories constrain tribal landscapes to institutional values, representationalism and the politics of academic determinism...social science monologues and the ideologies that arise from structuralism have reduced tribal literatures to an 'objective' collection of consumable cultural artifacts" (Visenor 1989, 5).

In a response to Visenor's concerns over representation, I have attempted to present the contemporary music of First Nations peoples as cultural processes rather than "cultural artifacts".

Finally, the functional processes of Native pop music call into question previous hypotheses of acculturation theory in ethnomusicology. Alan Lomax's well known thesis of "cultural grey-out" describes the "uprooting and destruction of traditional cultures and the consequent "grey-out" or disappearance of the human variety, [presenting a] serious threat to the future happiness of mankind" (Lomax 1968, 4). Lomax's thesis is based on two assumptions: 1) that the inevitable change in music cultures through the adoption of non-traditional musical features represents an impoverishment of
musical expressive culture, and 2) that these new musical expressions are in some way less "authentic" than traditional styles.

Rather than viewing the adoption of popular music styles as an impoverished tradition, many of the musicians I spoke with viewed their music as a continuation of oral traditions through song. Popular music was viewed as a resource through which Native musicians were able to express and promote their own unique cultural identity. As for the question of authenticity, certainly the musicians that I spoke with conceptualized their music as both an authentic representation of contemporary Native culture as well as an honest reflection of themselves as expressive individuals. In the words of Lawrence Martin "I think every Native person who's recorded something, says something Native - says something about a Native issue. It's just a given..."
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Martin, Lawrence. *Wapistan is Lawrence Martin.* First Nations Music Y2 10014, 1993


APPENDIX

Notes on the Transcriptions:

\( \downarrow \uparrow \) = a slide down or up to an unfixed pitch

\( \downarrow \uparrow \) = portamento

\( \smiley \) = a slight shortening of a rhythmic unit

\( \text{[Musical notation]} \) = the first whole note indicates the pitch of the tonic note at the beginning of the song. The second indicates the pitch of the tonic at the end of the song
Example 1

"Elders" - Performed by Lawrence Martin on the C.D. Wapistan is Lawrence Martin, 1993
Written by Lawrence Martin

mm. 1 = 120

Hey Hey how hey hey hey ah hey hey how hey
Em

Hey hey how hey hey hey hey hey hey hey
D
Em

Hey hey how Gitchi Yaw wuk Giis sken da
G/G/A7 Em G G/A/A7

mek Dan Dey Dan Dey Gi Shinah Cook
Em D

Gi- Dan Deh Dan Deh Gi Shinah
1. 2.
Lyrics:

(Chant)

Gitchi Yaw Wuk Giis sken da mok
Dan Deh Dan Deh Gi shi nah gook
Gitchi Yaw Wuk Ge whe tah mah gok
Dan deh dan deh Gi shi nah gook
Dan deh dan deh Gi shi nah gook

(Chant)

The elders say there will come a day,
When the young will be strong like the eagle,
The elders pray for that day,
When the young will be strong people,
When the young will be strong like the eagle.

(Chant)

(Repeat of first verse)

(chant)

Translation:

The elders know
What the future holds
The elders told me
What the future holds
What the future holds

(Chant)
Example 2

"Akua Tuta" - Performed by Kashtin on the C.D. *Akua Tuta*, 1994
Written by Florent Vollant and Claude MacKenzie.

m.m. $\frac{3}{4} = 84$

\begin{align*}
\text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D & \quad \text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D \\
\text{Akua Tuta} & \quad \text{Kuntu ta tsekuu} & \quad \text{Ku-mi Ne ku-in} & \\
\text{Am} & \quad \text{C} & \quad \text{D} & \quad \text{F} & \quad \text{F} & \quad \text{Am}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D & \quad \text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D \\
\text{Akua Tuta} & \quad \text{Ke tvente kie tain} & \quad \text{Tsekuu} & \quad \text{Kane kene-ku-in} & \\
\text{Am} & \quad \text{C} & \quad \text{D} & \quad \text{F} & \quad \text{F} & \quad \text{Am}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Am} / E / G & \quad \text{D} & \quad \text{Am} / E / G & \quad \text{D} & \quad \text{C}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D & \quad \text{Am} / / / & \quad \text{Am} / C / D \\
\text{ou} & \quad \text{A kante tesse in nu} & \quad \text{A kante tane te kie tain} & \\
\text{C} & \quad \text{Am} & \quad \text{C} & \quad \text{D} & \quad \text{F}
\end{align*}
Lyrics:

Akua tuta
Akua tuta tshekuan
kaminekuin

Akua tuta
Naketuanta kiei tshin tshekuen
kanetaunekuin

Hey, hey, hey...

Akua tuta
Akua tuta tshekuan
kakunuene mekuin

akua tuta
Naketuanta kiei tshin tshekuen
kauitshikuin

Translation (non-literal):

If I'm no longer a child of the Earth,
I no longer know where I come from.
I no longer recognize my brothers...
Self-awareness is respecting
and caring for oneself
and protecting our Mother Earth

Translation: Peggy Picard - Group Concept Music
(Sony Music CK80209, 1994)

(Florent Vollent, Claude McKenzie - Group Concept Music)
(Capitol Records C2 7243 8 28295 2 2, 1994)
Example 3

"Amazing Grace" - Performed by Susan Aglukark on the C.D. *This Child*, 1992

Lyrics:

Tatamnamiik Saimaninga
Piulilaurmanga
Tautungnangaa Naningmanga
Maanna Tautukpunga

Tusarama Saimajumik
Tatamilauqpunga
Ajurnirmik tataktunga
Qaiqulirmanga

Iqsinaqtut tuquanqtut
Inuvvigijakka
Qimakpakka pisukpunga
Qaiqulirmanga

(Traditional, Arr. by Susan Aglukark -SOCAN, EMI Canada E2
7243 8 28605 49, 1992)