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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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CLASSIC CANADIAN SONGS

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



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CANADIAN SONGS
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1. **Les fraises et les framboises/Le festin de campagne/Ah! Si mon moine voulait danser**
Jean Carignan and friends 3:59
2. **Lord MacDonald's Reel** Jean Carignan 2:26
3. **The Land of the Muskeg (and the Shining Birch Tree)**
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INTRODUCTION

Brenda Dalen

Classic Canadian Songs, a retrospective album selected from Folkways recordings produced primarily during the 1950s and 1960s, evokes nostalgia for a time when Canadian national identity was beginning to emerge from the mosaic of isolated communities scattered over disparate regions in a vast and often inhospitable land. In 1922, Bermudan writer Victoria Hayward used the term “mosaic” to describe the patchwork of fancifully shaped churches that she saw dotting the prairie landscape on a cross-Canada railway trip (Francis 1997). John Murray Gibbon, publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway, transformed the concept into a marketing gambit, organizing a series of annual music and folk arts festivals at the CPR’s flagship hotels during the 1920s and 1930s. The mosaic remains a fundamental tenet of Canadian national identity, conjuring up an image of a society in which distinct ethnic groups live harmoniously in mutual appreciation of their diverse cultural contributions—an image

enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988.

Like the approximately 140 Canadian albums in the Folkways catalogue, *Classic Canadian Songs* contrasts the music handed down by generations of immigrants from different cultures—initially French, English, Scottish, and Irish, followed by American, Eastern and Northern European, and Asian—with that of Aboriginal peoples fiercely determined to preserve their ways of life in the wake of oppressive colonialism and its injustices. *Classic Canadian Songs* celebrates the diversity of traditions represented on the Canadian albums even as it explores the reality of individual and collective experiences and the range of issues that shaped entire communities and, indeed, the fabric of Canadian society, history, and nationhood.

The history of Canadian recordings on the Folkways label began in 1950, when Samuel “Sam” Gesser (1930–), an enterprising young commercial artist from Montréal, paid a visit to Moses “Moe” Asch (1905–86), founder

and owner of Folkways Records in New York. Gesser, having purchased a Lead Belly recording in Chicago, was disappointed to discover that Folkways recordings were not available in Montréal. The two entrepreneurs quickly struck a deal, and Gesser returned home as the newly minted distributor for Folkways in Canada. Almost immediately he set about to remedy the dearth of Canadian traditional music albums, recording local folk singers himself and enlisting the aid of prominent folk music collectors. Between 1950 and 1964, he produced or commissioned about 100 Folkways albums, the earliest of which, *Folk Songs of French Canada* (Folkways 6929) in 1952 and *Folk Songs of Newfoundland* (Folkways 6831) in 1953, featured Alan Mills, the most important Canadian folk singer of that era. Contractually bound to purchase a minimum of 100 albums for each tape that he submitted, Gesser devised innovative ways to promote Folkways recordings, showcasing them together with live performances by Mills and his singing partner Héléne Baillargeon in world music programs written and produced for Canadian radio and television.

When Gesser embarked upon his association with Folkways, Newfoundland and Labrador had just joined Confederation (1949); Canada boasted a population of 14,009,429 (1951); the flags flown were the British Union Jack and the Red Ensign (until the adoption of the Maple Leaf flag in 1965); and “O’ Canada” was yet to be

proclaimed the official national anthem (1967). The Folkways recordings document the history of the Canadian folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s—roughly parallel to but far less politically motivated than its American counterpart—and furnish evidence of burgeoning nationalism in the years leading to 1967, the centennial of Confederation.

The Canadian Folkways recordings represent a mixture of field and studio recordings, containing Aboriginal and immigrant, vocal and instrumental, and traditional and contemporary music performed by amateur and professional musicians, both rural and urban, from virtually every region (Atlantic, Central, Western, and Northern), province, and territory in the country. There are more recordings from Atlantic and Central Canada than anywhere else, with more repertoire in English and French than in Native languages, Gaelic, Yiddish, Ukrainian, German, or Russian. Some recordings preserve repertoire distinct to particular cultures; others reveal a rich process of cross-cultural hybridization, particularly evident in the French, Scottish (Cape Breton), Irish, “down east,” and Aboriginal fiddling traditions. The Canadian collection also includes recordings of classical music (mainly from the 20th century), children’s songs, and spoken word (including poetry, dramas, and radio programs). The spoken-word albums preserve the voices of two legendary Canadian broadcasters, Pierre Berton and Max Ferguson. Berton

reminisces about growing up in Dawson City, Yukon, in *The Story of the Klondike: Stampede for Gold—The Golden Trail* (Folkways 7108). Ferguson is heard in excerpts from his satirical CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio program *Rawhide* (Folkways 3862, 3872, and 3873).

Folkways performers—including Alan Mills, Jean Carignan, O. J. Abbott, Jacques Labrecque, Stanley Triggs, Karen James, Tom Kines, Wade Hemsworth, and Lee Cremo—made regular appearances at the Mariposa Folk Festival, founded in 1961 in Orillia, Ontario, and named after the fictional town of Mariposa in Stephen Leacock's humorous collection of short stories, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Carignan, Mills, and Abbott participated in the Newport Folk Festival in 1960. Younger singer-songwriters such as Stanley Triggs and Karen James traveled the circuit of coffeehouses (*boîtes à chansons*) that sprang up across Canada during the 1950s and 1960s, the most famous of which were the Riverboat and the Bohemian Embassy in Toronto and the Yellow Door in Montréal. In 1962 Sam Gesser organized a Canadian festival at New York City's Town Hall. In Canada's centennial year, 100 folk festivals were staged across the country, and Folkways artists, including Ruth Rubin, Jean Carignan, Alan Mills, Hélène Baillargeon, Tom Kines, Lee Cremo, and George Clutesi, performed at Expo 67 in Montréal. Gesser served as booking agent for the Canadian

Pavilion, named Katimavik (Inuktitut for gathering place).

Several of the compilers of field-recording albums for Folkways were affiliated with the National Museum of Man (renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1986) in the nation's capital, Ottawa. Marius Barbeau (1883–1969), the dean of Canadian folklore, recalls his early experiences as a collector of Aboriginal music in *My Life in Recording: Canadian-Indian Folklore* (Folkways 3502). The main Folkways collectors, generally specializing in the music of particular regions and traditions, were: Laura Boulton (Hudson Bay region), Barbara Cass-Beggs (Saskatchewan), Helen Creighton (Nova Scotia, including the music of African Canadians; New Brunswick; and Prince Edward Island), Edith Fowke (Ontario), Ida Halpern (Kwakiutl, Nootka, Haida, Bella Coola, and Coast Salish Indians of British Columbia), Louise Manny (Miramichi region of New Brunswick), Ruth Rubin (Yiddish songs in Montréal and Toronto), and Kenneth Peacock (Newfoundland; ethnic groups throughout rural Canada; and the music of the Plains Indians).

Folkways performers and collectors frequently collaborated in the production of radio and television programs, folk song anthologies, and films. Alan Mills and Hélène Baillargeon appeared on many CBC radio and television broadcasts, in both official languages. Mills sang on *Folk Songs for Young Folks* (1947–59);



Baillargeon is best known for her popular children's program *Chez Hélène* (1959–73). In 1961, they produced a two-volume anthology of French folk songs, *Chantons en français* (Folkways 7712 and 7719–7722) for use in classroom language instruction. Mills made several albums of children's songs, one of which includes his own popular composition, "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" (Folkways 7677), covered most notably by Burl Ives. Edith Fowke prepared CBC radio's weekly *Folk Song Time* (1950–63), working with Mills on radio broadcasts, recordings, and publications. Their

albums *O' Canada: A History in Song* (Folkways 3001), *Songs of the Sea: Sung by Alan Mills and the Four Shipmates* (Folkways 2312), and *Canada's Story in Song* (Folkways 3000) originated in radio broadcasts. Many of the folk songs recorded by Folkways were published in two best-selling music anthologies: *Folk Songs of Canada* (1954) and *Canada's Story in Song* (1965). Mills, Tom Kines, Wade Hemsworth, and Derek Lamb participated in NFB (National Film Board of Canada) shorts and documentaries. Mills's play *Ti-Jean and the Devil* (Folkways 3532), based on a French-Canadian folktale told by Jean

Carignan, premiered on CBC radio in 1961.

As you listen to *Classic Canadian Songs*, with its array of songs about occupations, courtship, drinking, historical events, politics, patriotism, and spiritual conviction, or tap your toe to the instrumental dances, remember that, then as now, music-making was integral to the lives of Aboriginal peoples and immigrants alike—a means of connecting *what* and *who* they were with *what* and *who* they had been, a means of preserving self- and cultural identity, and a means of fostering relationships within and across cultural boundaries. At the end of a long week, friends and family gathered in the kitchen, the lumber camp mess hall, or perhaps the neighbor's barn to relax, commiserate about the weather, discuss the daily routine of work, and exchange local gossip over a glass of beer or a cup of coffee. The joys and sorrows of the community were shared in song, romances were pursued while dancing to lively fiddle tunes, and the isolation of scattered homesteads and long Canadian winters was forgotten for an evening. *Classic Canadian Songs* seeks to capture some of that early Canadian spirit—the delight of coming together

in the face of hardships and backbreaking work to enjoy the companionship of family and friends and to make music. It celebrates the uniqueness of the Canadian experience, all too often taken for granted. As Pierre Berton so eloquently put it: “You know, when I was a boy, living in Dawson City on the Klondike, it never occurred to me that I was living in a very strange town indeed. As far as I was concerned, this famous gold rush city with its abandoned dance halls and its wooden sidewalks was just another town. It didn't occur to me that the climate and the history and the geography and the people were all unique” (Folkways 7108).

We hope that *Classic Canadian Songs*, a joint venture between folkwaysAlive! at the University of Alberta in Edmonton and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, inspires you to explore the Canadian albums in the Folkways catalogue and to discover in them songs and stories about our geography, climate, history, and people. And, of course, then as now, hockey was our game, eh?—a metaphor for life north of the 49th parallel!

SONGS

1. LES FRAISES ET LES FRAMBOISES/LE FESTIN DE CAMPAGNE/AH! SI MON MOINE VOULAIT DANSER

Jean Carignan and friends

Gerard Delorier, Madame Richard, Aldor Morin, and Edgar Morin, vocals; Jean Carignan, fiddle; Bob Hill, guitar
(from *Songs and Dances of Québec Folkways* 6951, 1956)

Classic Canadian Songs opens with a spirited medley of three well-known French-Canadian *chansons à répondre* (response songs). Jean Carignan and company conspire to re-create the convivial atmosphere of the *soirée* or *veillée* in old Québec. There is opportunity for solo-group interaction in the refrains, with a hint of *turlutte* (mouth music) in the percussive accompaniment to the final song.

“Les fraises et les framboises” offers a toast to the girls of Longueuil and Chambly, sites of the first forts and *seigneuries* (feudal estates) in Québec. “Le festin de campagne” is an invitation to a boisterous country feast, where passing the

flask ensures another song. The medley closes with “Ah! Si mon moine voulait danser,” the familiar ploy of the young woman who sets out to entice a monk to dance.

2. LORD MACDONALD'S REEL

Jean Carignan

Jean Carignan, fiddle
(from *Alan Mills and Jean Carignan: Songs, Fiddle Tunes and a Folk-Tale from Canada Folkways* 3532, 1961)

Québec's most famous *violoneux*, Jean Carignan (1916–88), achieved international acclaim for a virtuosic style of playing that was admired by classical violinists and folk fiddlers alike. “Ti-Jean,” as he was affectionately known, took up the fiddle at age four. After mastering his father's repertoire, he began to absorb the recorded performances of Québec fiddler Joseph Allard (1873–1947), with whom he later studied; Scottish fiddler James Scott Skinner

(1843–1927); and Irish émigré fiddler Michael Coleman (1891–1945). He eventually learned an astonishing 7,000 tunes from other fiddlers and recordings.

As a child Carignan played his fiddle in the street to help support his family. His first big break came when George Wade invited him to join the Cornhuskers, Canada's most popular country band. After they disbanded (ca. 1940), Carignan returned to Montréal, working intermittently in factories and playing for dances. From 1956 on, he owned and operated his own taxi and performed only in concerts and at folk festivals, frequently with Alan Mills and Pete Seeger.

"Lord MacDonald's Reel" is described by Alan Mills in the original liner notes as a medley of tunes learned from an old-time fiddler in the Gaspé. It is in fact an Irish reel that Carignan, given his idolization of Coleman's Sligo style, undoubtedly learned from the latter's recordings (e.g., Folkways 6818). Carignan plays the reel at a much faster tempo, with greater virtuosity and heavier accentuation, jigging or clogging in keeping with French-Canadian tradition.

3. THE LAND OF THE MUSKEG (AND THE SHINING BIRCH TREE) Wade Hemsworth

Wade Hemsworth, vocals and guitar

(from *Folk Songs of the Canadian North Woods* Folkways 6821, 1955)

Wade Hemsworth (1916–2002), one of Canada's best-loved singer-songwriters, wrote songs as a hobby. Though his output was slim and he only occasionally performed in public, his songs have become Canadian classics that are "cemented in our consciousness, not as adornment, but as part of the weft and weave of our lives" (<http://www.nfb.ca/portraits/hommage/wade/index1.html>). Each one is a carefully crafted etching of the Canadian landscape.

Hemsworth's interest in songwriting stemmed from his discovery of traditional music when he was stationed in Newfoundland during the Second World War. A draftsman by profession, he traveled with survey crews for Ontario Hydro and the Canadian National Railway into remote regions of Ontario, Québec, and Labrador, garnering inspiration for songs that he wrote back home in Montréal. "The Land of the Muskeg (and the Shining Birch Tree)," which occurred to Hemsworth during an expedition into the iron ore fields of Labrador, is about men who relish the solitude and freedom of the wilderness and ultimately choose life in the bush over life in the town.

4. CREE GREETING SONG (ALSO KNOWN AS SHAKING HANDS SONG) William Peaychew

William Peaychew, vocals and hand drum

(from *Indian Music of the Canadian Plains* Folkways 4464, 1955, collected by Kenneth Peacock)

The "Cree Greeting Song" ("Shaking Hands Song") was composed and sung by William Peaychew (1900–60), who accompanies himself on one of his own hand drums in this recording. A respected singer-drummer and maker of many songs, Peaychew (Cree for thunderbird) belonged to a prominent family from the Red Pheasant First Nation, located near North Battleford, Saskatchewan. His grandfather signed the treaty establishing the reserve, and his grandson Lionel is an accomplished artist who teaches at First Nations University of Canada in Regina.

Formerly used for traditional festive occasions, greeting songs are now mainly sung when family and friends get together at Christmas or New Year's. Peaychew opens his song with a rapid drum beat and a call to stand up, join the dance, and dance hard. A descending melody follows, set to a heartbeat drum pattern typical for Cree songs. The words inviting people to walk around the dance floor also signify walking a good path toward the future. According to Florence Peyachew (current spelling), her father was happy to share his songs with other singers. "Don't even call them *my* songs," he said. "They are a gift from the Creator."

5. LE REEL DE L'HARMONICA (ALSO KNOWN AS REEL DE RIMOUSKI) Aldor Morin

Aldor Morin, harmonica; Edgar Morin, jigs; Bob Hill, guitar

(from *Songs and Dances of Québec* Folkways 6951, 1956)

In 1995 La Grande Rencontre, the annual festival of traditional music and dance in Montréal, established the Trophée Aldor to honor Aldor Morin, one of Québec's most accomplished harmonica players. The son of a well-known *violoneux*, Morin was born in Montréal in 1921. Largely self-taught, he made his debut around age six at the Monument-National, where he met the legendary *chansonnier* "La Bolduc." Madame Bolduc (1894–1941) gave him basic instruction on the harmonica (*musique à bouche or ruine-babines*) and featured him in La Troupe du bon vieux temps, a vaudeville and folk music company that toured Québec and New England during the 1930s. Over his remarkable career Morin, who is also a skilled singer, composer, storyteller, caller, and jigger, collaborated with many other prominent Québec musicians, including Alfred Montmarquette, Isadore Soucy, Tommy Duchesne, and Jean Carignan.

In this lively rendition of "Le reel de l'harmonica" ("Reel de Rimouski"), Morin is accompanied by guitar, with spoons and jigging audible in the background. Since he never mastered the chromatic harmonica, to play in various keys he simply welded together six different diatonic instruments.



6. THE NORTHERN TRAPPERS' RENDEZVOUS

Loewen Family Orchestra

Marvin Loewen, vocals; Loewen Family Orchestra (Marvin Loewen, Jack Loewen, Martha Loewen, Anne Loewen, Shirley Davidson, George Davidson)

(from *Songs and Ballads of Northern Saskatchewan and Northern Manitoba Folkways* 8764, 1960)

"Tie your mukluks tight, you're going out tonight" is your personal invitation—courtesy of the Loewen Family Orchestra—to "shake a leg" at The Northern Trappers' Rendezvous in The Pas, Manitoba. Billed as the dance of the season, The Northern Trappers' Rendezvous was held in conjunction with the Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival, one of Canada's oldest winter

festivals. What began in 1916 as The Pas Dog Derby grew over the years to encompass such events as the King Trapper competition, the crowning of the Fur Queen, and The World Championship Dog Sled Races. Today's festival also features the Queen Trapper competition, where women have the opportunity to show off their skills in log sawing, portage, snowshoe races, leg wrestling, bannock baking, and moose and goose calling. The chance for a rendezvous with traditions past and present and friends old and new could hardly be more welcome than in mid-winter, when cabin fever is at its peak in the Canadian north.

7. THE ALBERTA HOMESTEADER

Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gordon Fleming, accordion
(from *Canada's Story in Song Folkways* 3000, 1960)

Alan Mills (1913–77), born Albert Miller, grew up in Montréal during the Depression. A gifted journalist, actor, radio and television personality, and above all folk singer, he became Canada's best-known folk song interpreter. His recordings in French, English, and Yiddish form the backbone of the Folkways collection of Canadian music. As Irwin Silber (1925–) put it in 1961: "To 17 million people north of the United States, Alan Mills is the voice of Canadian folk music" (Folkways 2431).

In "The Alberta Homesteader," Mills impersonates the cranky bachelor Dan Gold, who invites us into his ramshackle sod shanty and unleashes a tirade of complaints—many of which he seems to have learned from his American cousin, "The Greer County Bachelor" (Folkways 5801, 5003, and 2175)—about "starving to death on a government claim." The lyrics are set to the tune of "The Irish Washerwoman."

To encourage settlement of the western frontier, beginning in the 1880s, the Canadian government under the Dominion Lands Act offered a free quarter section of land (160 acres) to anyone who filed the \$10 registration fee,

built a "habitable" residence, and broke and cultivated a specified area within three years. Idealistic settlers poured in from Atlantic and Central Canada, the United States, and Europe, only to find themselves stranded on the bald prairie, contending year round with extreme temperatures, severe weather, and unforeseen hardships. Few homesteaders lasted three years. Although the Alberta homesteader threatens to head back east, when all is said and done, he may be just ornery enough—like the tenacious mosquito and flea, vividly depicted by jazz accordionist Gordon Fleming (1931–2002)—to stick it out on his government claim.



8. A POOR LONE GIRL IN SASKATCHEWAN

Anne Halderman

Anne Halderman, vocals

(from *Folksongs of Saskatchewan* Folkways 4312, 1963,
collected by Barbara Cass-Beggs)

“A Poor Lone Girl in Saskatchewan,” sung by Anne Halderman (1910–2004) of Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, chronicles the plight of a young prairie woman who watches her marriage prospects dwindle as “one by one” her beaux clear out, abandoning their family homesteads to seek fortune and adventure in the Great North West. The dust storms that swept over the western plains during the Dirty Thirties forced many families off the land; legions of young men tried their luck on the next frontier in much the way that their forbears from Ontario once chased the dream of prosperity on the prairies.

Halderman revamped “The Poor Lone Girl in Ontario,” learned from her mother, to suit the Saskatchewan story. What becomes of the poor lone prairie girl? Does she resign herself to spinsterhood? Hardly! She books a flight with TCA (Trans-Canada Airlines) and heads north, determined to find herself a husband if she has to track him all the way to the Bering Strait.

9. WHEN THE ICE WORMS NEST AGAIN Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gilbert “Buck” Lacombe, guitar

(from *O’ Canada: A History in Song* Folkways 3001, 1956)

Tourists to the north still believe that ice worms are pure sourdough myth, created to initiate *cheechakos* (“green” prospectors) during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897–98. In fact, the discovery of ice worms on the southern coast of Alaska in 1887 may have fueled the imagination of northern residents like Robert W. Service (1874–1958), who immortalized the ice worm and its attendant myths in the song “When the Ice Worms Nest Again” (*Twenty Bath-Tub Ballads*, 1939) and the poem “The Ballad of the Ice-Worm Cocktail” (*Bar-Room Ballads*, 1940). In the latter, a big-mouthed *cheechako*, forced to prove his mettle by drinking an “ice-worm cocktail,” flees town, having unwittingly downed what is merely a limp strand of spaghetti with ink spots for eyes.

Several different variants of the song have come to light since Service published his. The most famous, attributed to a group of Manitobans affiliated with the Northern Manitoba Trappers’ Festival, was recorded by Canada’s “Yodeling Cowboy,” Wilf Carter (aka Montana Slim, 1904–96), in the late 1940s. Alan Mills sings a variant that may have originated in Alaska, accompanied by jazz guitarist Gilbert “Buck” Lacombe (1921–).

To the “husky, dusky maiden in the Arctic,”

which variant is sung is irrelevant. Ice worms cannot withstand temperatures much below freezing. Dwelling as she does “in the land of the pale blue snow, where it’s ninety-nine below,” there’s not a snowball’s chance that she’s received her marriage proposal.

10. THE ODA G. Stanley G. Triggs

Stanley G. Triggs, vocals and tiple mandolin

(from *Bunkhouse and Forecastle Songs of the Northwest* Folkways 3569, 1961)

Born in the heart of Kootenay Country in 1928, Stanley Triggs drew upon his early adventures as a trapper, logger, packer, forester, river driver, lookout man, firefighter, powder monkey, and deckhand to create distinctively British Columbian songs. After a brief foray into the Canadian folk music revival of the early 1960s—performing at the Folk Song Circle in Vancouver, at coffee houses in Ontario and Québec, and in Sam Gesser’s Les Feux-Follets—he pursued a career as archivist, historian, and curator at the Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History, at McGill University from 1965 to 1994.

As a folk musician, Triggs is best known for four tubgato songs that earned him the moniker “genuine foc’s’le singer” (Lyon 1996). “The Oda G.” spins a yarn about the oldest tubgato then in operation along the west coast. Built

in 1889, she “knows that old coastline” well enough to navigate safely to Long Bay after her hapless crew falls into the “chuck” (water)—an expression borrowed from Chinook Jargon, the trade language used by First Nations peoples and Europeans in the Pacific Northwest during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

11. THE BALLAD OF WELDON CHAN

Karen James

Karen James, vocals and guitar

(from *Karen James* Folkways 3549, 1961)

“The Ballad of Weldon Chan,” written by Arthur P. Hughes (1932–), protests the unjust treatment of a Chinese immigrant forced into hiding in early November 1959 to avoid deportation from Canada. For 3½ years, while his wife and young daughter remained in Vancouver, Chan hid out in attics, basements, and sheds in Toronto and picked up odd jobs as a grocery clerk, dishwasher, farmhand, and warehouse worker, managing to elude a Canada-wide search by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

Hughes, a dedicated humanitarian and student at the University of British Columbia, believed that Ellen Fairclough (Progressive Conservative Minister of Citizenship and Immigration under John G. Diefenbaker) had unfairly targeted Chan while investigating the possible illegal smuggling of Chinese immigrants. His ballad mocks the

relentlessness with which Fairclough and the RCMP—spurred on by Cold War paranoia and a long history of racist, anti-Chinese immigration policies—pursued Chan, whose only “crime” had been to deny his previous attempts to gain entry into Canada. Chan finally surrendered on 30 May 1963 after Guy Favreau (the new Liberal Citizenship and Immigration Minister under Lester B. Pearson) rescinded the deportation order and promised to grant him and his family full citizenship.

“The Ballad of Weldon Chan” was first recorded by Kel Winzey in a calypso arrangement, from which Karen James learned it. She sang the ballad at the first Mariposa Folk Festival in 1961, recording it for Folkways in the same year.

12. CHANSON DE RIEL Gaspard Jeannotte

Gaspard Jeannotte, vocals
(from *Folksongs of Saskatchewan* Folkways 4312, 1963, collected by Barbara Cass-Beggs)

Métis elder Gaspard Jeannotte (1889–1985) grew up in the Devils Lake area of North Dakota, migrating to Ituna, Saskatchewan, at age 15. In 1908 he settled near Lebreton in the Qu’Appelle Valley, where he worked as a trapper, woodcutter, water and ice hauler, and farm laborer. A much sought-after singer in the community, Jeannotte was also an excellent dancer and caller.

In 1884 the Saskatchewan Métis, who had moved west from Manitoba after the Red River Rebellion (1869–70), found themselves once again being crowded out by white homesteaders. Led by Louis Riel (1844–85) and Gabriel Dumont (1837–1906), they mounted the North-West Rebellion, which was quashed in the summer of 1885. Riel was arrested, tried, and hanged for treason in Regina on 16 November. Métis legend has it that “Chanson de Riel” was written by their martyred hero in his final days.

Sung in Michif (the mixture of Cree and French spoken by the Métis), “Chanson de Riel” takes the form of a letter written by a prisoner to his mother as he awaits execution. Using a penknife dipped in blood, he describes his grief and pain, asks friends and family to pray for him and the country for which he fought, and promises to die bravely. Theresa Goffinet (born Jeannotte) remembers “Chanson de Riel” as one of her father’s favorite songs.

13. TIM FINNEGAN’S WAKE Tom Kines

Tom Kines, vocals and guitar
(from *An Irishman in North America* Folkways 3522, 1962)

Classically trained tenor Tom Kines (1922–94) grew up in Manitoba singing songs, mostly Irish in origin, that his grandfather had learned in logging camps. What sparked his passion for performing and researching folk music, however,

were the many hours spent in County Donegal with an Irish lawyer, folklorist, and historian, whose acquaintance he made during a stint in the Royal Canadian Navy.

Upon returning to Canada, Kines settled in Ottawa, actively pursuing his avocation as a folk singer while working as an administrator. Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s he toured extensively, participated in NFB (National Film Board of Canada) shorts, and produced, hosted, and performed in numerous CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio and television programs, including the series *The Song Pedlar*, *The Song Shop*, and *Magic in Music*.

The drinking song “Tim Finnegan’s Wake,” popular in Irish music halls and the inspiration for James Joyce’s last novel, recounts the comical fate of a tipsy hod carrier whose love of the *craythur* (whiskey) proves to be his undoing—and ultimately his salvation. When the inebriated Tim falls to his death attempting to deliver his load of bricks and mortar, friends and neighbors congregate for the ritual wake. In the drunken pandemonium that ensues, a flying gallon of whiskey splashes over the corpse and brings Tim back to life.

14. IT’S THE B’Y Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gilbert “Buck” Lacombe, guitar
(from *Folk Songs of Newfoundland* Folkways 6831, 1953)

Inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2005, “It’s the B’y” enjoys iconic status as one of Newfoundland’s most popular songs. It came to national attention largely through the efforts of collectors, folklorists, and performers eager to document the songs of Canada’s newest province in the 1950s. This performance by Alan Mills may well be the earliest commercial recording of it.

Although little is known about its authorship and specific place of origin, “It’s the B’y” is believed to be indigenous to Newfoundland. Oral history supports some of its literally hundreds of variant stanzas having been written in the late 1870s by Joseph Deering, a young widower from Pearce’s Harbour, when he was courting “Lizer” (aka Sally) Brown. Part of the “macho-brag” song’s charm, with its male perspective on courtship and the work of boat-building, sailing, and fishing, lies in the use of Newfoundland folk language and dialect (Hiscock 2005). Generations of Canadians, who learned the song in school, have puzzled over the meaning of “sods and rinds to cover yer flake” and chuckled at the prospect of eating codfish “fried in maggotty butter.”

Cast as a lively square dance, with fanciful calls built into its sing-along chorus, “It’s the B’y” paints a rather quaint picture of life in remote



outports like Fogo, Twillingate, and Moreton's Harbour. With the collapse of the cod fishery in the early 1990s that way of life may now seem as alien to Newfoundlanders as it once did to the rest of Canada.

15. TONTS, TONTS! Ruth Rubin

Ruth Rubin, vocals; Pete Seeger, banjo
(from *Jewish Children's Songs and Games Folkways* 7224, 1957)

Ruth Rubin (1906–2000), folk singer and pioneer in the documentation of Yiddish culture, was born to Ashkenazi parents who had immigrated to Montréal as part of the large influx of Eastern European Jews fleeing the Pale of Settlement in the wake of czarist pogroms (1881–82). She moved to New York in the 1920s but

returned to Canada frequently, seeking out and performing Yiddish folk songs. Of the 2,200 songs she collected in Canada and the United States between 1948 and 1968, many proved to be unique to Montréal, where Yiddish schools, bookstores, libraries, newspapers, literature, and theater had flourished for several generations.

“Tonts, tonts,” a Bessarabian children’s song that Rubin learned from her mother, consists of nonsense rhymes against the backdrop of a traditional Jewish wedding. Sieve and noodle pot are broken, chickpeas scorched, and shoes worn through as the families dance around the bride and groom much as they would have in grandmother’s day. On warm summer evenings in Hasidic neighborhoods like Outremont and Côte Saint-Luc the sounds of Yiddish children’s songs and games still fill the air.

16. THE WELCOME TABLE Charles Owens

Charles Owens and family, vocals; Isabel Owens, guitar
(from *Folk Music from Nova Scotia Folkways* 4006, 1956, collected by Helen Creighton)

During the 1940s and 1950s Helen Creighton documented the rich musical legacy—mainly spirituals and jubilee songs—of African Canadians, who were among the earliest settlers in Nova Scotia. One of her most important singers was Charles Owens of Inglewood (a segregated community on the outskirts of

Bridgetown), founded in the mid-19th century by descendants of the Black Loyalists, who had migrated to the Annapolis Valley after the American Revolution. Owens had worked at sea until he married and took up farming. At age 99, he was still spry enough to sing and play the drum regularly for the Salvation Army. Here he leads his family in an up-tempo jubilee, “The Welcome Table,” with daughter Isabel accompanying on guitar. Dating from before the American Civil War, the song resonated with fugitive slaves traveling the Underground Railroad and with the freedom marchers who revived it during the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s.

17. THE HEEL AND TOE POLKA

Arbuckle, Mikkelson, and Clifton

Bob Arbuckle, fiddle; Verner Mikkelson, accordion; N. Roy Clifton, piano

(from *Old Time Couple Dances, Fiddle and Accordion Folkways* 8827, 1961, collected by Edith Fowke)

Old Time Couple Dances, Fiddle and Accordion is the third Folkways album by a group of amateur musicians who were in demand on the square-dance circuit in the Toronto area during the 1950s and 1960s. This album features old-time couple dances, mainly the waltz and the two-step, played in the “down east” style popularized by Maritime fiddler Don Messer (1909–73). In

the original liner notes pianist Roy Clifton, an experienced square-dance caller, provides background information and step-by-step instructions for executing the dances. Each tune begins with a short introduction to enable the dancers to catch the beat.

One of the highlights of an old-time country dance is the caller’s invitation to “grab your partners for the ‘Heel and Toe Polka!’” Couples circle the dance floor—“heel and toe and away we go”—at breakneck speed in the step-close-step-and-hop movement devised in 1830 by a young Bohemian girl.

18. CREE PRISONER’S SONG

William Burn Stick

William Burn Stick, vocals and hand drum
(from *Indian Music of the Canadian Plains Folkways* 4464, 1955, collected by Kenneth Peacock)

The “Cree Prisoner’s Song” may have come from either George or Samuel Desjarlais, two Aboriginal brothers who were accused of murder and asked to sing a song to prove their innocence. One brother made this song, proving his innocence; the other could not sing, proving his guilt. Both were hanged in 1944 in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta.

Ethnomusicologist Kenneth Peacock (1922–2000) collected the “Prisoner’s Song” and the story of its origins in 1954 at the Red

Pheasant Reserve in Saskatchewan. Friends of the Desjarlais brothers, who had learned the song while visiting them in jail, agreed that William Burn Stick (ca. 1900–72), whose performance Peacock recorded, sang it especially well.

A member of the Alexander First Nation, near Morinville, Alberta, Burn Stick was the grandson of a signatory to the reserve treaty. He and his brothers were active singers; their sons and grandsons have sung Sundance songs and formed their own drum group, The Moonlight Bay Singers. Burn Stick's daughter Leena Lambert recalls her father singing the "Prisoner's Song." The song holds special meaning for his granddaughter Denise Lambert, whose work puts her in touch with Aboriginal people in prison.

Burn Stick plays the Cree short-long beat on the hand drum while he sings. The song has three stanzas, each preceded by a refrain of spiritually meaningful vocables. The words speak of enjoying life in the face of death. If death comes, the singer "will just walk on and on."

19. UN CANADIEN ERRANT Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gilbert "Buck" Lacombe, guitar
(from *O' Canada: A History in Song* Folkways 3001, 1956)

"Un Canadien errant" is attributed to Antoine Gérin-Lajoie (1824–82), who wrote the words in 1842 and set them to the tune of an existing folk song, "Par derrière chez ma tante," also known as

"Si tu te mets anguille." The song is historically connected with the Rebellions of 1837–38 against ruling oligarchies in Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Québec). When the uprisings were suppressed, many of the rebels were executed, imprisoned, or deported; others escaped to the United States, where they lived in exile until general amnesty was declared in 1849.

The plaintive lament of the young exile longing for his homeland became an expression of nationalism and an anthem for displaced and oppressed people, especially in French-speaking Canada. Acadians, for example, sang the variant "Un Acadien errant" to commemorate the expulsion of their ancestors from Nova Scotia and Île Saint-Jean by the British between 1755 and 1762, even considering it as a possible national song before officially adopting "Ave maris stella."

20. MAGGIE HOWIE Geraldine Sullivan

Geraldine Sullivan, vocals
(from *Folk Songs of Ontario* Folkways 4005, 1958, collected by Edith Fowke)

The ballad "Maggie Howie" is a gruesome tale about a young Irish Protestant girl from Napanee, Ontario, who was murdered in 1887 by her distraught Irish Catholic suitor, Michael Lee, after her parents put an end to their engagement. Sung by Geraldine Sullivan of Lakefield, near Peterborough, the ballad was well known to

singers of Irish descent in southern Ontario.

The editor of the *Napanee Post-Express*, whose help Edith Fowke enlisted in gathering information about the murder, was astonished to discover that its offices—haunted by the ghost of Maggie Howie—stood on the very site where the murder had taken place. In 1957 the *Post-Express* printed a copy of the ballad, submitted by a descendant of Maggie's family and allegedly signed by "Mickle Lee," who had spent the remainder of his life in Kingston Penitentiary, in the wing for the criminally insane.

21. CONSTITUTION BREAKDOWN

Lee Cremo Trio

Lee Cremo, fiddle; Vincent Joe, piano; Wilfred Paul, guitar
(from *Creation's Journey: Native American Music* Smithsonian Folkways 40410, 1994)

Known as the "Best Bow Arm in the World," Lee Cremo (1938–99), Mi'kmaq fiddler from Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, won over eighty fiddle competitions, made many recordings, performed with country music's greatest stars, and appeared in the documentary film *Arm of Gold* (1986). His style of playing with its cuts, double stops, open fifth drones, "Scottish snap," "lift," and "lively bow" owed much to a hybridization of Cape Breton and Mi'kmaq fiddling traditions going back to his great-grandfather, who had acquired a homemade fiddle and a "bag of tunes" from an

early Scottish settler. Lee's father Simon Cremo (1900–64), a gifted itinerant fiddler from whom he learned basic bowing techniques and repertoire, had been a close friend of influential Cape Breton fiddler Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald (1914–87). Like his mentor Jean Carignan, Lee preferred fast reels and jigs and generally clogged while he played. "Constitution Breakdown," one of his own tunes from the 1970s, pokes fun at the ongoing threat of stalemate in Canadian constitutional talks (Smith 1994).

22. 'N UAIR NIGHIDH TÙ

The Millers (or the North Shore Singers)

The Millers (or the North Shore Singers), vocals
(from *Songs from Cape Breton Island* Folkways 4450, 1955)

Between 1775 and 1850, crop failures in Scotland prompted a mass migration of Gaelic-speaking Scots to Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia. Along Cape Breton's North Shore, Scots from the Hebrides Isle of Harris carried on the age-old tradition of producing woolens by hand. The work of milling or waulking (*luadb*) the cloth was done at milling frolics, where the millers sat around a table pounding or "drubbing" newly woven cloth—dressed with the oils of the melted livers of dogfish and soaked in a neutralizing solution of stale urine and water. Rhythmic songs (*orain luaidh*), sung in call-and-response manner, helped coordinate their movements.

“N Uair Nighidh Tù” (When You Wash) is a work song for washday that also accompanied the similar pounding and scrubbing movements of milling. Recorded at a milling frolic in Skir Dhu in the mid-1950s, it is performed by The Millers (or the North Shore Singers), who belonged to the last generation of Gaelic-speaking Scots in Cape Breton. Milling frolics remain a staple of Cape Breton’s summer festivals.

23. ANTI-CONFEDERATION SONG

Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gilbert “Buck” Lacombe, guitar
(from *Folk Songs of Newfoundland Folkways* 6831, 1953)

During the Newfoundland election campaign of 1869, the menacing imperative of the “Anti-Confederation Song”—“Come near at your peril, Canadian Wolf!”—rang out like a warning shot across the Gulf of St. Lawrence. At the center of the campaign was a fiercely partisan debate over whether or not the island should join the Dominion of Canada, established on 1 July 1867. Charles James Fox Bennett (1793–1883), the skilled propagandist who led the charge against Confederation, understood the power of a persuasive campaign ditty. The “Anti-Confederation Song” appealed to Newfoundlanders’ pride as Britain’s oldest overseas colony and preyed on their fear of being swallowed up by their larger, “predatory” neighbor.

The Confederationists were soundly defeated.

Newfoundland and Labrador remained independent until 31 March 1949, when—after a hard-fought campaign waged by Joseph Roberts “Joey” Smallwood (1900–91) and two general referenda, won by a narrow margin—they finally joined Confederation, becoming Canada’s tenth province.

24. DANSE CARRÉ Edgar Morin

Edgar Morin, calls and jigs; Jean Carignan, fiddle; Aldor Morin, harmonica; Bob Hill, guitar
(from *Songs and Dances of Québec Folkways* 6951, 1956)

The square dance, popular throughout Canada in the early 20th century, remains a staple of social life in rural communities in the West and in parts of Atlantic Canada. It evolved in the United States in the late 19th century and was standardized in the 1930s and 1940s by Lloyd “Pappy” Shaw (1890–1958). Choreography is coordinated by a caller, whose unique “patter” is interspersed with a defined set of calls, generally forty to fifty for a traditional square dance. Experienced callers challenge the dancers by departing from expected patterns, mixing calls in unusual ways, or throwing oddball calls into a well-known sequence. In Québec, the square dance is known as *le set carré*, *le set callé*, *la danse callée*, or *les “squares” américains*. Caller Edgar Morin animates “Danse carré” by prompting everyone to join in jiggling, clapping, and playing the spoons.



25. THE BLACK FLY SONG

Wade Hemsworth

Wade Hemsworth, vocals and guitar
(from *Folk Songs of the Canadian North Woods Folkways* 6821, 1955)

“The Black Fly Song,” arguably Canada’s most famous folk song, was written by Wade Hemsworth (1916–2002) in 1949. Inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003, it has been covered by many performers, including American folk singer Pete Seeger, who admired Hemsworth’s songs for their “unbeatable” combination of humor and wisdom (Verrier 1990). The NFB’s animated short film *Blackfly* (*Mouches noires*), produced in the early 1990s and featuring Hemsworth’s recording

with Kate and Anna McGarrigle, received an Academy Award nomination.

“The Black Fly Song” draws upon Hemsworth’s experiences as a surveyor in the wilderness of northern Ontario, Québec, and Labrador, where the odds of dying with the black fly picking your bones are heavily stacked—in favor of the fly. The setting is the Little Abitibi River, and the characters are members of an Ontario Hydro survey crew, dispatched there to investigate the feasibility of building a power dam. With no effective means of deterring the pesky flies, the men rely on a salve concocted by Blind River Joe, the bull cook, made from bacon grease and balsam gum and dispensed with a healthy dose of humor.

26. HOGAN’S LAKE O. J. Abbott

O. J. Abbott, vocals
(from *Lumbering Songs from the Ontario Shanties Folkways* 4052, 1961, collected by Edith Fowke)

O. J. (John) Abbott (1872–1962), regarded as one of the finest traditional singers of his day, recorded approximately 120 songs for Edith Fowke between 1957 and 1961. Born in England, Abbott learned most of his songs in the 1880s and 1890s from Irish farm families in the Ottawa Valley and shanty boys in the lumber camps of northern Ontario and Québec. Also an accomplished fiddler, caller, and step dancer, he

sang in the old Irish style, often with *declamando* (spoken) endings.

Abbott was 84 years old when he recorded “Hogan’s Lake,” a “purely Canadian” shanty song dating back to the 1860s (Fowke, notes to Folkways 4052). Set to the tune of “The Lumbercamp Song,” the lyrics describe the daily routine of a square-timber gang working for “Thomas Laugheren” (McLaughlin) on the Black River (Rivière Noire) in Québec. After a hard day’s work felling timber, the men retire to the shanty to dance and listen to their favorite songs, including Fitzsimmons’s rendition of “The Girl That Wore the Waterfall,” a popular 19th-century love song about a girl sporting the latest hairdo.



27. SHE’S LIKE THE SWALLOW Alan Mills

Alan Mills, vocals; Gilbert “Buck” Lacombe, guitar
(from *Alan Mills and Jean Carignan: Songs, Fiddle Tunes and a Folk-Tale from Canada* Folkways 3532, 1961)

The lyric ballad “She’s Like the Swallow,” which may have originated in Newfoundland, was first collected by Maud Karpeles (1885–1976) in 1930. Kenneth Peacock discovered additional stanzas and a second tune in 1959. Although the ballad may once have belonged to a complex of English laments, the swallow simile that frames it is unique to Newfoundland.

Happiness eludes the young woman, whose heartless lover chides her for foolishly believing that he would remain faithful to her. The circumstances that have rendered her disconsolate are revealed in a stanza omitted by Alan Mills that makes reference to the altered position of her apron—difficult to misinterpret in the context of common fertility symbols such as meadows, gardens, and flowers (Peacock 1965).

The haunting melody inspired numerous arrangements by 20th-century Canadian composers, including John Beckwith, Keith Bissell, Jean Coulthard, Godfrey Ridout, and Harry Somers, a distinction shared with “Un Canadien errant,” “It’s the B’y,” and “Ah! Si mon moine voulait danser.”

28. THE GAY GORDONS (SCOTLAND THE BRAVE)

Arbuckle, Mikkelson, and Clifton

Bob Arbuckle, fiddle; Verner Mikkelson, accordion; N. Roy Clifton, piano
(from *Old Time Couple Dances, Fiddle and Accordion Folkways* 8827, 1961, collected by Edith Fowke)

A Scottish country dance popular at *céilidhs* and old-time dances, the Gay Gordons may owe its name to The Gordon Highlanders regiment and most likely originated in continental Europe or North America, sometime during the 19th or early 20th century. Danced by couples moving freely across the floor or in a circle, it begins in open position with an allemande hold and concludes in waltz position with a polka around the room.



The tune heard in this recording is not James Scott Skinner’s “The Gay Gordons” but rather “Scotland the Brave,” an old bagpipe tune for which Scottish broadcaster Cliff Hanley penned lyrics in 1951 and which is one of a handful of “unofficial” Scottish national anthems. “Scotland the Brave” is the official pipe march of the British Columbia Dragoons and the march-off tune of the combined band and pipes of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (St. Mary’s). The “skirl of the pipes”—albeit adapted for fiddle, accordion, and piano—invokes the spirit of the “old Highlanders,” who left their mark from “Nova Scotia” in the east to “New Caledonia” in the west.

29. NOOTKA FAREWELL SONG

George Clutesi

George Clutesi and his Port Alberni Group, vocals
(from *Nootka Indian Music of the Pacific North West Coast* Folkways 4524, 1974, collected by Ida Halpern)

George Clutesi (1905–88), a highly respected artist, writer, broadcaster, film and television actor, and singer-dancer, was an important ambassador for First Nations peoples throughout Canada. A member of the Tseshaht band of the Nootka (Nuu-chah-nult) First Nation on Vancouver Island, Clutesi initiated the revival of North West Coast ritual songs and dances that were prohibited by Canadian law from 1884 until

1951. In 1949, he hitchhiked to Victoria to ask Vincent Massey (then Chairman of the Royal Commission on the National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences) for permission to practice traditional song and dance. Shortly thereafter, Clutesi began teaching Tseshaht songs to children in the very residential school where he had earlier been denied his language and culture.

The “Nootka Farewell Song” was the property of Tseshaht Chief Adam Shewish (1920–90) of Port Alberni, who strongly supported Clutesi’s mission. Chief Shewish’s father and wife sang with Clutesi’s group, and she later took over training the young performers. The song begins and ends with the vocable *oh*, signifying prayer or supplication. The words belong to an archaic language idiom no longer spoken. Before singing the song, Clutesi characterized the fate of his people, saying, “We are but an echo of the past” (Halpern, notes to Folkways 4524).

30. MOOSE AND BEAR CALLS

Sandy Stoddard

Sandy Stoddard, moose and bear calls; Helen Creighton, interviewer
(from *Folk Music from Nova Scotia* Folkways 4006, 1956, collected by Helen Creighton)

Our final track is a lighthearted reminder of how deeply ingrained the “call of the wild” is in the Canadian psyche. Although most of us reside



in towns and cities within shouting distance of coffee and donuts at the nearest Tim Hortons, in our imaginations, at least, we still “live cheek by jowl with the wilderness” (Berton 1982). With its rugged landscape and harsh climate, the wilderness has become our mythical, spiritual home—a powerful symbol of Canadian identity. Like Susan Buchan, wife of John Buchan, Canada’s Governor General from 1935 to 1940, we sense that wherever we live, whatever we do, “the wild is always there, somewhere near...” (Gatenby 1993).

Helen Creighton (1899–1989), Canada’s “first lady of folklore,” is heard in conversation with Sandy Stoddard, an octogenarian of Scottish descent from Ship Harbour, Nova Scotia. Well known among local sportsmen as a guide, folk singer, and raconteur, Mr. Stoddard demonstrates the fine art of moose and bear calling, using a horn hastily constructed from wallpaper.

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Special thanks to R. Gary Kachanoski, Vice-President, Research, University of Alberta, for his vision, support, and championing of folkwaysAlive!

Thanks to Margaret Asch; Michael Asch; Henry Bishop; Eugene Burnstick; Arshi Chetal; Gary Cristall; Eric Dalen family; Simone Gareau; Sam Gesser; Theresa Goffinet; Ken Hildebrand; Philip Hiscock; John Huck; Arthur P. Hughes; Jessica Keyes; Rick Krofchek; Denise Lambert; Leena Lambert; Carmen Loconte; G. Garry MacDonald; Frank Martens; Veronica Pacheco; Andie Palmer; Florence Peyachew; Lionel Peyachew; Leonard Ratzlaff; Allyson Rogers; Emily Sewepagaham; Sherryl Sewepagaham; Garry Shutlak; Ralph

Stanton; Apollonia Steele; Carl Urion; James Whittle; Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary Library; Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia; Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta; Canadian Museum of Civilization; Department of Music, University of Alberta; Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta; Music Library, University of Alberta; Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management; Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library; Royal Canadian Artillery Band



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In 1985 Moses and Frances Asch donated a complete collection of Folkways records to the University of Alberta, where their son Michael was Professor of Anthropology. The only such donation ever made by the Aschs, this gift was prompted by the personal connection that they developed with Edmonton during several trips in the 1970s and 1980s to visit Michael, his wife Margaret, and their

grandchildren, Jessica and Seth. Eager to learn something about the history of the city and the region, Moe Asch explored museums, galleries, and archives, especially the City of Edmonton Archives. He also discovered a vibrant arts community, with a lively theater and folk music scene, including the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, and a unique radio station, CKUA, Canada's first public and first educational broadcaster, founded in 1927 on the university campus.

In 2003, the University of Alberta entered into a partnership with Smithsonian Folkways, establishing folkwaysAlive! as a place for research and community outreach with its base and focus on the Moses and Frances Asch Collection of Folkways Records. folkwaysAlive!, which has its home in the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology in the historic Arts Building, is the university's initiative to carry the Folkways' legacy forward in Canada, by linking the content and spirit of Folkways with the cultural life of our communities. The mission of folkwaysAlive! is to explore and support Canada's diverse musical-cultural heritage and living musical traditions, for education, research, community-building, and aesthetic enjoyment.

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