

Artist *profile*



Fig. 1 Jerry Evans

Jerry Evans – *Artist and Filmmaker*

Art has always been an important part of Jerry Evans' life. Born in Grand Falls in 1961, Jerry's family moved a lot when he was young because of his father's work with the provincial government. Each time they moved, it took a while to make new friends. To entertain himself, Jerry spent a lot of time drawing. "I think that's where my seed was planted for art," he says.

At an early age Jerry also knew that there was something different about his family, something that nobody would talk about. Other kids teased them, calling them racist names. When Jerry asked why, his grandfather said they were of Spanish descent and that explained the straight hair and dark skin that kept showing up in his family.



Fig. 2 Jerry Evans, *Spirit Wind* (1996), Lithograph

*Thus, even the census records of the Evans family made no mention of their Aboriginal heritage.



Fig. 3 Jerry Evans, *Spirit Tree* (1996)
Lithograph

It wasn't until he was in his early 20s that Jerry heard the truth. His great-uncle Caleb was visiting from Ontario and caught a lift into central Newfoundland to visit relatives while Jerry and his dad went moose hunting. On the drive, Caleb told them some of their family history. He explained that some of their ancestors were Mi'kmaq, although this wasn't talked about much in their family. These Mi'kmaw ancestors had married English settlers at a time when such marriages were considered socially unacceptable.*

For Jerry, his uncle Caleb's story explained the whispered stories and teasing. But even more, he says, it opened a door for him. He wanted to learn everything he could about his Aboriginal ancestry. "I didn't grow up in my culture, learning my language and the ceremonies of my culture," Jerry says now. "It was almost like being reborn."

At the time of Jerry's discovery about his family, he had a certificate in Commercial Art from College of the North Atlantic and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. As a young artist, it was only natural to explore this new information in his art. "My work is about what it was always about," Jerry says. "Who I am and where I'm from."

Today, the story that had been suppressed for three generations now appears in Jerry's prints. For instance, in the lithography print *No'kmaq – My Relations* (1998), Jerry

included photographs of his family members – his great-great-grandfather, great-grandparents, and grandfather – and his own hand print as a symbol of a living connection to this heritage.

In another print, Jerry explored the title of Daniel Paul's book about the Mi'kmaq – *We Were Not The Savages*. Census takers once used the word "savage" when they recorded Aboriginal people in Newfoundland. Jerry's print also includes portraits of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq taken by French photographer Paul-Émile Miot in the late 1850s. When he saw these photos, Jerry wondered if he was looking at some of his own ancestors.

Porcupine quills, beadwork, carved amulets, and other traditional Mi'kmaw and Beothuk imagery sometimes make their way into Jerry's art. But in his search for authenticity, Jerry also avoids the stereotypical images of Aboriginals often used in popular culture. In *Here Across the Waves* (see fig. 6.103 on page 558), for instance, Jerry used a photograph of an anonymous Mi'kmaw woman because she was wearing a traditional peaked cap and beadwork as opposed to the feather headdress that is often pictured for all Aboriginal people, regardless of their affiliation. Another image shows the famous Mi'kmaq hunter, guide, and prospector Mattie Mitchell.

Much of Jerry's training as a printmaker came from his time as the printer in residence at St. Michael's Printshop in

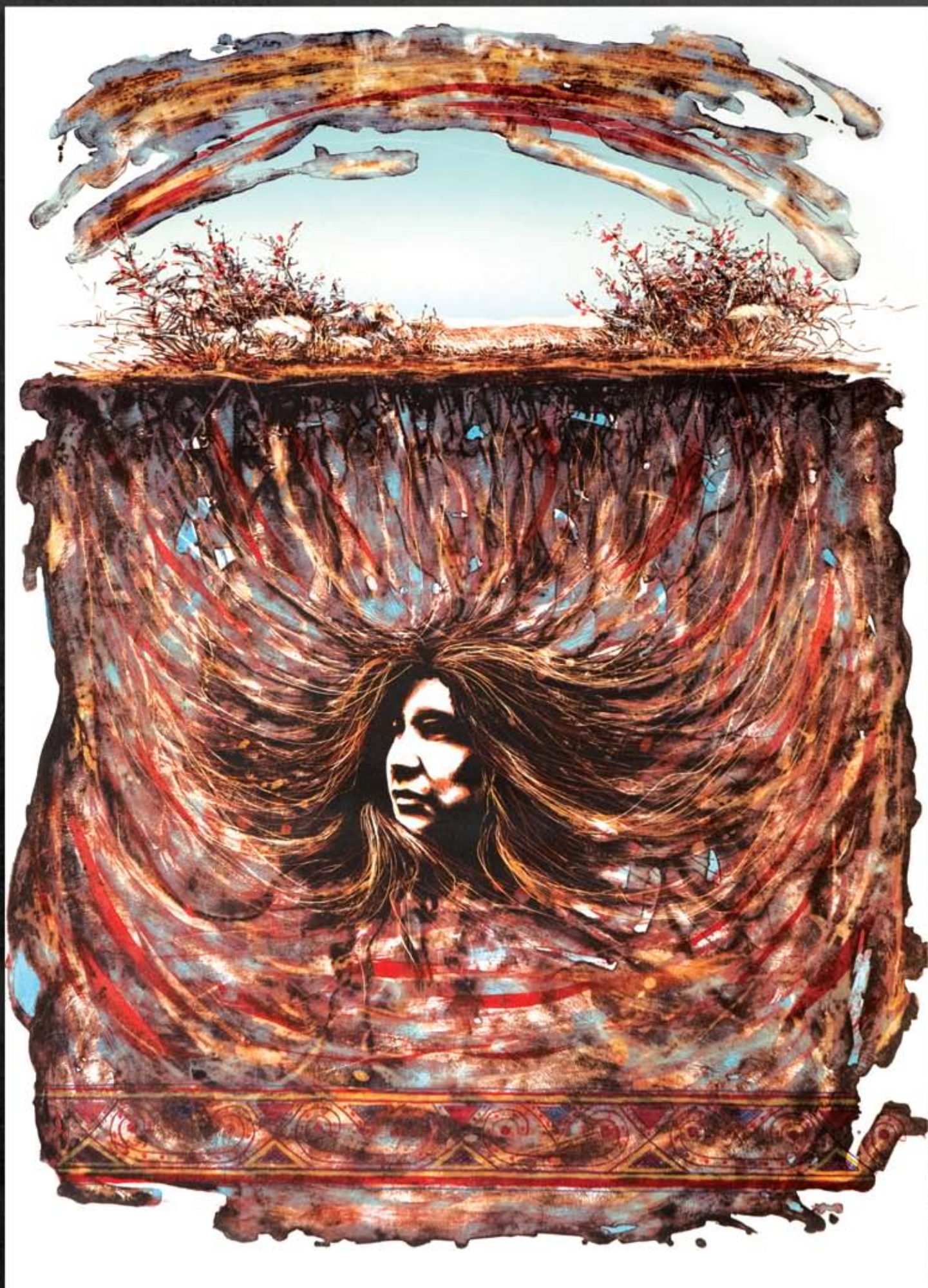


Fig. 4 Jerry Evans
Wistgamu Kiju – Earth Mother (2001)
Lithograph

Fig. 5 Jerry Evans
Migration Cycles (2002)
 Lithograph



St. John's. Jerry specializes in the print form of stone lithography. Following a system of apprenticeships and training established in the Middle Ages, Jerry became a "Master Printmaker" in 1992. Under the supervision of Anne Meredith Barry* and Otis Tamasuskas, he earned his "chop" – an embossed seal that indicates his mastery of his craft.

Recently, back problems and other health issues have led Jerry to take a break from printmaking. Instead, he is creating more paintings and learning filmmaking. Jerry's first short film is based on the same theme as his lithography prints. Titled *Red Ochre: Mekwisiqwan*, it shows footage of Jerry growing up in a Canadian culture. Black and white photographs of family members are interspersed with video of Jerry creating a collage. This approach helps to contrast the two sides of his background. For instance, an

image of Jerry as a baby dressed in a button-up shirt with a little bow tie is juxtaposed with a contemporary video of himself dressed in leather, porcupine quills, and feather regalia at a pow wow. The video also includes a scene where Jerry's son, who is wearing a baseball hat, peeks out from a traditional Mi'kmaw shelter.

Today Jerry's Mi'kmaw culture is a central part of his spirituality and he always participates in the annual Conne River Pow Wow. Even though the modern-day pow wow is not a Mi'kmaw tradition, Jerry says it is a way for all Aboriginal people to get together with old friends, meet new ones, and "openly celebrate and embrace our culture." After three generations of keeping their Mi'kmaw heritage a secret, Jerry Evans is proud to be a member of an Aboriginal family and is proud to pass this tradition on to his son and family.

Try it...

Some of Jerry Evans' works of art incorporate photographs. Try creating your own piece of art that uses both photographs and at least one other medium.

Reflect...

Jerry Evans says, "My work is about what it was always about. Who I am and where I'm from." If you were going to create a piece of artwork to illustrate who you are and where you come from, what would you want to portray? What kind of imagery would you use to express this?

Artist *profile*

Fig. 1 Elsie Holloway



Elizabeth (Elsie) Mary Holloway – *Photographer*

Newfoundland and Labrador's first female professional photographer, Elsie Holloway, was 16 when she received her first cheque for publishing a photograph. It was May 1899 when Elsie went down to the Outer Battery with her father and some other girls to photograph an impressive iceberg in the mouth of St. John's Harbour. Elsie's father, Robert Holloway, was an enthusiastic amateur photographer and allowed her to use his large field camera. Ducking under the black cloth that blocked the light from the viewfinder, Elsie composed her shot and pressed the shutter — taking the shot that later would be published in the British periodical Pearson's Magazine.

Born in 1882 in St. John's, Elsie was raised in an interesting household. Her father, a principal at the Methodist College, also was one of the pre-eminent Newfoundland photographers of his generation. He shared his love of

photography with his daughter and son, Bert. Many of Robert Holloway's photographs were taken around St. John's and on summer travels throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, accompanied by his family.



Fig. 2 Brigus, c. 1940

Elsie often took her camera along on her travels.



Fig. 3 Night time on Water Street, St. John's, 1936 as captured by Elsie Holloway

Upon completing high school, Elsie went to London, England to take courses in retouching and tinting portrait photographs. However, she learned the art of photography from her father. In an *Evening Telegram* interview in 1946, she noted: "Father taught us all he knew, and photography was his hobby. I did take a course in retouching, but that was all. The rest I just picked up myself. I was always fascinated by photography."

In 1904, Elsie's father died and the family moved from the principal's residence at the Methodist College to a new

home in St. John's. Immediately, Elsie and her brother, Bert, set up a darkroom on the top floor. There, the Holloways made plans to open their own photography studio. To finance their venture, they finished and sold a book of their father's landscape photographs that he had been working on prior to his death, as well as individual prints from the thousands of glass plate negatives that they had inherited from him.



Fig. 4 Sliding in St. John's, c. 1920s by Elsie Holloway

In 1908, Elsie and Bert opened the Holloway Studio in St. John's. While Elsie focused on portrait and group photography, which formed the base of their studio's business, Bert showed his father's enthusiasm for adventurous travel. He booked passage on sealing vessels and took some of the best photographs we have of the seal hunt. He also made a photo record of the Newfoundland Sealing Disaster of 1914 when the casualties and bodies were brought off the ships in St. John's.

Elsie soon proved that while she was a patient and careful photographer, she could also be innovative. At a time when photographs were very formal, Elsie liked to capture her subject's personalities, especially children. In

her spare time, Elsie returned to landscape photography in the communities where her family had travelled when her father was alive. In 1914, she visited the International Grenfell Mission in St. Anthony, and travelled north along the Labrador coast. Many of her pictures from this trip have survived.

When the war started in Europe, Elsie found her subjects showing up in military uniforms. Some of the young men she photographed, like Sergeant Tommy Ricketts, would become heroes. Others, like her brother, would never return. In April 14, 1917, Bert Holloway was reported missing in action at Monchy-le-Preux; his body was never found.



Fig. 5 Lieut. Robert (Bert) Holloway, 1916

Elsie Holloway was well known for her portrait work. She took this portrait of her brother before he left to fight in the First World War. Bert Holloway never returned from duty.

With her brother's death, Elsie became the sole owner of Holloway Studio. Before 1916, it is sometimes difficult to tell if a photograph signed "Holloway" was Elsie's or Bert's (or even her father's), but we know that in 1919 it was Elsie who recorded every stage of Alcock and Brown's departure from St. John's as they began the world's first non-stop transatlantic flight. Elsie was also there to record when Amelia Earhart left from Harbour Grace in May 1932 to complete the first solo transatlantic flight by a woman; and she was the official photographer of the

Royal Visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the colony in 1939.

In 1946, at the age of 65, after 30 years of operating a thriving business, Newfoundland's first female professional photographer sold Holloway Studio and retired. Elsie Holloway died in 1971, but her work remains as a way for us to catch glimpses of life in Newfoundland and Labrador that would have otherwise been lost.



Fig. 6 Capturing a historic flight

Elsie captured the start of the world's first non-stop transatlantic flight, which left from St. John's in July 1919. (top left) Crowds gather at Lester's Field, St. John's to watch the plane take off. (top right) Pilot Capt. John Alcock and navigator Lieut. Arthur Whitten prior to takeoff.

Fig. 7 HM King George VI and Queen Elizabeth leaving Holyrood, June 1939

Elsie was the official photographer for this royal visit.

Fig. 8 Filling a water cask, c. 1930 by Elsie Holloway

Try it...

Take several photographs of your environment and select one which you could enter in a magazine section entitled "This is my Newfoundland and Labrador." Explain why you chose that photograph.

Reflect...

Why is our province "a photographer's dream?" When you travel throughout the province, do you take lots of photographs? What happens to the photographs you take?

Artist *profile*

Fig. 1 Ron Hynes



Ron Hynes – *Songwriter and Performer*

“I come from a really good discipline of songwriting in Newfoundland and Labrador,” Ron Hynes says, “because we have been writing songs for 500 years before there was a music industry. And these songs were not written to get a publishing deal or to get on Much Music. These songs were written to document the lives of the people who wrote them. They were poets who wrote about things in their lives, about their communities. And they wrote things that say, ‘This is who we are and this is where we came from, and this is where we live and why.’ So, I came by my trade honestly.”



Fig. 2 Ron Hynes (centre front) with cast of *Hank Williams – The Show He Never Gave*

At the age of nine, growing up in Ferryland, Ron knew he wanted to be a songwriter and singer. He was surrounded with music, but it was his mother’s youngest brother, Sonny O’Neill,

who taught him how to play the guitar on a Gibson J50 when Ron was 13. Sonny loved the music coming out of Nashville at that time: Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash, Hank Williams, and he passed that love of music on to his nephew.



Fig. 3 Ron Hynes in Ireland for the filming of *Ron Hynes: The Irish Tour*, c. 1997

Sonnys' Dream

Lyrics by Ron Hynes

Sonny lives on a farm
On a wide open space
Where you can take off your sneakers
And give up the race
You can lay down your head
By a sweet river bed
But Sonny always remembers
What it was his mama said

Chorus:

O Sonny don't go away, I am here all alone
Your daddy's a sailor who never comes home
All these nights get so long and the silence goes on
And I'm feelin' so tired, I'm not all that strong

Sonny carries a load
Tho' he is barely a man
There ain't all that to do
Still he does what he can
And he watches the sea
From a room by the stairs
And the waves keep on rollin'
They've done that for years

Repeat Chorus

It's a hundred miles to town
Sonny's never been there
And he goes to the highway
And stands there and stares
And the mail comes at four
and the mailman is old
Oh, but he still dreams his dreams
full of silver and gold

Repeat Chorus

Sonny's dreams can't be real
They're just stories he's read
They're just stars in his eyes
They're just dreams in his head
And he's hungry inside
For the wide world outside
And I know I can't hold him
Though I've tried and I've tried and I've tried

Repeat Chorus

© 1976 Wonderful Grand Music/Peermusic Canada

*As of 2010, there are over 100 cover versions of "Sonny's Dream" by various artists worldwide.

When Ron looks back at his career, he acknowledges that he "jumped in with both feet" right after finishing high school. In 1972, Ron released his first album, *Discovery* which was the first recording of completely original material by an artist from Newfoundland and Labrador. Four years later, Ron's international hit, "Sonny's Dream",* was written somewhere in Alberta while Ron

was touring with the Mummer's Troupe in a Volkswagen bus. His inspiration was the uncle who first taught him to play guitar. He started thinking about his grandmother's relationship with his uncle Sonny and the lyrics came to him in only 10 minutes along with the beginnings of a melody. That's the way Ron still prefers to write songs, although very few come that fast.



Fig. 5 The cover of Ron's seventh solo album, *Ron Hynes* (2006)

"The lyric comes first," Ron says of his songwriting. "Then I wait for the lyric to sing back to me. The lyric will have a certain attitude to it, whether it be a love ballad or a funny story or a tragedy. It will dictate the tone of the melody, whether it's up-tempo, medium tempo, or quiet and introspective. Then I may go to the piano, or a ukulele, or a guitar. But my favourite thing is to walk away from the instruments altogether and sing it a cappella. I'm always editing as I go, singing it over and over again, until the phrasing seems to work its way out. That's the only way I know how to do it, and I've done it that way for almost 40 years now."

Although Ron has released his seventh solo album, *Ron Hynes*, and received awards and accolades for many of his songs throughout his career, Ron says his best song is "Atlantic Blue," which was written six years after the loss of 84 lives on the *Ocean Ranger* in 1982. Ron adds that he likes to write songs based on stories. For instance, his song, "My Father's Ghost" was influenced by a ghost story his grandmother used

Fig. 6

St. John's Waltz

Oh the harbour lights are gleaming
And the evening's still and dark
And the seagulls are all dreaming
Seagull dreams on Amherst Rock
And the mist is slowly drifting
As the storefront lights go dim
And the moon is gently lifting
As the last ship's coming in

All the sailors got a story
Some are true, some are false
But they're always wrecked and they're up on the deck
Dancin' the St. John's Waltz.

Oh we've had our share of history
We've seen nations come and go
We've seen battles rage over land and stage
Four hundred years and more
For glory or for freedom
Or for country or for King
Or for money or fame but there are no names
On the graves where men lie sleeping

Lyrics by Ron Hynes

All the nine to fives survive the day
With a sigh and a dose of salts,
And they're parkin' their cars and packin' the bars
Dancin' the St. John's Waltz

Oh my heart is on the highway
And I'm sold on goin' to sea
All the planes fill the skyway
All the trains run swift and free
So leave the wayward free to wander
Leave the restless free to roam
If it's rocks in the bay or it's old cliché
You'll find your way back home

So don't question or inquire
What's been gained, what's been lost
In a world of romance don't miss out on the chance
To be dancin' the St. John's Waltz

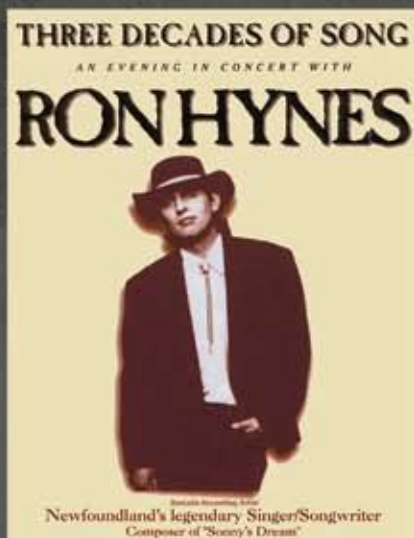


Fig. 7 Ron has been writing and performing music for over 30 years.

to tell him and contains symbols of his grandmother's Catholic faith and Gaelic superstition.

*She stood inside the doorway
and she turned towards the cove.
She took down the blessed crucifix
and she burned it in the stove.
And we all stood in the kitchen
like travellers in the rain
waiting on some platform
to board some lonely train.*

Ron Hynes is very aware of how his own history has shaped his songwriting. But he is also aware of how songs written by people like him shape this province. "More than anything else, as Newfoundlanders, our songs define us," says Ron. "We are connected by them."

*"It wasn't until I had put in twenty years,
until I was thirty, that I knew how to write
... I think that's true of any discipline ... it
takes twenty years for it to have your stamp on
it. That was when my songs sounded
like me and no one else, so that when someone
hears your song on the radio they can say
'that's a Ron Hynes' song' and not a Bob
Dylan song or a Johnny Cash song."*

- Ron Hynes

Try it...

Take 10 minutes and jot down some possible lyrics for a song. These lyrics should come from a personal experience. You may wish to use a graphic organizer.

Reflect...

Are most of your favourite songs your favourites because of the lyrics or because of the music?

RON

THE PERFORMER

In addition to being a songwriter and singer, Ron Hynes can also add "actor" to his resume. Although some of his acting gigs have combined his musical talent with his dramatic flair, he has also done several acting roles for both film and television. In 2010, Ron completed the film *Ron Hynes - The Man of a Thousand Songs*, in which he played himself. His other acting roles include a lead role in the movie *A Secret Nation*, the role of Johnny Shea in the television series *Dooley Gardens*, and principal roles in the theatre productions of *The Bard of Prescott Street* and *Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave*. In addition, Ron was a founding member of The Wonderful Grand Band and completed two albums and over 40 half-hour episodes of the show *Wonderful Grand Band* with them.



Fig. 8 *The Bard Of Prescott Street*, 1976
Mary Walsh, Ron Hynes, David Ross

Artist *profile*



Ned Pratt photo

Fig. 1 Harry Martin

Harry Martin – *Songwriter and Performer*

Harry Martin has four generations of European settlers on one side of his family and countless generations of Inuit on the other. These cultures and traditions make up the theme of most of this songwriter's music. As a symbol of this, for many years Harry carried three feathers on the neck of his guitar: one to represent the Innu and Inuit who make up the Aboriginal peoples; one for the European and Aboriginal mix which created the Metis; and one for the settler culture in Labrador. The feathers also represented his interest in protecting nature.



Fig. 2 Opening ceremonies at the Labrador Winter Games in Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Born in Cartwright in 1948, Harry was raised playing music. At an early age he played the accordion, and learned three chords on the guitar when he was 13 years old. A few years later, an American serviceman stationed at the radar site in Cartwright taught Harry how to play finger-style on a guitar.

For a brief period in the late 1960s, Harry made a living playing in bands in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, but found that playing music professionally "took the fun out of it."

He joined the Canadian Armed Forces and thought that he was leaving his guitar behind. But two years later, while still in the service, Harry picked up the guitar again. He began playing cover tunes with bands, but also tried his hand at writing his own songs. He later recorded one of his compositions, "Raven Hair." In 1981, that song topped the charts on Goose Bay's CFLN Radio for a week. Harry realized that people from Labrador liked hearing songs by one of their own about their own lifestyles.

Harry realized that people from Labrador liked hearing songs by one of their own about their own lifestyles.

Fig. 3 "Raven Hair," written in 1979

Raven Hair

Words and Music: Harry Martin,
Cartwright

Ra-ven hair — cool dark eyes. You looked at me — I came a-live
 When you came on with that smile. I was in hea-ven for a- while The world was ours
 The night so young Don't e-ver end — go on and on Just when I'm feelin' so
 high. Your eyes are sayin' good bye. Oh, what a night for dream-in' —
 We've got the stars on our side — It's just too good to be-lieve — in
 I couldn't leave if I tried
 (verse four D.C. al fine)

1. Raven hair,
Cool dark eyes,
You looked at me I came alive,
When you came on with that smile,
I was in heaven for a while.

2. The world was ours,
The night so young,
Don't ever end, go on and on,
Just when I'm feeling so high,
Your eyes are sayin' goodbye.

Chorus:

Oh what a night for dreamin',
 We've got the stars on our side,
 It's just too good to believe in,
 I couldn't leave if I tried.

3. Don't say a word,
Don't break the spell,
Let's go and find a wishing well,
And I will make your dreams come true,
Just tell me what I got to do.

Chorus

Repeat Verse 1

After leaving the service, Harry became a conservation officer. In the 1970s, the provincial government introduced many new rules and regulations on trapping and hunting. Harry was in charge of enforcing these new laws along more than 500 kilometres of Labrador coastline and 80 kilometres of rivers in southern Labrador. Later he would admit that it was not an easy job.

Many hunters and trappers he dealt with had maintained traditional trap lines for generations. They believed the wildlife that had sustained their fathers and grandfathers should always be there to hunt and trap. Although there were people who saw the need for hunting quotas and humane trapping regulations, some saw them as a nuisance. For Harry this meant that sometimes “during the day I would

come into a situation where someone was committing a minor infraction ... and in the evening I'd find myself at that same person's house ... (at) a party.”

This gave Harry the idea to use his music as a bridge between himself and the hunters and trappers with whom he had to work. He started organizing musical events. People would show up for the music, and then Harry would slip a rule or regulation into the mix. This worked because Harry admired the hunters and trappers he knew. His songs began to tell their stories. For instance, the song “Take Me to the Country” was inspired by Henry Mesher, a fur trapper from Paradise River whom Harry had met. In this way, Harry's 30-plus-year career as a conservation officer inspired much of his music.



Fig. 4 First public concert performance. Official opening of the Cartwright Community Hall, 1967

Take Me to the Country

Words and Music: Harry Martin, Cartwright

Researchers: Barbara Parry, Tim Burluse and Ki Adams

Slowly with feeling

Some-where be-yond those dis-tant hills is where I long to be

the ri-vers and the lone-ly lakes (are) col-ling out to me.

Say-ing come back home—old man back home where you belong—

(cause) time for you is run-ning out you've been gone too long—

Chorus

So take me to the coun-try just the way it used to be

(To) once more ride—the riv-ers and sleep be-neath the trees

Stand and watch that morn-ing sun spread out a-cross the land.

And if I on-ly live one day I'll die a hap-py man

Fig. 5 “Take Me to the Country,” written in memory of the late Henry Mesher, 1983

With the realization that many children in Labrador didn't know how their grandparents had lived and, in some cases, didn't respect the traditions they had inherited, Harry started to take his songs into schools. "I could sometimes point to a kid in the room and say, 'This song is a story about your grandfather.' For a little while that kid would be a hero in the eyes of his friends, who would say things like 'Wow! Your grandfather did all that?'"

Harry's music also celebrates his love of nature. For instance, one of his songs, "Broken Wings," was written to raise awareness of the declining population of eider ducks. He says this song "ties the type of work I'm doing with the

music I love to do ... and it sent out the message that if we don't take care of the things we have in nature, we'll lose them. It's a pretty simple message, but a strong one."

Today, Harry continues to work as a Wildlife Enforcement Officer for Environment Canada in Labrador. He has received several awards for both his music and his conservation work and has released four recordings: *Harry Martin* (1980), *Visions Of This Land* (1994), *Broken Wings* (2000) and *Full Circle* (2005). Harry continues to perform in venues across the country, but adds that he still gets invited to local trappers' events and is honoured to have sung at funerals of Elders.

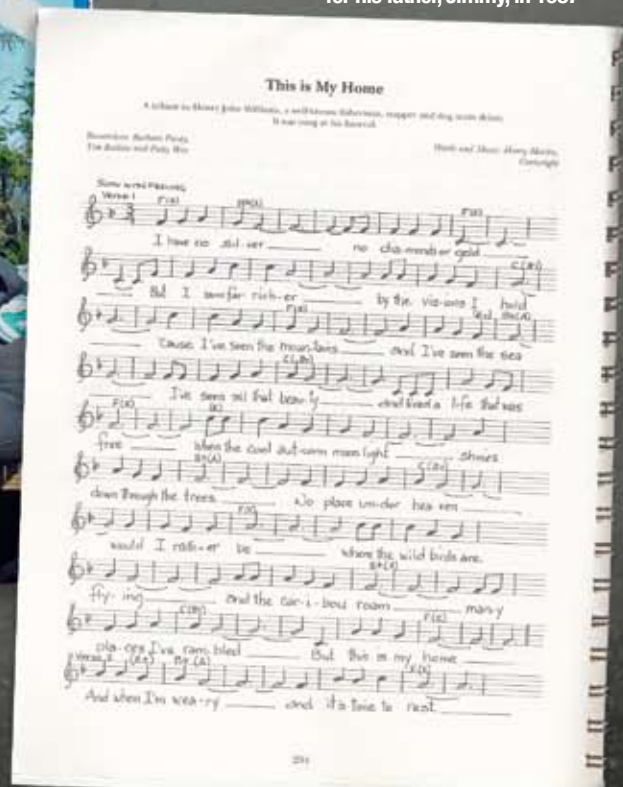
"My songwriting was two-fold: it was an effort to preserve the Labrador culture and heritage and also to promote responsible wildlife conservation practices. So it was both tied in together there."

— Harry Martin



Fig. 6 Chatting with the late Gordon Davis, Sr. whose generation of trappers and hunters inspired many of Martin's songs

Fig. 7 "This is My Home," written for his father, Jimmy, in 1987



Try it...

Using either an existing melody, or one that you have created, craft a song based on one of the following themes:

- your culture and heritage
- the beauty of "this place"
- something that you believe in strongly

Share your composition with friends and family.

Reflect...

Make a list of your favourite songs related to the theme of (i) culture in general or (ii) Newfoundland and Labrador in particular. Rank your list to identify the three songs that speak most strongly to you. What ideas in the lyrics, or other aspects of the music (melody, harmony, rhythm, or form) do you find most compelling? Why?

Artist *profile*

Michael Massie – Artist



Fig. 1 Michael Massie

Michael Massie's art combines modern and traditional elements, and reflects his mixed Inuit, Metis, and Scottish ancestry. Michael loved creating art from an early age. When he was growing up in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, art was not offered after grade 6, so Michael taught himself to draw from comic books.

In 1991, after studying European art forms in St. John's, Stephenville, and Halifax, Michael took a workshop in Inuit carving techniques from sculptors Mattiusi Iyaituk and Charlie Kogvik, both of whom had learned the craft from family carvers. Michael created controversy in the Inuit stone-carving world by introducing non-traditional materials like wood and European techniques like silversmithing.

"I am part Inuit and part Qablunaaq," Michael has said, "I might as well combine the two and come up with something different."

Michael's silversmithing honours his Scottish grandfather, David Massie, who came to Labrador in the early 1900s to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. His imagery of owls, shamans, and uluks are drawn from his Inuit heritage. Since 1992, Michael has also created many elaborate and decorative tea sets, which are a fond homage to his Metis grandmother's love of tea. For Michael, tea is an act of hospitality, which represents his love for his family – an underlying theme in much of his work.

The modern artists Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali have influenced Michael's contemporary designs. But

his art also incorporates humour that comes from Aboriginal stories where shamans turn into trickster animals to teach important lessons. In addition, many of Michael's sculptures are based on stories. His compact stone carvings have a strong connection to traditional Inuit stone carvings. At the same time, the exaggerated features of some of his pieces speak of his early appreciation of the pop art form of cartoons.



Fig. 2 Michael Massie

Enigmas of a teapot (2002)

etched sterling silver, olive wood, horse hair, musk ox horn, ebony, ivory, seal skin, enamel, and sinew - 19.68 x 24.13 x 14.22 cm

This piece deliberately combines Inuit and surrealist motifs. (Note the melting ulu on the lid.) Traces of eight well-known surrealist artworks are incorporated. The surface of the piece is etched with Inuktitut syllables, drawings of eyes, and free-form shapes.



Fig. 3 Michael Massie
The look of confidence was apparent on his face as he was about to strike (2003)
limestone, cocobolo wood, ivory, bone, and sinew - 50.8 x 33 x 18.42 cm

*“Remember what you know and always
leave the door open for something new.”*

— Michael Massie

Fig. 4 Michael Massie
***Grandfather I have something to tell you* (2004)**
anhydrite, bone, bird's eye maple, mahogany, and ebony
17.25 x 9.25 x 12 inches



Fig. 5 Michael Massie
Detail of *Grandfather I have something to tell you* (2004)

Grandfather I have something to tell you:

A story from my past. When I was 12 or 13, my father and my mother's father took ... (us) camping to Mulligan, Labrador for a week. One day my Dad and Grandfather left camp to go get more supplies ...

Going outside for a minute, I noticed a small bird ... which landed not far from where I was standing. I quickly went into the cabin and grabbed the pellet-gun and went back outside. Now Grandfather had always told us not to kill any animals that we didn't eat ... but I aimed and pulled the trigger – and watched as the bird turned ... (face up) – dead. Stunned and riddled with guilt and fear over what I had just done, I picked up the little bird and brought it into the cabin to show the boys ... and was roundly told off for it.

Grabbing a little spoon, I ran out to bury the little bird. I never could tell Grandfather or Dad what I had done and I have always regretted doing that ... and this is my confession in stone, some 30 years later.

In the design, having the one leg standing and the other kneeling is me standing to accept responsibility for what I had done – while also kneeling to say a prayer or confessing to it all. The gloved hand represents the fact that I have hidden something, while the ungloved one says that I am baring all or confessing. The Xs for eyes is a whimsical way of saying something is dead.

**Fig. 6 Michael Massie
Walrusty (2005)**

sterling silver, kingwood, lignum vitae, ebony,
and bone - 22.86 x 20.96 x 17.15 cm

Michael says the inspiration for the design of this piece "came from something I saw one night as I switched off the TV ... just that split second before the screen goes black, there was a shape that caught my eye (the shape that is now the negative space between the handle and the spout). As soon as I was back in the shop, I began to sketch that shape — and lo and behold this is what came from it."



Try it...

Find a story in your culture and tell it in a work of visual art. Consider creating a carving from plaster of paris to represent the story.

Reflect...

Think about your own influences as they relate to your art work. Who, or what, influences you? How are these influences reflected in your creations?