

**"WHAT IS TRADITION? NATIVE
NORTH AMERICAN POPULAR
MUSIC AS EXPRESSIVE CULTURE"**

James E. Cunningham, PhD

Popular music:

“commercially mass produced music for a mass market that derives from musical styles that first became popular in the 1950s” (Roy Shuker: *Understanding Popular Music* 2001),

MUSIC

folk



art

popular

ART MUSIC

- art for arts sake
- strong theoretical/notational foundation
- composed and performed by professionals
- longevity
- patronage

FOLK MUSIC

- orally transmitted
- amateur musicians
- dynamic

POPULAR MUSIC

- professionalized
- consumer-based product
- dynamic

“TRADITION”

“the expression from the past brought forward
into the future” James E Cunningham

POWWOW MUSIC

- originated in 1950s
- strong underpinning of indigenous tradition
- dynamic
- professional musicians
- disseminated via mass media

Young Bear Singers (Mandaree, ND)



NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS USA

- NAMA
- aka The Nammys
- est. 1998
- defining Native American music industry
- more than 30 categories annually
- Including “traditional” music

GRAMMYS - USA

- National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS)
- est. Best Native American Music Album category 2001
- Best Regional Roots Music Album 2012



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF RECORDING ARTS & SCIENCES
SHENANDOAH WITH ALISON KRAUSS
BEST COUNTRY COLLABORATION WITH VOCALS - 1995
'SOMEWHERE IN THE VICINITY OF THE HEART' (TRACK)

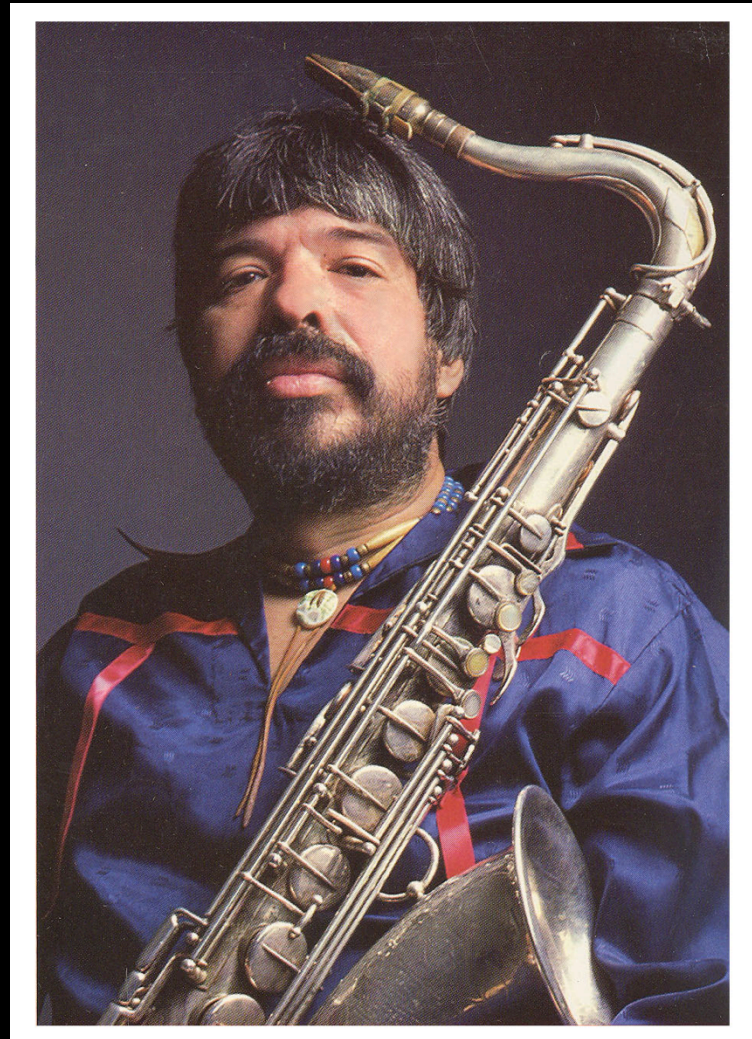
JUNO Awards/Canada



- **Best Music of Aboriginal Canada Recording (1994–2002)**
- **Aboriginal Recording of the Year (2003–2009)**
- **Aboriginal Album of the Year (2010–present)**

Jim Pepper (Creek/Kaw)

- jazz saxophonist
- “urban Indian”
- from Portland, Oregon
- jazz-rock fusion
- “Witchi Tai To”
- top 40 radio hit 1969



1970s-1980s



Redbone



Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree)



Carlos Nakai (Navaho/Ute)

1990s

Susan Aglukark (Inuk)



Joanne Shenandoah (Oneida)

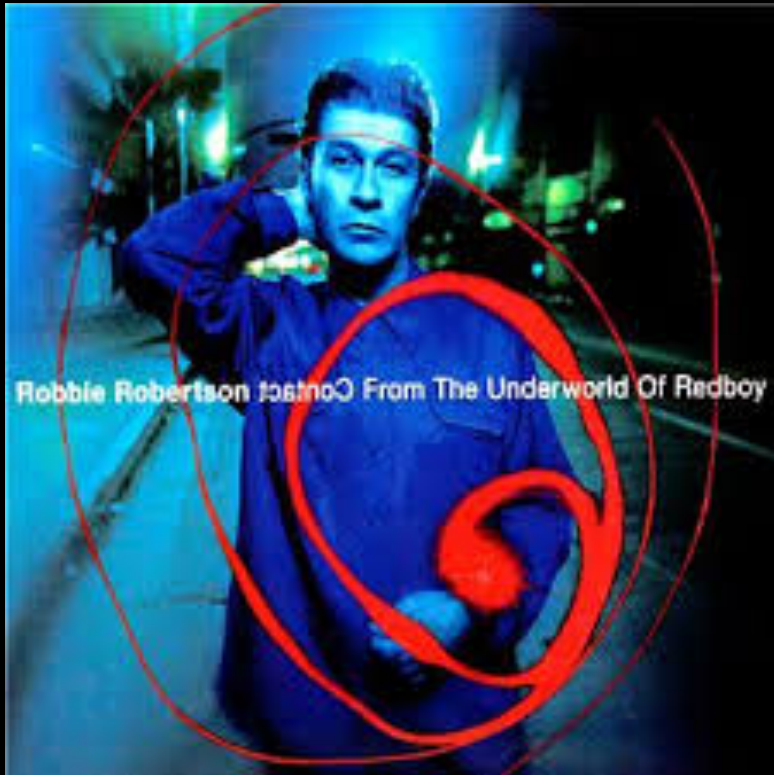
1990s

Kashtin (Claude McKenzie
and Florent Vollant, Innu)

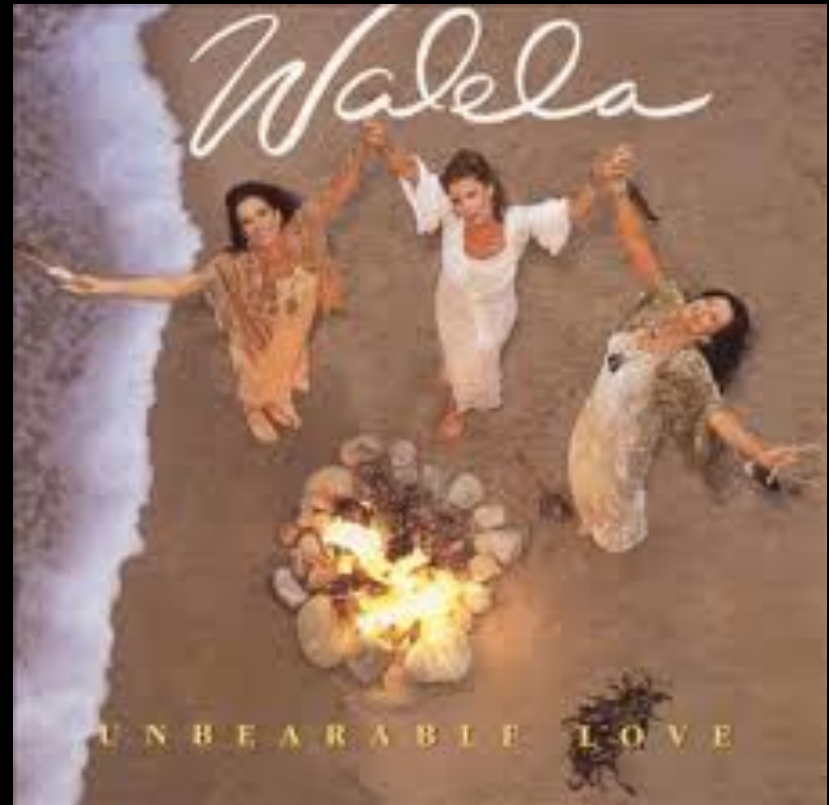


Tudjaat (Madeleine Allakariallak
and Phoebe Atagotaaluk, Inuk)

1990s



Robbie Robertson
(Mohawk)



Rita Coolidge/Walela
(Cherokee)

Native North American Popular Music

Representation:

- Native language
- vocables
- musical elements
- themes (cultural and/or political)
- image



Native North American Popular Music

Representation:

- **Pros: visual and aural representations of indigenous culture**
- **Cons: culture can be misrepresented**

Native North American Popular Music

Process:

- role of song in culture
- origin, ownership, acquisition, composition
- group interaction
- creative choice
- emotion and/or sentiment
- humor ★★★

Native North American Popular Music

Process:

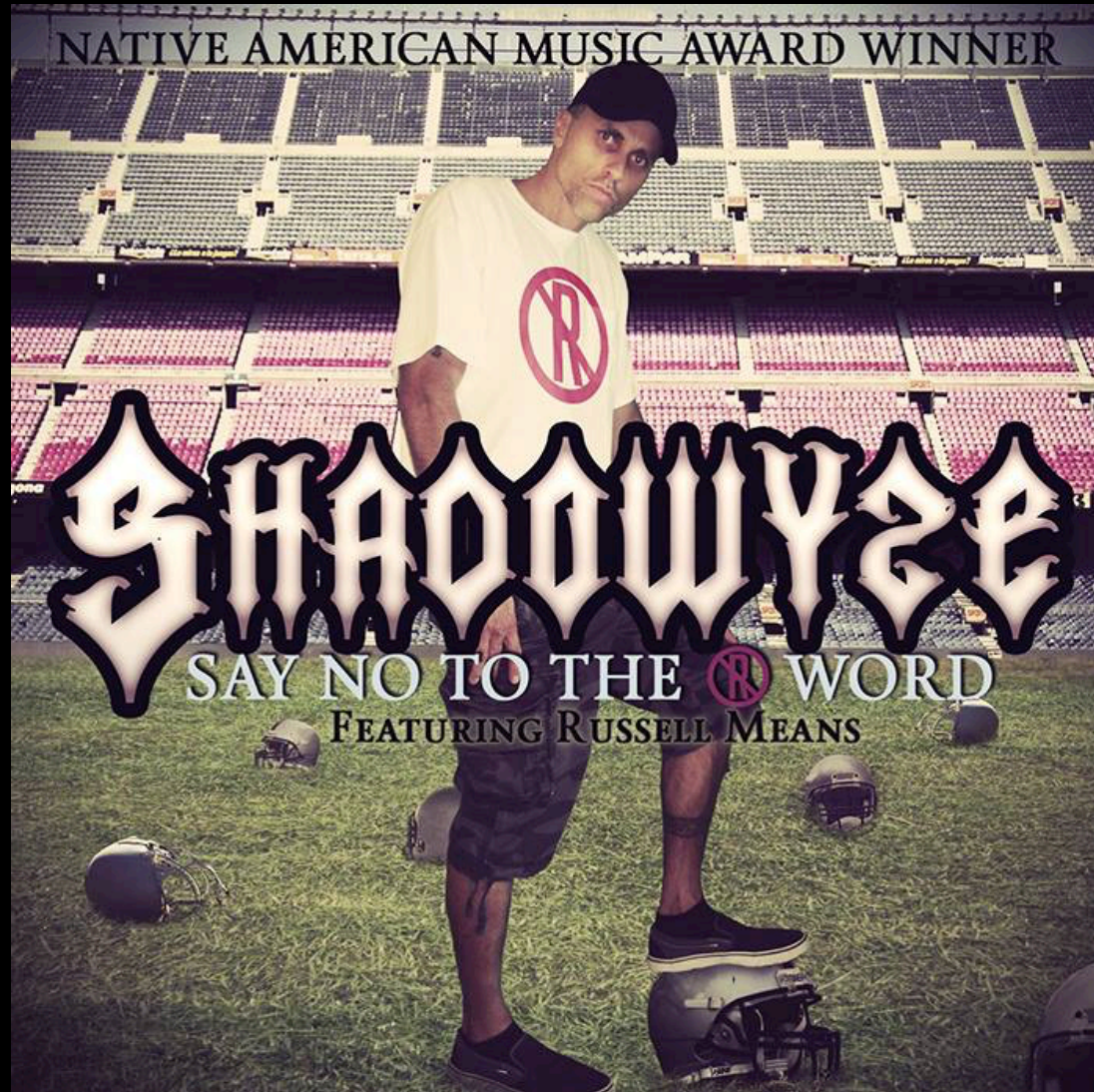
- **Pros: “true” evidence of the influence of indigenous culture**
- **Cons: not overtly evidenced in the musical product or performance, and must be expressed verbally by artists**

“Witchi Tai To”

- Native American Church song
- transmitted through oral tradition
- traditional melody
- Comanche language
- vocables
- ceremonial/healing song
- sentiment
- creative choice



Shadowyze (Muscogee-Creek/Cherokee) “Witchi Tai To-Water Spirits”



Nelson Tagoona (Inuk) “throatboxing”



George Leach (Stl'atl'imx) Aboriginal Album of the Year 2014 Juno Awards



A Tribe Called Red (Ottawa)



DJ NDN

DJ SHUB

**BEAR
WITNESS**

“Electric Powwow Drum”



- Canada Act 1982
- Constitution Act 1982 – Section 35
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC-AADNC)
- INAC – Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act, established the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1985.
<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-6/page-1.html>
- Indian Act – 1985 (defines eligibility for Indian status)
- FIRST NATIONS - Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists.
<http://www.nonstatusindian.com/terminology/definitions.html>