



Highlight Summary Report
Virtual Roundtable on
First Nation Citizenship
Featuring Artistic Presentations
from First Nation Artists
Monday, June 20, 2011

National Dialogue on First Nation Citizenship
Dialogue National des Premières Nations sur la Citoyenneté
www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca



Table of Contents

Brief Overview: The National Dialogue on First Nation Citizenship	Page 2
Highlight Summary of Proceedings	Pages 3 - 13
Opening Remarks	p. 3
Discussion Question 1	p. 3
Vince Fontaine: “Indian City”	p. 4
Violet Duncan & Melvin John: “And the Hoop Stays Strong”	p. 5
Discussion Question 2	p. 5
Missy Knott: “Walking After Midnight”	p. 7
Lisa Jackson: “Suckerfish”	p. 7
Steve Wood: Traditional Cree Drum Song	p. 8
Discussion Question 3	p. 8
Nathalie Coutou: “The River Keeper”	p. 10
Kelvin Redvers: “The McIvor Case”	p. 11
Shy-Anne Hovorka: “Can’t Change the World”	p. 12
Closing Remarks	p. 13
Online Commentary Highlights	Page 14
Next Steps	Page 15
Brief Biographies of the Featured Artists	Pages 16 - 18



Brief Overview: The National Dialogue on First Nation Citizenship

On Monday, June 20, 2011 the Assembly of First Nations hosted First Nation artists from across Canada to participate in the second Virtual Roundtable on First Nation Citizenship. The Virtual Roundtable series is part of AFN's National Dialogue on First Nation Citizenship, which seeks to foster a respectful and inclusive discussion on citizenship and identity that supports decision-making and deliberations at the community, nation and treaty levels. This dialogue will inform the development of actions and strategies to assist First Nations to restore jurisdiction over citizenship and transition to new approaches, in a staged and supported manner, at the pace and timing that they determine.

This Roundtable featured discussion on First Nation citizenship, identity, and Nationhood as well as artistic presentations from each of the panelists. The format of the event was intended to facilitate an intergenerational exchange between artists, to foster reflection on identity through exploration of culturally-driven artwork, and to spark discussion over how artwork can be used to inspire creative approaches to First Nation governance issues.

The Virtual Roundtable consisted of the following participants:

- National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo (Ahousaht First Nation, BC)
- Elder Bertha Commanda (Kitiganzibi First Nation, QC)
- Caitlin Tolley, AFN National Youth Council Representative (QC & Labrador)
- Jerry Daniels, AFN National Youth Council Representative (MB)
- Nathalie Coutou, Visual Artist & Owner of *Khewa Boutique* (Wakefield, QC)
- Violet Duncan, Performer/Youth Coordinator, *Kehewin Native Performance* (Kehewin Cree First Nation, AB)
- Vince Fontaine, Founder of *Rising Sun Productions* (Winnipeg, MB)
- Shy-Anne Hovorka, Vocalist & Songwriter (Thunder Bay, ON)
- Lisa Jackson, Filmmaker (Toronto, ON)
- Melvin John, Performer/Storyteller, *Kehewin Native Performance* (Kehewin Cree First Nation, AB)
- Missy Knott, Vocalist (Curve Lake First Nation, ON)
- Kelvin Redvers, Filmmaker & Producer for *CTV First Story* (Akaitcho First Nation, NWT)
- Steve Wood, Performer & Founder of *Northern Cree Singers* (Saddle Lake Cree Nation, AB)

The Virtual Roundtable focused on the following three questions, reflecting broadly on the theme of “Identity, Nationhood, and Change”:

1. What does First Nation citizenship or citizenship in your Nation mean to you?
2. How does your cultural heritage and artistic background contribute to your sense of identity? How is this linked to your idea of what a citizen is and what the responsibilities of a citizen are?
3. In your opinion, how can the arts be used as tools to further the efforts of First Nations to move forward on citizenship?

This report provides a summary of Roundtable highlights, including commentary from panelists and live chat participants. The webcast video and chat forum have been archived on the AFN Citizenship WebPortal at www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca for full viewing.



Highlight Summary of Proceedings

Opening Prayer

Elder Bertha Commanda opened the Roundtable by offering ceremonial tobacco to everyone which she later used for smudging. Elder Commanda then asked the Creator for strength, wisdom, and sensitivity to remain connected to the beautiful world around us. She also thanked the Creator for everything we have been given. She prayed first in Algonquin and then in English.

Opening Remarks

Caitlin Tolley and **Jerry Daniels** introduced themselves as representatives of the AFN National Youth Council and extended the opportunity to each of the panelists to introduce themselves. Everyone expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to participate in the Roundtable discussion.

National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo welcomed the panel of artists to the Roundtable discussion and expressed his hope that the evening would be about “expanding conversations about [First Nation] identity”. He spoke of the richness of heritage and culture that still exists in his home of Ahousaht, British Columbia and said that when he “thinks about the work that we are involved in at this time—the resurgence of our peoples, the rebuilding of our families and our nations—it would be unthinkable, where I come from, for what is so often referred to as the “leadership”, whether it be hereditary or elected systems of government, to contemplate our future, or issues in the here and now, without going to our spiritual, cultural, and artistic leaders. In fact we have different names for them in our language, so there is not so much of a disconnect between the elected or hereditary types of leadership. Because in fact what we require is the involvement of everybody in helping to shape our communities and our societies.”

National Chief Atleo mentioned that this was the second Virtual Roundtable on First Nation citizenship and that it “strikes to the core of what [First Nations] have inherited, that is a challenge and an opportunity to think about what the future might look like and to reflect on it differently... There is a great level of admiration for the depth and the spirit of artistic expression”. He encouraged people to get involved with the dialogue online and supported the idea of broader webcasts and online forum technology, which is allowing AFN to reach from coast, to coast, to coast and connect people within remote communities.

Question 1

What does First Nation citizenship or citizenship in your Nation mean to you?

Missy Knott described her experience growing up away from her First Nation, Curve Lake, and then reconnecting to her community after her mother adopted two young children from White Dog, Northern Ontario, and decided to move back to Curve Lake. She spoke about how thankful she was to re-connect to her nation through the support the Curve Lake community offered to her younger brother and sister. Missy also mentioned the various opportunities that have arisen on her quest to find her roots, including attending “Amp Camp” with Shy-Anne Hovorka and performing in the opening ceremonies for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

“Now I have a leadership role in my community, and I’ve been asked to mentor all these small children, like my brother and sister. And I feel very lucky... I am so happy to be a part of my nation.”



Melvin John explained that in his opinion citizenship was “passed down from our grandfathers. They gave us a worldview to help us understand everything around us. In this way we understood ourselves and our identity.” He explained that as colonizers arrived within First Nations they brought foreign views and systems which disconnected people from their cultural practices, and thus from their identities and their innate sense to act as stewards of the earth. “When our citizenship [process] was interrupted across generations, we had to learn to piece together, as we interacted with other nations, a clear representation of where we came from.” Melvin spoke of the treaties between the Queen and indigenous peoples, which promised to respect traditional forms of governance and citizenship structures but which were eroded over time, resulting in a lack of traditional knowledge amongst younger generations. Kehewin Native Performance seeks to help new generations tap into their deepest emotions, explore their identity, and reconnect to their past through music and dance.

Steve Wood began by pointing out that “historically, citizenship was determined by people within the band. In other words, citizenship is belonging to a group of people that have a common understanding, a common identity—they know who they are, they know where they come from. More importantly they have a foundation, which is a language that distinguishes them from others.” Steve spoke about his childhood, and described his identity and sense of connection to his nation as being directly linked to common experiences shared amongst members of Cree communities. Despite spending a period of time in a residential school, Steve says he has never forgotten the traditions within his community. “I believe as children we have those things that the elders have instilled in us, which dictate how we will determine our future.”



Presentation 1 **Vince Fontaine - “Indian City”**

Vince Fontaine introduced his vision “Indian City”, which aims to explore “inherent ties to the past” and the unique cultures of First Nations. He explained how he can “touch the past through the spirit world” and through his music. “I’ve been very fortunate over the past fifteen years to achieve what I suppose people would call success. But to me it’s just fuel to keep going in what the Creator has set forth for me. Eagle and Hawk has received accolades, awards, and applause, but what that says to me is that our culture has achieved accolades and applause.” He explained that when people cheered for his band, they were really cheering for the dancers and the culture they represent. “Indian City” is meant to encompass Vince’s experience as an indigenous person. He chose the term “Indian” because it is the one he most associates with and it is the title his ancestors chose to adopt when they signed the treaties. His aim with this production is to present North American indigenous groups to the globe and promote knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultures.

Lisa Jackson responded to Vince’s presentation by commending him for focusing so much on the artistic process of developing a piece because she believes that it is in this process that “the magic happens”. She also commented on “how vibrant and alive” Indian City feels, while incorporating both traditional and contemporary elements. Lisa believed it felt “very accessible, yet very respectful and powerful in its presentation.” Lisa spoke to her current interest in combining the traditional with modern perspectives to address what First Nations are facing today and felt that “Indian City” really encapsulated this approach and would successfully reach a broader audience with its energy and messaging.



Presentation 2 Violet Duncan & Melvin John “And the Hoop Stays Strong”

Violet Duncan and Melvin John chose to present an interpretative dance piece by Keherwin Native Performance called “And the Hoop Stays Strong” about the devastation of colonization, finding a way out of reservation life, and the aftershock of having to rediscover culture and identity. The dance illustrates the generational effects of colonization, including the assimilation of First Nation people and the stripping of identity from First Nation individuals. After being moved onto reservations, the dance explores the way Indians chose to adopt foreign western lifestyles, moving into cities and giving up their identities to escape the hard life of living on reserve. The specific example the performers use is that of indigenous people joining “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show”, which not only required sacrificing identity, but at times sustaining injuries or illnesses that could lead to death. The dance then explores the disenfranchisement that occurred during the “60s scoop”, a period in Canadian history marked by mass removal and adoptions of First Nation children, restricting them from their Nations. Violet says Keherwin explores these issues in a very literal way to educate young people about where they came from and to create discussion. Melvin quoted his wife Rosa John in saying that “what citizenship means to us is recognizing our Nations alongside Canadians”. He said that “First Nations not only need to be recognized by the Canadian government, but that Nations need to revisit traditional ways of determining citizenship.”

Nathalie Coutou reflected on “And the Hoop Stays Strong” by calling it “thrilling” and remarked that there is the potential for such performances to bridge understanding about First Nation history within current school boards throughout Canada. Nathalie said that her 15 year-old daughter was completely incensed at the way First Nation history had been changed so drastically to suit the preferences of the Canadian education system. “I find that those three vignettes give hope and make [history] more accessible so our youth can say ‘Oh, this is what happened to us!’ and they can make it understood to their peers.”

Question 2

How does your cultural heritage and artistic background contribute to your sense of identity? How is this linked to your idea of what a citizen is and what the roles and responsibilities of a citizen are?

Shy-Anne Hovorka opened up about her experience of being separated from her family and placed into foster care as a young girl. She spoke of the challenges of being a First Nations child in an environment that was entirely foreign to her, which disrupted her sense of identity. Luckily, she found the Hovorkas who wanted to foster Shy-Anne’s connection to her Nation and culture. However, because she was lighter skinned Shy-Anne also struggled to fit in amongst her First Nation peers. Her deepest feeling of connection to her roots came from the wonder she felt towards natural phenomena. “I was obsessed with thunderstorms. And in grade 8 I went and I just sat in the middle of this rainstorm. I went in afterwards and wrote this poem about the sound of the

thunder hiding the sound of my heart breaking and the lightning lighting the path to for me to see and the rain washing my tears away and the wind holding me and letting me know it was okay... So I knew I still had that connection to Mother Earth.” At the age of 27, while still struggling with her identity,



Shy-Anne decided to go and find out what her spirit name was. She remembers an elder telling her “If you can feel the drum, you know where your roots are.’ And that was all I needed to hear, because when that drum went I could feel it reverberating in me and just lighting me on fire.” During the sweatlodge Shy-Anne had an extraordinary experience, being visited by a black bird and lightning twice. The next day Shy-Anne’s name was the only one to come through in the naming ceremony: Black Thunderbird. When she returned home the poem she had written in grade 8 about the storm fell out of one of her music books. She immediately sat down to add music to the words and titled it “Thunderbird”. “The bad things that have happened to me are not things to make me feel sorry for myself. They are also gifts of the Creator because now with those hardships I can understand the next generation of youth coming up and I can try to mentor them. Now I use my music to go into remote communities and I perform for them, but I also give them a chance to perform for me... I work around the clock so I can pay for a youth from each community to come and perform with me on the big stages and let them honour us with their arts from their areas. It is their voice that is going to carry us into the future.” Shy-Anne describes her responsibility as a First Nations citizen as using her talents to empower youth and pass on positive messaging.

Vince Fontaine’s response began with an explanation of what it was like to grow up as an Anishnaabe person off-reserve, and the shame that was associated with being called “Indian”. In Winnipeg, Vince was influenced by the music community and worked hard to improve his guitar skills in order to get gigs. “What that did to me was to give me a sense of being a citizen of the music community. At the same time, tugging at my heart and soul, was the citizenship question of my heritage. I was no longer ashamed, but I didn’t really put it forth that I was Anishnaabe. I was just a musician...” Vince went on to talk about a period of change during the 80s. As he travelled through Western Canada he came across many peace communities and felt the need to do something; the idea of Eagle and Hawk had taken root. “My artistic conviction started to come... I wrote a song called “The Wild West Show” which posed the question of who would be Indian today in light of the Wild West Show from a hundred years ago.” Vince felt that with Eagle and Hawk he had a responsibility to explore issues affecting First Nation communities and to ask questions about what makes someone “Indian”. Today he feels his music is a catalyst to promoting understanding of First Nation cultures across the globe, and it is his role to ensure that his art positively contributes to global recognition and acceptance of First Nations.

Lisa Jackson also spoke about growing up off-reserve, as her mother lost her status through marriage. Lisa referenced the period of her life when she was working in television and finally felt ready to use the film *Suckerfish* to explore her strained relationship with her mother, who had been deeply affected by her experience within the residential school system. “I believed this was the only ‘native’ film I would ever make because I didn’t feel qualified to make any other films. I thought this was my own experience and this is all I can talk about.” However, Lisa quickly received feedback from her audiences that told her she was not alone. Many had shared her experience of challenging relationships with parents who were residential school survivors. “There were a lot of young people who felt really conflicted about their citizenship, or their identity, and I realized that, as uncomfortable as it was for me to put my story out there in a really honest way, I had the strength to speak out for people who felt a real hunger to be more connected to who they were. And so I decided that I would continue to make Aboriginal films.” Lisa now feels compelled to represent those who were assimilated and to advocate for welcoming disenfranchised First Nation people back into their communities.

*“Culture is the foundation of our sovereign
Nationhood.”*
~ Vince Fontaine



Presentation 3
Missy Knott
"Walking After Midnight" Cover

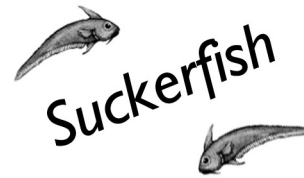
Missy Knott chose to perform "Walking After Midnight" by Patsy Cline because this song reminds her of her youth and time spent with her mother and grandmother. This genre encouraged her to become a vocalist and gives her strength as she reflects on moments with her family listening to this music when visiting Curve Lake as a young girl.

Vince Fontaine was impressed by Missy's performance, commenting on her beautiful voice and talented back up guitarist, Sean Conway. He said he liked the fact that Missy chose to perform a piece of music that connects her to her roots "and pays homage to her upbringing". Vince explained that he believes artistry first blossoms when people are young, and recalled a childhood memory of his when his mother took him to buy his first guitar. He asked the Creator to extend many more years of song before her.

Presentation 4
Lisa Jackson - Suckerfish

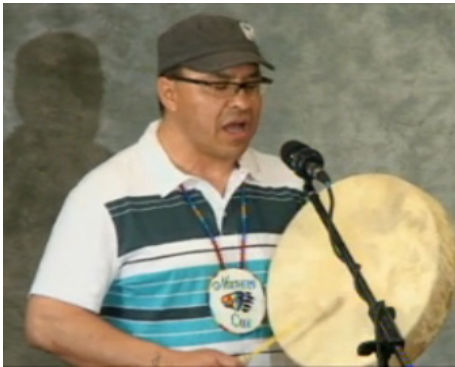


A film by Lisa Jackson



Lisa Jackson expressed how difficult it was for her to make this film. She spoke about how, as an artist, you start each project with a question without knowing what the answer will be. "I did this at a time when I was ready to really look closely at my relationship with my mother and at my identity. The first time this screened in front of an audience, I had so protected myself in the process of making it that I actually felt shocked, like 'What did I do?!' ...The reward for the vulnerability of putting your story out there is that I've seen that it is such a common story." Knowing that others out there could relate to her experiences, Lisa has found the strength to continue working with First Nation issues in her films. She is particularly interested in working with youth and giving them an opportunity to share their stories. "I think it is really important that there is a freedom for people to express what they are feeling, whatever that may be. And art is an amazing way to do that."

Shy-Anne Hovorka was incredibly moved by the film, and was shocked at how involved she became in the storyline for such a short film. She expressed her support for Lisa's initiatives which give youth the opportunity to speak for themselves through film and provide mentorship in film media. "Seeing the film there are so many different themes in there, that I bet every single person in this room can relate to at least three or four different aspects." Shy-Anne spoke about the troubled relationship she has with her own biological mother, but said that after watching Lisa's film it made her want to make an effort to reconnect. "There is another side to the story and I think sometimes we miss that there are two sides to the story and you made it so beautifully clear... it was unbelievable..." Shy-Anne also commended Lisa for having the courage to stand up and show people who she was, even if she wasn't entirely sure what her First Nations identity meant to her at the time.



Presentation 5

Steve Wood - Traditional Cree Drum Song

Steve Wood began by reflecting on Shy-Anne’s words about feeling the drum inside of her and not really understanding what it was. He said that people from all different backgrounds came up to him all the time asking about what it was they were feeling when the drum began to beat. He said he didn’t have the answer, but he knew whatever it is, it is very powerful.

Steve said he had been very nervous leading up to the Roundtable, for fear that he would “mislead, misrepresent, or misinterpret” the things that he had been taught. “I was talking to my wife before I came, I had a number of different types of presentations at home on a disc. I was thinking about which one to use and she told me ‘Why don’t you just be honest? Why don’t you just do what you always say, and let our drum do the talking for us? Even if they don’t understand, they will feel.’ So I left all of that stuff, and I just brought my drum.” He told a story about visiting an elder some years ago. Steve could feel something in his house, and was concerned for his family so he went to see an elder. The elder told him ‘the drums have spirits, and what you are feeling is their need to speak.’

Steve chose to perform a song that he heard every morning growing up, which “talks about the sun rising in the east, it talks about the birds singing, it talks about how the day is gifted to us.” Steve would hear the drum and then smell sweetgrass as his father smudged. He says that while in residential school these are the things he held onto, because you can not take those things away, “I guess you can’t take it out of the Indian.” “Knowing your identity is something that will lead to successes in your life—that’s something I tell my students every day.” Steve wishes that one day traditional music will be taught to First Nation students in the classroom. In order to get more young people interested in traditional Aboriginal music, Steve’s group Northern Cree has contemporized the music. He believes the drum is a powerful tool for teaching culture, history, and language.

Kelvin Redvers commended Steve for his decision to teach children through drum songs, as it something that they can immediately latch onto and enjoy. “I think that’s a great way of spreading ideas of identity and ideas of Nationhood. That is the direction we need to be going.”

Question 3

In your opinion, how can the arts be used as tools to further the efforts of First Nation communities to move forward on citizenship?

Kelvin Redvers told his fellow panelists about his grandfather Bineya signing Treaty 8 “which was an agreement of coexistence, at least from his perspective, signed between two different nations so that they could live peacefully together on the same land.” Kelvin explained how “coexistence” was not actually the result of Treaty 8, as the Dené were subjugated to the will of the Canadian government. He said that his understanding of citizenship was a “goal to return to something similar to what my grandfather envisioned, which was a peaceful agreement between two strong nations to work together in a unique, collective, and positive way, but we want to be able to define ourselves.” Kelvin spoke about the two roads he sees existing: one road is towards



establishing pride amongst First Nations people who may feel ashamed of their identity and the other road is towards garnering “the collective goodwill of the rest of the Canadian population”, which is necessary. Kelvin believes that art can be used to change the message that Canadians are receiving about what First Nations want, so instead of becoming wary of listening to First Nations, Canadians will see issues in a new light and be encouraged to respond. “I suppose most Canadians don’t understand the complexities of the Indian Act, the complexities of Treaties. I think it’s kind of gotten to the point where any time First Nations stand up, even if they’re going to do something positive, the perspective that the rest of Canada has is sort of ‘Oh, what do they want now?’ ...The narrative that First Nation groups have been wronged in the past, and we’re working to find something better—it’s a good narrative. But I believe the general public of Canada has heard that story too many times. And hearing the same message so many times, people start to grow wary of it. I believe our role as artists is to take that message, the message that we are working towards something good, and make it feel fresh again. To make that message sound new and vital. In hollywood they pretty much take the same stories and use them over and over again, but if a filmmaker does their job the story feels fresh again...” Kelvin told everyone that he thought Joseph Boyden’s ‘Three Day Road’ was a great example of this process. “It’s not a political piece, it doesn’t say anything about law, but what it does is it brings the general person into our psyche, into our world, and into our sense of understanding. Art can reach over cultural boundaries, unlike many other things.” Kelvin says it is up to artists to bring people into their world so that by understanding First Nations people will choose to support their efforts, including the struggle to have their right to define themselves recognized.

Violet Duncan asked “How can the arts not be used? I listened to the panel here today and I’m hearing that the artists have certain roles, we have certain responsibilities. Even though so many of us had fear, were vulnerable, it’s that fear and vulnerability that got our voices out there, that got the questions out there... And so many people connected to that.” Violet spoke about Kehewin Native Performance’s work in communities with school children. They raise questions and the issues that youth haven’t thought about before because they are so stuck in the present, dealing with day-to-day issues such as substance abuse. The Kehewin group talks about their history to explain what is happening today. “They are involved either through movement or through voice, and it’s getting discussion going. That’s what art is all about, and as artists this is our responsibility to bring it forward to our communities.” Violet says that even though the children are young now, in a few years they will go to college, become educated, and return to their lift their communities up all because of watching one show about their history.

Nathalie Coutou said “art is the key to cultural identity”. She discussed feeling detached from her identity and the struggles of opening up her art store Khewa Boutique. Nathalie had a vision of one day operating an art store dedicated to Aboriginal art and education about Aboriginal cultures. She began by doing research on Aboriginal owned and run art businesses, which she discovered did not exist. Upon advice from her mother to “put one leg forward, your body will lean and the other will follow”, Nathalie took a risk—she bought a house that she would convert into a store. The community in which she purchased the house actually tried to drive her away. They signed a petition against her store and were fearful that the presence of a “native woman” would draw too much attention to the community. But Nathalie was determined: “I wanted to bring the song, the drum, the moccasins, the jewelry, the people, the dancing. The cultural identity and the things I was taught.” Despite being told she was the only native woman in Gatineau, and being told by an elder at a Pow Wow that she had

to choose between her native identity (inherited from her mother) and her white identity (inherited from her father) she decided that she must embrace all of herself. “I decided to dance for life, for the

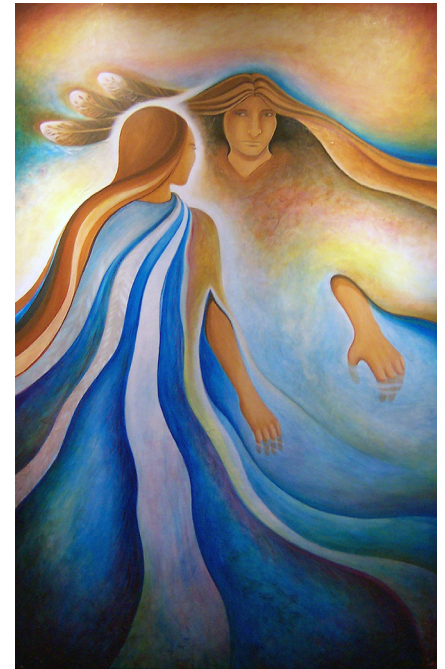


river, for the wind, for the fish, for the flowers... I'll dance as a giver of life. Nobody could take this from me because I'm a woman. And that really rooted me into my own circle of life." Nathalie decided to use her store to educate people about aboriginal identities and to dispell negative stereotypes, including those about the Métis. She went further and created the Harvest Festival to bring together First Nation peoples with members of the Outaouais community. Nathalie has also gotten involved in advocating for protection of the Gatineau River, which she describes as "the highway of our ancestors" and she is motivated in this work by her connection to the natural world. This connection is displayed in her artwork which she believes is a way to "materialize our own dreams" and create change.

Presentation 6

Nathalie Coutou - "The River Keeper" Painting

Nathalie Coutou's painting "The River Keeper" is a depiction of a dream she had where the giver of life was swimming in a river. "The woman surfaces to meet with man on Earth and to teach them how to care for her River. The man is presented as Mother Earth, because man comes from woman." Nathalie said that when she first gave birth she was told to avoid nursing her children due to the time commitments and sacrifices she would have to make in other areas of her life. But she felt compelled to nurse her children based on an instinct to help them survive, so she did. "This piece shows that if we, as women, keep our thoughts strong, if we keep our eyes open to the things we want to look at, if we open our ears to the conversations we want to take part in, if keep our place in existence and if our words are in touch with our heart then we can touch the beauty and the pureness of our inner waters. We are the keeper of the water. We are the giver of life. If we keep our water inside of us clean, we then nurture life and bring it into the new world clean." Nathalie wants this painting to convey the need for women to stay strong and to hold onto their identities and beliefs. There is a need for women to communicate their needs, wants, and aspirations to others. Nathalie believes this sharing needs to happen in order for First Nations to fully understand citizenship. As an artist, she thinks it is her responsibility to share the dreams she is given, to promote Aboriginal culture, and to educate others on First Nations issues.



Missy Knott responded to Nathalie's painting by speaking about the need to stop and recognize the beauty that surrounds us in our environments. Missy shared with the panel a number of challenging events she has faced over the past couple of years, which essentially threw her life into chaos. One of the things that centred her was recalling something her father had said to her before passing away: "Just slow down and take a look around you", and everything was beautiful." Missy said this realization allowed her to surface in her life and thanked Nathalie for sharing her work with everyone.

"As an artist it is not my role to be famous or collect awards... My role is to show the next generation where they can get to and how they can make the world, which is struggling, a better place."

~ Shy-Anne Hovorka



The McIvor Case

Presentation 7 Kelvin Redvers - “The McIvor Case” CTV’s First Story

Kelvin Redvers presented a segment from a show he produced for CTV’s First Story on the McIvor case. Sharon McIvor has taken the Canadian government to court over gender discrimination within the *Indian Act* as previous versions of the Act had restricted eligibility for women and their descendants due to marriage and remnants of this discrimination persisted. Kelvin said making a court case interesting and easy to comprehend was really difficult, so his aim was to simplify the issue so that wide audiences could understand what was going on and why it was wrong. Kelvin chose this piece because it was Sharon McIvor’s fight for her rights that now allows Kelvin to apply for his status under the *Indian Act*. “I realize that this whole discussion is about how we can move away from status, but, on a personal note, to finally be getting that recognition—that I’ll be a member of my First Nation, of the Akaitcho Nation—is huge. It links back to what Sharon said about ‘being recognized as part of a community. It’s a right I have, my children have, and my grandchildren have’... The biggest thing for me was that, for 23 years of my life, Sharon McIvor was fighting that fight and I had no clue.” Kelvin said he never questioned why his mother, grandmother, and cousins were all considered “Status” while he was not, he just assumed that was the way the law worked. It took learning about the McIvor case through his work at First Story for him to realize that something wasn’t right. Kelvin believes that artists have the power to educate the masses and to spread the word about First Nation citizenship issues.

Steve Wood believes that while a sense of belonging is important, the *Indian Act* must go. “Within our Bands the people collectively determine who lives with the Band.” Steve feels the decision of who belongs to a Nation should still rest with the Bands, not with the Canadian government or any other outside agency. Steve feels that “Status” is impeding First Nations from getting to the heart of identity and citizenship issues because it divides Nations and creates rifts between individuals with status and those without. He also spoke about the way Nations have been divided into smaller communities, referencing the Cree Nation as a specific example. Steve believes that these communities must learn to work together as a Nation once more, so that they can effectively engage in Treaty dialogues with the Canadian government; as Kelvin said, “Nation to Nation”. Steve believes the education system within First Nations is one area that could be especially improved with a stronger relationship between Canada and First Nations.

Shy-Anne Hovorka said she could relate to Kelvin’s experience, as she lost her ability to be registered through her adoption to non-First Nation parents. She said it never really bothered her until people started questioning why it was she didn’t have Status. Shy-Anne was incensed because she felt she shouldn’t need a card to be able to say who she was and that people should not question her identity because she doesn’t have a card. At the same time she questions why her right to an identity is being denied and wonders if she should fight for it.

“A lot of us have teenagers in our lives, and they are shaking our trees, and they shake them really hard and they want answers.”

~ Nathalie Coutou



Presentation 8 Shy-Anne Hovorka - “Can’t Change the World”

Shy-Anne Hovorka and her band performed their song “Can’t Change the World” live. The song was written with her guitarist, Jordan Eljison, and explores the way teenagers today, especially within First Nations, feel as they are surrounded by things like substance abuse and suicide while facing the reality that not much of a future for them exists within their communities. They just want to get out. “All over the world there are these same issues that come up everywhere but it’s really sad to see that it’s in our own backyard, and sometimes it’s overlooked.” Shy-Anne explains that the music video for this song depicts a little girl chasing a globe, and the globe moves through the teenage years of partying, adult homelessness, and then comes full circle as an elder catches the globe and hands it back to the little girl. The video closes in front of city hall, which represents the girls physical, mental, and emotional desire to change the world finally being put into action, and an entire community stands behind her. Shy-Anne made sure that there was representation from each of the four directions in her video because she felt that was important.

Melvin John really enjoyed Shy-Anne’s beautiful voice and the talents of her band. He was happy that she had chosen song as a way to spread her message to youth. He believes Shy-Anne’s career is only just beginning and that when youth hear her song they will understand her vision and want to pursue the world that Shy-Anne is working towards. He said that while Shy-Anne might not save all of the youth, she will be able to save many of them. Melvin also commented that he could see Shy-Anne branching into other mediums aside from music to address her audience as well.

Violet Duncan liked the way Shy-Anne chose to call the song “Can’t Change the World” because she felt it would get youth fired up and motivated to make an effort to change their situations. “That’s what gets our young people going, is saying you CAN’T do something—it just makes them want to do it.” Violet said the song was incredibly powerful and she really liked the concept for the music video.

“That is one of the biggest roles of art and artists... is to be able to go to communities and spread that feeling of pride, of defining who we are. Me, I define myself as a filmmaker... That is a very strong identity for someone. So for people who may be lacking that, art can be the key to helping people who don’t know how to define who they are.”

~ Kelvin Redvers



Closing Remarks

National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo expressed his thanks to all of the participating artists for opening up and sharing their art, thoughts, and feelings with everyone. The National Chief was impressed that the conversation had spanned so many topics including combining traditional and modern elements to share ideas, portraying the connection First Nations people have to the Earth, and finding new ways to engage the understanding and emotions of other Canadians. He spoke about the fact that somewhere along the way artists seem to have been removed from the discussion and are seen as producing things for galleries and museums, but that the Roundtable was a reminder that people are surrounded by the arts every single day. He said that it is time to reflect on the moment First Nations are in and that it is time to look to the Treaties for guidance, and to remember that these Treaties were not only between Nations, but between people. They established a relationship. “I always liked the saying of Black Elk who said that ‘the sole proposition of the universe is relationality’. That our sole purpose in life is to create, maintain, and uphold relationships. And in so many different ways you’ve all brought that to the forefront here.” The National Chief acknowledged the comments being made during the online chat session and said that while people still felt it was important to recognize the past, the pain, and the trauma, that it was equally as important to move forward and focus on healing. He also agreed with online participants who said that artists will lead the way to rebuilding First Nations and promoting healing within communities. He closed by thanking the moderators and event organizers and encouraged everyone to continue the discussion about First Nation citizenship while considering the viewpoints of those we don’t often bring to the table, such as First Nation artists.

Closing Prayer

Elder Bertha Commanda thanked the Creator for the Roundtable and for bringing the artists together to continue the work of the elders on the issues of First Nation citizenship and identity.

“All of these pieces—the music, the stories, the interpretive dances—this is the legacy that we create today, that will lead to healing and wellness of the coming generations. One day, we will be the Ancestors.”

~ Barbara (Online Forum Participant)



Online Commentary Highlights

On the online chat forum, which ran live during the event, there were a number of comments and questions about topics being discussed at the Roundtable and on the artists' presentations. This section will address some of the questions raised and highlight some of the comments provided by participants.

Is this about First Nations citizenship in both the US and Canada or just Canada? ~ Cal

The Assembly of First Nations National Dialogue on First Nation Citizenship is focusing on the situation and jurisdiction of First Nations in Canada. However, as a number of our Nations span the Canada-US border and as a need for inter-governmental agreements and protocols exists for all First Nation citizens, there is applicability of this dialogue internationally.

The online forum started off with a number of comments pertaining to the *Indian Act*, including frustration over the different legal definitions that have been applied to indigenous groups in Canada and the assimilatory nature of the *Indian Act's* policies. Another topic addressed was the racialization of First Nations people, which was brought in with Western ideology. Online participant Renate commented that "Being related is the core of identification - to the people, to the territory, to the history. So what Shy-Anne is talking about is important to engage in." Another participant, Patricia, could relate to Shy-Anne's experience of feeling not visually "native" enough due to her light skin and curly hair. Patricia said "An elder talked to me once and said 'Which part of you is indian? Your arm? Your leg?' She made me laugh... she also helped me to feel I 'belonged'." People also expressed fears about being rejected within their Nations because they grew up off-reserve. Online participant Joanna reassured everyone and said that while this was a problem in the past, it is more common for First Nations people to live off-reserve these days, so there tends to be greater acceptance when they do return to their communities, whether just to visit or to live.

The online participants were really impressed with the artistic pieces presented during the Roundtable. They commented on how powerful the art pieces are and how much pride it instilled in them to see First Nation artists creatively addressing such important issues. While many of the presentations reminded participants of the pain and trauma they had experienced, they were also motivated by the artists to hope for positive change and to use the arts as tools for healing and education. One participant, Barbara, specifically sent a shout out to the Walk for Nations Team, which is a group of recovered drug addicts and gang members who now travel Canada to raise awareness about substance abuse and violence, and collect funding for indigenous youth programs that reconnect youth to their cultures.

The online participants were all very supportive of the artwork the panelists presented and commented on the important role First Nations artists will be able to play in the process of having First Nation rights recognized and respected within Canadian law. Everyone agreed that artists had the power to lead the way on such important issues: educating youth, finding creative solutions, helping people to heal through art, and re-instilling cultural pride in First Nations people everywhere.

"I wish I had a hundred of my elders to speak behind me, because I am only a youth in terms of what our grandfathers left to us..."

~ Melvin John



Next Steps

Virtual Roundtable Series

AFN will be coordinating activities to further dialogue over the coming months. Our next Virtual Roundtable discussion will be hosted in French. Please visit the First Nation Citizenship WebPortal at www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca for background information and dates of upcoming events.

Online Survey

Please let us know what you think about First Nation citizenship by completing our survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/fncitizenship>.

Multimedia Submissions

Are you inspired by the artwork the panel of artists presented? The AFN is currently seeking multimedia submissions for our 'Have Your Say' project. Put on your creative hat and join these artists in creating a piece of art that explores the broad theme "Identity, Nationhood, and Change"!

Use the following questions to help guide your creative vision:

What does Citizenship and Nationhood mean to you today? What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of citizens and their governments? What is the appropriate unit or body to determine citizenship (i.e. you are a citizen of what)? How important is this unit to your identity as an Indigenous person? How would you like to see citizenship move forward in your Nation? What tools are needed to make change a reality?

These multimedia submissions can include films, songs, images, sculptures, or any other media—use your imagination! Youth are especially encouraged to make their voices heard. Collected submissions will be posted to our website and the most creative will be selected to become part of our Arts Gala at the National Forum in November! More information on the creation of submissions is available at www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca in the 'Have Your Say' section.

National Forum on First Nation Citizenship

Don't forget to join us at the National Forum on First Nation Citizenship, November 15 & 16, 2011 at the River Cree Resort in Enoch, Alberta. The Forum will feature workshops and panels on a variety of First Nations governance issues ranging from intergovernmental frameworks and considerations for citizenship administration to long-term planning and next steps. We will also be hosting an evening Arts Gala featuring submissions from our 'Have Your Say' project and live presentations and performances from First Nation artists from across Canada. For more information visit our website: www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca.



Brief Biographies of the Featured Artists



Nathalie Coutou

Nathalie is an Abenaki artist from St-Alexis de Montcalm, Quebec. She began painting at a young age, inspired by the artwork her father created. She studied Graphic Design at Old Montreal College and has been contracted to do design work for a number of companies and events, including Carleton University and the Aboriginal Tourism Team of Canada. In 2001 Nathalie opened Khewa Boutique in Wakefield, Quebec. The shop features artwork and crafts from indigenous artists and aims to foster understanding about indigenous culture and values. Nathalie's personal creations embody these values, depicting humans and animals living in harmony with and connection to the natural world around them. Outside of running her business, Nathalie is an active community member and organizes the Wakefield Harvest Festival each September, which celebrates aboriginal culture and community-building.



Violet Duncan

Violet is a youth leader and lead dancer for Kehewin Native Performance Company. Within the company Violet plays many roles including directing rehearsals, designing costumes, and, most importantly, inspiring youth and engaging them in the arts. Violet believes that performing arts offer an outlet for exploring history, promoting healing, and connecting First Nation youth to their culture and identity. Violet is also well known for her pageant title, as she won the Miss Indian World Competition for 2007 after competing in the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in 2006. Violet spent a year traveling the world and acting as an ambassador for indigenous youth everywhere. Violet is expecting a child in the very near future and we wish her family happiness and good health as she embarks on her journey into motherhood!



Vince Fontaine

Vince is an Ojibway guitarist, songwriter, and producer from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Vince entered his music career as a guitar player in the late 1980s, performing in Winnipeg's professional music scene. He ultimately found his voice through the music group Eagle & Hawk, which he started in 1994. To date, the band has received five dozen nominations and over 30 wins at awards ceremonies across North America, including a Juno Award and nine Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards including 2008 Aboriginal Entertainer of the Year and 2009 Best Group and Best Rock Album. Vince brings his creative skills to the live stage and has produced and organized various culturally significant events such as the North American Indigenous Festival. In 2008, Vince Fontaine was the recipient of the Winnipeg Arts Council's prestigious "Making A Mark Award" presented at the Mayor's Arts Luncheon in June.



Brief Biographies of the Featured Artists



Shy-Anne Hovorka

Shy-Anne is an Aboriginal vocalist, pianist, and songwriter from Northwestern Ontario. She studied music at Lakehead University, graduating with Honours, and performed as the feature soloist for the Thunder Bay Symphony. Shy-anne's music incorporates a variety of genres, from blues to pop music. Her albums *Black Thunderbird* and *Pseudo*, along with her stellar vocals, have won her multiple awards, including the 2010 Aboriginal Entertainer of the Year at the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards. Aside from music, Shy-Anne is passionate about issues affecting Aboriginal youth. She performed alongside Missy Knott in the 2009 Aboriginal Music Tour, which promotes healthy lifestyles, respect for Mother Earth, and encourages youth to follow their dreams. She also holds Youth Talent contests that give Aboriginal youth the opportunity to win a paid performance spot on her tours.



Lisa Jackson

Lisa is an Anishinaabe film director and producer who currently resides in Vancouver, British Columbia. She studied at Simon Fraser University and graduated with a degree in Film and History. Lisa has produced numerous films exploring a wide array of Aboriginal issues, including army recruitment of Aboriginal youth, modern indigenous artwork, and revival of indigenous language. Her film *Suckercfish* has been screened at more than 60 film festivals worldwide and was broadcast on Canadian television by CBC and APTN. Lisa's films are known for being extremely thought-provoking, exploring territory that evokes strong emotions and forcing her audience to think about issues in a critical way. Her recent projects include the short animation *The Visit* and *Pushing the Line: Art Without Reservations*, a Bravo! Channel documentary. Lisa's film *Savage* recently won Best Live Action Short Drama at the 2011 Genie Awards.



Melvin John

Melvin John is Plains Cree from Kehewin Cree Nation in Alberta, Canada. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies and is presently finishing his Masters of Fine Arts degree. He has been sharing traditional and personal stories with audiences of all ages for over 18 years. With his wife, Rosa John, he is one of the co-founders of Kehewin Native Dance Theatre, a dance and storytelling touring company made up of their children, grand children and youth trainees. Their rendition of creation stories and humorous -tellings of Trickster Stories invite his audiences into a world of traditional concepts and world views interpreted from a First Nations perspective.



Brief Biographies of the Featured Artists



Missy Knott

Missy Knott is a 21-year old indigenous vocalist from Peterborough, Ontario. In 2009, Missy released her first album “For No Reason At All...”, won the Peterborough Folk Festival’s Emerging Artist Award, and won Best Pop CD Album at the Toronto Exclusive Awards. She participated in the 2009 Aboriginal Music Tour alongside Shy-Anne Hovorka promoting healthy lifestyles, respect for Mother Earth, and encouraging youth to follow their dreams. In 2010 Missy traveled to Vancouver to dance in the Aboriginal cultural presentation at the Winter Olympics. At home, Missy acts as a role model for emerging youth artists and is a familiar face at fundraising events across the city. Last August she organized the “Stars of Tomorrow” Contest, which featured performing youth from across the Kawarthas.



Kelvin Redvers

Kelvin Redvers is a 24 year-old Dené filmmaker from the Akaitcho Nation who grew up in Hay River, Northwest Territories. At 15, Kelvin established Crosscurrent Productions Company and went on to obtain a degree in Film Production from Simon Fraser University. He has produced many international award-winning films including *Firebear Called them Faith Healers* which won him the Rising Star Award at the 2010 Canadian International Film Festival. His work ranges from narratives, to creative storytelling, to documentaries and satires and always manages to capture the essence of his subject matter in an imaginative way. Kelvin currently works for CTV directing and producing for the show *First Story*, which explores Aboriginal issues and current affairs. His first episode *Black Blood* was just awarded the Radio and Television News Directors’ Association’s Trina McQueen Award for the Best News Information Program in British Columbia, making him eligible for an award at the national level. Kelvin is currently working on a new short film.



Steve Wood

Steve is a Cree performer from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in Alberta. Steve is one of the Founders of the Northern Cree Singers, who have been nominated for a Grammy Award for the past six years in the category for “Best Native American Album”. After Grammy organizers decided to drop the category earlier this year Steve was one of the most vocal critics urging them to reconsider and to continue to recognize the value that Aboriginal performers bring to the industry. Under Steve’s leadership the Singers have been able to release a staggering 28 albums since 1991. Through music Steve advocates for the preservation of First Nation language and culture.



For more information please visit
www.firstnationcitizenship.afn.ca

