



History becomes alive through the written word. It is in this spirit that the NBYO has commissioned a special essay to commemorate Canada's 150th birthday. Through poetry and prose, this work will mark this special moment in our history by reflecting on the role art has played in shaping our culture.

Peaceful Land

Herménégilde Chiasson

150 years ago an important dream was born here.
It started with the idea of a union between New Brunswick
and Nova Scotia

Later on it included Ontario and Quebec

Later still the dream kept on growing to include
everyone between the two great seas bordering this project,
this country, this dream, this beautiful land called Canada.

Beauty comes with love

What we love becomes beautiful

From season to season the land changes, renewing
its climate and its landscape

This is why so many artists, so many poets and so
many musicians have been inspired by the life, the
struggles, the rewards that come with sharing this land
New Brunswick might be best translated and described by
its artists, its musicians, its poets

The First Nations people were the first ones to witness that beauty of the land

Their knowledge, their wisdom and their roots have been shaped by a long journey

If you listen carefully you can still hear the beauty of their drums beating in the forest

A beauty Mihku Paul recalls in her Woolostook vision of the land

You are the story now, ephemeral as the days.

Born here, died here.

The fire's song will call you kin

The house of dawn will welcome you when that morning finally opens its eyes.

This song of the land grew with different colours in the words of two Fredericton poets

It has been said that Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts, at the time of Confederation, were the finest voices in all Canada

They wrote about the dream that was taking place before their eyes

Charles G.D. Roberts welcomed the union with these words:

Here in Canadian hearth, and home, and name,—

This name which yet shall grow

Till all the nations know

Us for a patriot people, heart and hand

Loyal to our native earth, our own Canadian land!

And Bliss Carman seems to reflect this love of the land in the conclusion of his poem on the rivers of Canada

*Tobique and Madawaska and shining Gaspereaux,
St. Croix and Nashwaak and St. John whose haunts I
used to know.*

*And all the pleasant rivers that seek the Fundy foam,
They call me and call me to follow them home.*

The French and later on the Acadians have inhabited this land for more than 400 years and they have also witnessed its beauty as Leonard Forest in his poem *Former Seasons*, translated by Jo-Anne Elder and Fred Cogswell:

*my seabirds inscribe me in enormous circles
above the wharves of my connected summers
my summers are swollen with sunlight, they make
and unmake themselves like fertile tides*

The words of these writers are a tribute to the landscape we admire

Their music is a testimony to our common presence
From First Nations to Newcomers we bring our
voice to a common song

Each culture along with the passage of time creates
its layers of conscience

A reminder of the sharing of this place and of a
time that remains with us still

Culture records our intimate and public story
Culture creates a narrative that will stay with us
through time and history

Culture is present in words, in paintings, in theatre,
in films, in dances and mostly in music

Music travels in our minds, you can hum along to
it, you can sing it, you can play it, dance to it, or you can
simply hear it; but whatever way you approach it, it will
stir your emotions and stay with you as the sound of an
era, the soundtrack to your very own movie

It could be personal or it could be historical

To have an idea of what people were like 150 years
ago, the way they dressed, what they ate, the way they
behaved, what they had in mind, what they feared, what
they enjoyed, we looked to what their writers wrote, the
music they listened to, the paintings we can still look at

All these works of art blend together to help us
create a picture of what happened, what they were
involved in and, yes, what they dreamed

Just like us, they had dreams and those dreams
have shaped us

Just like your dreams will shape the future

In New Brunswick we have been blessed with such
artists

Musicians, storytellers, image makers who have
crafted a vibrant vision of our presence on this land and
the dreams we carried with us all along

Culture is also where ideas are born

Just like every human being needs to change, to innovate, to create using ideas as his or her guides, so does society in its quest to improve itself

Ideas are the necessary ingredient in the making of every social renewal

Ideas are free, they are fragile and they can easily be discarded but they can also be liable in bringing us major rewards in inspiration, wealth or welfare

Ideas can be very simple, like the clothespin, or trigger changes to civilisation, like the internet

Whatever they might be they always transform our lives on a small or large scale

If dreams are more on the emotional side, ideas are their intellectual counterpart

They both are a product of culture, and both are born outside of the box

Whether you deal with a piece of music or a major breaking mathematical equation, they both are the result of the “what if” world and attitude

What if you used carbide to design a lighter hockey stick, what if you used a round disk attached to an axle to move heavy objects, what if you used oil as a binder for pigment, what if you used a single instrument to dialogue with the orchestra, what if you set words to music?... And the list goes on

It reads like a long poem of innovations major or trivial that have shaped the human adventure

Just as it had many artists, New Brunswick has also had many of these inventors or idea-makers

From the snow blower to scuba diving and from the sardine can to the lollipop, we have had our share of thinking outside of the box

This is the magic of culture and the importance of its presence in our lives

Culture tells our story but it also lives in everyone of us
We carry it around wherever we go and it identifies us
Along with politics and economy it is one of the three great voices of every sane society

Culture is important for it is where our dreams and ideas are crafted

And the world, like every one of us, lives on dreams and ideas

Dreaming is what we do when we imagine the future
Dreaming happens every day and everywhere
Can you imagine someone who would be deprived of such a gift

Such a person would be very unhappy, living in a very grey world

Dreams can be essential or trivial, grand or minimal, noble or crazy

Dreams trigger our imagination and our sense of creation

Dreams are also the motor and the fuel of every

artistic activity

Artist dream the world that will later become part of our world

Dreams can concern us as individual but also as part of society

Whatever they are they always involve a possibility of change

Dreams are free but making them real is where the real work begins

Many dreams are born and abandoned but some make it to reality

Youth is the time when we are most sensitive to dreaming

Youth is a time when everything seem possible

A time when dreams are boundless

A time when music surrounds us

Accompanies us in our dream world

We dream of the future where we will live the most part of their lives

We dream of the changes we will operate in our lives

We dream of the world being born in our environment or in our future society

Culture is usually associated with the arts but culture is a lot more than that

Culture is a way of living together, of sharing and working

As Canadians, as New Brunswickers, we have

inherited a great culture

A culture that has made us one of the most envied countries on earth

Every culture finds a way to voice the concerns, the pleasure and the beauty of the place where it lives

This expression of culture is most intense in the arts
Music is probably the most popular form of that expression

Every culture on earth has a form of music born of its environment

From the most primitive to the most sophisticated way of reaching us

From hand clapping to elaborate synthesizer music lives

In our modern world music is everywhere

From elevators to shopping centres, and from streaming to telephone playlists, music has found a way to reach us whenever and wherever we are

There used to be a time when you had to create and make your own music

You had to be a musician or go to a place where music would happen

In those days music was magical, precious, expensive, and eventful

Symphonic music was associated with worship or power

How lucky we are today to have access so freely to that music

Living in a time where culture, the arts, music are so close to us

Sharing a culture that we own and to which we contribute as artist and as Canadians

Like a symphony our culture is made up of different instruments, different sounds, different notes, but we all come together in a forceful and clear message of freedom for the people of various origins united on this land

This year is an important year for celebrating what has made us who we are

This is a great year to take notice, to appreciate and to admire our culture

The culture that has shaped us just as we have made it to our image

The culture and the music, the arts and the words

150 years ago a very important event took place here

The first of July 1867 we became Canadians

Canadians in our hearts and soul

Quiet people and peace keepers

Peace is important to us the same as silence is important to music

Canada is a peaceful land here and elsewhere where our soldiers have maintained peace

This doesn't mean that everything is perfect but compared to other countries we have shown a willingness to make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard

It's like making music in an orchestra

An orchestra requires an individual contribution
from each musician

But all these efforts are geared to producing a
collective sound which would be like the sound of the
many voices of this country

We are a huge country, a huge orchestra
We also have a huge project for we live in a huge land
We are not the first to inhabit this land

We are on the land of the Mi'gmaq, the Woolastook,
the Passamaquoddy

They have been here for more than ten thousand years
We have joined them just as others will join us
They will come from far away to live with us
To share our peace
They will bring their music
And this music will merge with ours
And together we will create a tribute to a long
lasting peace

Our project, one hundred and fifty years young,
will widen

Our music will be more inclusive, more
harmonious, more peaceful

We live in a huge land
It's difficult for us to imagine the size of that land
It takes more than five hours for the sun to move
across it

And on its way the sun carries our light and our
music

And every colour it awakens, every voice, every
gesture is a note added to this amazing symphony we are
creating

Music is keeping the beat of our common march

There are so many types of music in the world

The world is changing and so is its music

Listen to what we were listening 150 years ago

Listen to the difference, the style, the words

Or you might hear the echo of what's coming

We have to learn to hear, we have to learn to listen
to each other

We have to learn to be curious and let ourselves be
surprised

So as to make this land, this country, this project
resonate across the world

And we will all be happy and proud of that music
we have created together

Yet ... yet... always keep in mind that everything is
not perfect

It's the youth's responsibility to change the world
for the better

The future is always an adventure we imagine

The past is already a story we tell each other

It's a great privilege to live here, to live in this land
where we have gathered since 150 years ago when we
came together in peace

And remember

Peace is silence and music is born out of silence

Listen...

Can you hear

It's the music of the future