

## Beats and Braids Artist Bios

**NATHAN ADLER** is a writer, artist, and filmmaker. His novel *Wrist*, an Indigenous monster story, is published by Kegedonce Press (July 2016). He has a short story published in *The playground of Lost Toys* (Dec. 2015), and two forthcoming stories: *Tyner's Creek* in an anthology called *Those Who Make Us ~ Canadian Creatures, Monsters and Myth*, by Exile Editions; and, *Valediction at The Star View Motel*, in an Anthology called *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time*, by Bedside Press. He is an MFA candidate in the Creative Writing program at UBC and works as a glass-artist. He is also working on a collection of short-stories and a second novel. He is Anishinaabe and Jewish, and a member of Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation.

**SEAN CONWAY** is an entertainer from Curve Lake First Nation, currently residing in Peterborough, Ontario. He is an avid musical explorer bridging classic country music, rockabilly and jazz as a guitarist, singer, songwriter and bandleader. From his stark intensity to his relentless humour, he takes his audience through his shows with grace and poignance. Come see him by himself, or with his band - Either way this lovely performer is sure to make you laugh, dance and carry-on.

**ANN BEAM** has been a professional artist for more than 30 years, with a BA in Fine Art from State University of New York at Buffalo. She taught at the Art Gallery of Ontario and has worked extensively in a wide range of media including ceramics, watercolour, etching, concrete, canvas, as well as works on paper. She has exhibited extensively across Canada, and is represented in both private and public collections. Ann opened the Neon Raven Art Gallery on Manitoulin Island, which features works by her late husband, artist Carl Beam and daughter Anong Migwans Beam, as well as her own work.

**PURA FE** an heir to the Tuscarora Indian Nation, is an artist, an activist, and much more. Her musical journey, running the gamut from folk to mainstream through an artful use of the blues, reflects the concerns of an artist who grew up in the Motown era, while citing Buffy Sainte-Marie, Charley Patton and Joni Mitchell as her true mentors. And, more widely, "*traditional music from all over the world, wherever the spirit is connected to our roots.*"

Saying that Pura Fé was brought up in a musical environment is an understatement. On her maternal side, she claims no less than eight generations of Tuscarora singers. Her mother, gifted with a Wagnerian operatic voice, was the featured vocalist in several of Duke Ellington's *Sacred Concerts*. "*She would have deserved to be heard all over the world, but those were difficult times for a woman of color,*" regrets Pura Fé whose father, born in Puerto Rico, boasted First Nation and Corsican blood. As a teenager in New York City, failing to find her place in the school system of the metropolis, she delved into her parents' Native music record collection and took part in First Nation

pow wows. Initially working as a background singer, in the studio as well as in Broadway musicals, she eventually felt the need to express herself through her own songs. *"It came out just like that, all of a sudden!"* she recalls. This outburst took the name of **Ulali** in 1987. This singing trio, formed with Soni Moreno and Jennifer Kreisberg, rapidly made waves with its bluesy Native American sounds. The connection between Native music and the African-American primal art form, abundantly explored by one of Pura Fé's most ardent fans, Taj Mahal, then became her trademark as she started her solo career with the help of the Music Maker Relief Foundation.

*"There have been many interactions between Native Americans and African-Americans since slavery. People don't always know it, but Native peoples have played a major role in the development of American music, whether it's jazz, blues or rock'n'roll."*

When she's not touring or fighting for civil rights, Pura Fé sings her Tuscarora blues songs in her Durham home, to the sound of her lap-steel guitar.

**NICK FERRIO** is a musician and songwriter. Since 2009, he has written and performed under his own name, releasing albums *Introducing His Feelings* (2012 Shuffling Feet Records), *Half the Time* (2013 7th Fire Records), and *Amongst the Coyotes and Birdsongs* (2015 Headless Owl Records). He has performed at concerts and festivals across Canada and Europe, including appearances at POP Montreal, Halifax Pop Explosion, CMW, NXNE, Sappyfest (Sackville, NB), Dawson City Music Festival, (Dawson City, YK), Lawnya Vawnya (St. John's, NL), In The Dead of Winter (Halifax, NS), and Hillside Music Festival (Guelph, ON). Nick Ferrio is a member of The Burning Hell and has performed and contributed to the albums *Happy Birthday* (2008 weework Records), *Baby* (2009 weework Records), *People* (2013 BB Island Records), and *Public Library* (2016 BB Island Records). Nick Ferrio performs with Leanne Simpson and contributed to her album *Island of Decolonial Love* (2013 ARP Books).

**RYAN McMAHON** is an Anishinaabe comedian, writer, media maker & community activator based out of Treaty #1 territory (Winnipeg, MB). Armed with a degree in Theatre & as a graduate of the prestigious Second City Conservatory (Toronto), Ryan's comedic storytelling style is fast paced, loose & irreverent as he explores the good, the bad & the ugly between Indian Country & the mainstream. Since 2010, McMahon has recorded 3 National comedy specials (Welcome To Turtle Island Too, UnReserved & Red Man Laughing) & 2 taped Gala sets at the prestigious Winnipeg Comedy Festival. In 2012, McMahon became the 1st Native comedian to ever record a full mainstream comedy special with CBC TV (Ryan McMahon - UnReserved) and later that year made his debut at the prestigious Just For Laughs Festival in Montreal, QC where he was named to the NEW FACES list at the festival. Ryan's latest full length CBC comedy special, Red Man Laughing, aired Nationally on CBC Radio 1 in 2015. McMahon's new live show, Wreck-On Silly Nation, is scheduled to tour across Canada in 2017. It tackles massive themes like reconciliation, Canada's 150th

birthday party & the intricacies of moose meat pie. Ryan has written for the GLOBE & MAIL, VICE, CBC, CBC Aboriginal, APTN among others.

**LEANNE BETAMOSKE SIMPSON** is a renowned Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg artist, musician, poet and writer, who has been widely recognized as one of the most compelling Indigenous voices of her generation. Her work breaks open the boundaries between story and song—bringing audiences into a rich and layered world of sound, light, and sovereign creativity.

Leanne's new album, *f(l)ight*, is a haunting collection of story-songs that effortlessly interweave Simpson's complex poetics and multi-layered stories of the land, spirit, and body with lush acoustic and electronic arrangements. Recorded and produced by an acclaimed cast of Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians including: Jonas Bonnetta (Evening Hymns), James Bunton (Ohbijou, Light Fires, Forest City Lovers), Juno-nominated Cree/Metis cellist **Cris Derksen**, **Nick Ferrio** (The Burning Hell), Ojibwe/Cree singer-songwriter **Tara Williamson**, and Anishinaabe singer-songwriter **Ansley Simpson**, *f(l)ight* will be released September 30, 2016 on RPM Records.

**RAE SPOON** is an award-winning Canadian musician, songwriter, producer, multi-instrumentalist and author. They have released eight solo albums spanning folk, indie rock and electronic genres over the past twelve years and have toured across Canada and internationally. Their live shows swing between audience singalongs and large danceable arrangements, which keep them playing everywhere from folk festivals and house concerts to rock concerts and theatres. Rae was the subject and composer of the score for the National Film Board-produced musical-documentary *My Prairie Home*, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2014. They have been nominated for two Polaris Prizes, a Lambda Literary Award, a Western Canadian Music Award, a CBC Radio 3 Bucky Award and a MOTHA Transgender Musician of the Year Award.

**AL TUCK** is a genre-hopping, songwriter-troubadour, born and based in Canada's smallest province, picturesque Prince Edward Island. If Canada had an official "songwriter's songwriter" position, Al Tuck would be a strong contender for the role. Grammy-winning singer Feist has described him as a living legend in our midst. Juno-winners Joel Plaskett and Old Man Luedecke have trumpeted him as a major formative influence. Broken Social Scene's Jason Collett dubbed him the greatest songwriter of his generation.

**BEAR WITNESS** is founding member of A Tribe Called Red and The NDN Talent Collective, produces experimental video installation and screen works. He is the recipient of four Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards, a Juno award and the Emerging Artist award from the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival. He exhibited his solo show *The Only Good NDN* at the Sydney Festival in Australia. His video work has screened at prestigious film festivals around the world including the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, the Berlinale and the International Film Festival Rotterdam.