

Study Guide Outline:

Don Freed First Nations/Métis Presentation and Song Writing Workshops 2006

Dear Teachers,

At the end of this document you will find questions which I have provided as a follow up to my presentations. I hope that they will generate discussion over a wide age range.

Overview:

From Dawson City to Manitoulin Island and dozens of communities in between, from the large urban centres to the smallest and most remote First Nations, Métis singer/songwriter, Don Freed has left a legacy of song and story wherever he has ventured. He has entertained and developed songs with pre-school classes to university level over the last twelve years as a workshop provider and cultural animator.

What students should be aware of is that immigration to Canada began hundreds of years ago, and that those early immigrants were motivated by a vision of freedom from oppressive regimes and a desire for self-determination (What parallels can be drawn to modern times?). They should also be aware that there were many, many Nations on the North American continent prior to the arrival of Europeans. Canada was formed by the signing of Treaties with these Nations. Hence, Treaties are the Heart of Our Country.

Bio:

Don Freed became a writer when he was in grade 2. "I read a book called 'Peter the Puffin', I liked it so much that I stayed at noon hour that day and wrote my own book. " When Don was 12 he started to write songs. Musically he has been associated with Johnny Cash, Joni Mitchell, Jane Siberry and Colin James. He is a veteran of the Canadian Folk scene and has received 2 nominations for the Western Canadian Music Awards in both the Children's and Aboriginal Categories.

In 1993 Don, a Métis with family roots in the Red River Settlement, began conducting song-writing workshops with Native elementary school children in Northern Saskatchewan. "It seemed that any time you heard about Northern youth there was always tragedy attached to the stories," he says, "so, I've got them to express themselves and their cultures and brought out a positive story." Don's dream of producing a positive story bore fruit in 2001 when CBC Newsworld produced a full-length documentary showing Don working with

youth in Northern Saskatchewan. Since 1993, Don has worked every year with youth in schools across Canada, producing songs using many dialects such as words in Michif, Cree, Dene, Dakota, Ojibway, Kaska and Northern Tushone.

Don has been a Writer In Residence in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan from 1994 to 1996, and he has produced six Tape/CD projects of songs written and recorded with elementary students. The year 2001 saw Don culminate eight years of conducting song writing workshops by producing "Our Very Own Songs," a double CD of original songs representing the youth of 28 communities in northern Saskatchewan. A website and songbook were also part of this project www.ourveryownsongs.ca. Don reports with delight that children not yet born when many of these songs were written can now sing them by heart. Over a vast area the songs have been absorbed by a new generation.

Don has also done presentations and projects in inner city schools, as well, and has worked in conjunction with school boards and Children's Festivals in presenting school children performing their own songs.

Don delights his audience with his proficiency in guitar, harmonica, jaw harp, and kazoo.

Technical Requirements:

Set-up time: 5 minutes, Don Freed will provide his own set-up

Performance space: Quiet, intimate performance space is preferable such as music room, if available.

Change Room: Not Required

Technical: Overhead Projector, Flip Chart and Markers (for workshops only)

Staff member to burn CD's of workshop songs from DAT tape

Performance Description:

Don offers a choice of 2 presentations of – 45 to 60 min. in length.

1. Singing about the Métis
2. Heart of My Country

These presentations go from the quiet to the raucous as Don will tell stories and sing songs to each group and end by having them all do a 'jumping jig'.

OR

3. **Song Writing Workshops 2/day** – one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Using ideas suggested by students, Don and the students will develop a song in an intimate and comfortable setting. Students will make choices in lyrics, rhyme scheme, musical key and rhythm.

1. Singing about the Métis

Using archival photographs, stories and songs Don tells of the emergence of the Métis in the days of the fur trade, their relevance to the formation of Canada, and their cultural contributions to the Canadian mosaic. The songs, with singable choruses are from the CD 'Singing About the Métis' which Don produced with elementary students while Writer-in-Residence in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

2. Heart of My Country:

For fifteen years Don has journeyed from Dawson City, Yukon to the First Nations of Southern Ontario writing songs of traditional legends and local stories with First Nations children in elementary schools. Heart of My Country presents students the stories and songs gathered in Don's travels. From the Kaska Ice Age Legend of the mammoth Dunna Cho through legends and stories from the Cree, Dene, Han, Dakota, Ojibway, and the Métis, Don will both entertain, inform and inspire your students to want to learn more. He will also teach them of the importance and relevance of treaties in his anthemic song 'Heart of My Country' with the chorus:

"Heart of My Country, Heart of My Land,
Written on paper not upon sand
The Heart of my Country must never cease
Heart of My Land is a promise of peace"

3. Song Writing Workshops 2/day

Don can provide 2 workshops per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Don insists that a teacher be present at all times and a local dialect-speaking person, preferably an Elder, be present if possible if working with a First Nations or Community school. (Many of the songs that have been developed in workshop contain words in Michif, Cree, Dene, Dakota, Ojibway, Kaska and Northern Tushone).

Don asks that the teacher in whose class he will be working in, engage their students in conversation before he arrives to get ideas from them from which they would like to make a song. When he arrives he will also ask for any more ideas that might be considered, and put them to a vote. He believes that the teacher should engage the class for ideas because:

- a) the teacher will know the students better than he and what they are capable of and what their interests are.
- b) the teacher may be aware of local stories/legends that the students might not be aware of.
- c) Some students may simply be too shy even though they have good ideas.
- d) The students are more engaged if the teacher is as well.
- e) If time is a factor it would be better to not spend a significant amount of it arriving at an idea.

After an idea has been decided upon, things happen quickly. Don will fill chalkboards with details given to him by students. Then a first line will be decided upon, helping to set up the rhythm of the song. Don will try various beats, tempos, keys, allowing the students to select the one they think best suits their idea. Once the song is completed it is then recorded and a copy made for the class. If Don spends a week in school a concert can be held in a gym or common area or local hall where parents and community members are invited.

There have been schools that have produced their own in-school recordings and books with illustrations by students. These can be used in school for fund raising events.

...at the end of the day?

...you will have a legacy in your school and in your community created by your newly inspired and empowered young people. Don began this work in the spring of 1993 in Northern Saskatchewan. After numerous subsequent visits he has found...

“there’s a whole new generation of kids now that have grown up with the songs that their older siblings and cousins wrote years ago. I told those older siblings and cousins that this would happen and, thanks to the teachers and the local radio stations who use recordings, it has! It’s a good thing all around, no mistake about it.”

Post-Performance Question Sheet for Presentations:

“Heart of My Country”

Suggested questions to provide discussion on Don Freed’s “Heart of My Country” presentation:

In what period of the earth’s history did the legend of Dunna Cho take place? (answer: ice age)

How long ago was that? (50 – 12 thousand years ago)

What First Nation has been telling this story for so long? (the Kaska in the Yukon)

What does ‘gunna stonce’ mean? (good-bye)

Who was the hero? (the little girl)

What if the father never listened to his daughter? (they might have been killed or injured)

Does that mean that they worked as a team? (yes)

What did the Kaska want each new generation to learn from this story? (children should contribute ideas and adults need to listen to children)

In any fair society, who has the best ideas? (anyone)

What animal did the North American Plains’ First Nations depend on for their survival? (buffalo)

Before there were horses in North America people would hunt buffalo on foot. What animals fur would they wear as a disguise? (wolf)

When they would crawl through the tall prairie grass where would their bows and arrows be? (on their backs)

Besides food what else was made from buffalo? (tools, clothes, sinew, sacred objects)

First Nations people believed that the buffalo in all their many millions were a gift from the Creator. What would they do to show their thanks? (dance and sing at a feast)

In what grade were the students who wrote “Long, Long, Ago” with Don Freed? (grade one]

In what language does “Shunka Wakan” mean ‘horse’? [Dakota]
What does “Hanke Wicasta” mean? (half man)
To what sacred objects are the Spirits drawn to? The eagle feather, whistle and drum

What is the job of this legendary being? (to keep mortals from spying on the ceremonies of the spirits)

What other mythological creature does this legend physically resemble? (centaur)

What does Kokom mean? (grandma)

In what language? (Cree)

In “Me and My Skunk” who does the boy live with in the forest? (his Moshom and Kokom)

What does Moshom mean? (grandpa)

In what language? (Cree)

Why did the boy and his skunk have nightmares? (from eating too much candy)

Who was the greatest buffalo hunter ever? (Gabriel Dumont)

Where was he born? (the Red River Settlement (Winnipeg))

What did he name his short hunting rifle? (Le Petit)

What does that mean? (Little One)

To what people in Canada is Gabriel Dumont considered a great leader and hero? (the Métis people)

What does Métis mean? (the people of two races that emerged as a distinct culture in Canada)

Why was it so important to hunt long ago? (there weren't any stores selling food)

What kinds of things would prevent people from hunting?
(blindness, sickness, too old, too young, no gun, no horse)

What did Gabriel Dumont call his band of special hunters? (the Society of Generous Ones)

What does the word ‘hubba’ mean in the Dene language? (father)

What is a fishing derby? (lots of people make a hole in the ice, the biggest fish wins a prize)

How do the Dene people say 'a wolf is singing'? (Nunie hegen)

How about a 'a loon is singing'? (dadzene hegen)

How about 'a dog is barking'? (ti delghus)

In Canada's northern communities what is a 'winter road'? (a road of ice across a frozen lake)

What kind of animals might one see along a winter road? (snow owls, grouse, ptarmigan, hare, lynx, moose, fox)

What were 'residential schools'? (schools a long time ago where taken away from their cultures and families to be educated)

Were children always treated fairly in residential schools? (sometimes yes and sometimes no)

What did the dolls that Dora and her friends made have to look like? (their eyes had to be blue and their faces had to be fair)

What do First Nations children hair and eyes look like? (usually they have dark hair and eyes, unless they have mixed blood)

How do you think these children felt making dolls that did not look like themselves to represent Canada? (discuss with students)

To what country were these dolls sent? (they were sent to a mission in Trinidad)

How do you think the children felt when they heard that the ship was sunk by a submarine and the dolls lost forever? (discuss with students)

There are no longer residential schools in Canada. Do you think that all people should be allowed to live their different cultures and be proud of their different heritages? (discuss with students)

If you were to take a map of Canada and you coloured in where all first Nations are living, what would it look like? (It would look like a map of Africa or Europe. A continent containing many different countries, or First Nations)

What were the agreements called that made peace between the First Nations and the government of Canada? (they were called Treaties)

The Treaties that were signed were meant to last as long as the rivers flow, "as long as the grass grows and as long as the sun shines". What does this mean? (it means that the treaties last forever)

If the agreements are between the country of Canada and the First Nations, who is represented in these treaties today? (all the people of Canada are represented in Treaties)

Should newcomers to Canada be made aware of Treaties and their place in them? (discuss with students)

How does it make you feel to know that the country of Canada was formed by promises of peace? (discuss with students)

How important is it to the future of Canada that people understand more about the Treaties? (discuss with students)

***Teacher Feedback: Dear teachers: my presentations are constantly evolving. If something worked particularly well with your group or if you can suggest ways in which my presentation can be improved on please contact me at the address below
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