

Words and Music by Rita Joe: Dialogic Ethnomusicology

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As often in field research, this project was born out of several coincidences. These led to a productive association among three individuals: ourselves (Kevin Alstrup and Gordon Smith) and Micmac poet Rita Joe. Our intention is to not to privilege any parts of this work over others; rather, it is to share our experiences and our work in the creative spirit within which it evolved. The article is loosely structured to hear the different voices we believe bind the work together. To facilitate the discussion, and to emphasize the dialogic aspect of this research, we shift voices in our narrative. (Initials refer to one of the authors or to Rita Joe).

Gordon

This project continued field research I (G.S.) was conducting in the summer of 1992 in Eskasoni, a Micmac reserve on the Bras d'Or Lakes about 50 kilometres from Sydney on Cape Breton Island. At that time I had the opportunity to meet and chat with Rita Joe, who was known to me as a "famous" Micmac poet.¹ In conversations with Rita, I gradually came to understand that poetry is her way of expressing her story and what she considers important current themes in First Nations' culture. Poetry and conversation mingle in ways that are artful, and also part of the way the Spirit guides and inspires the creative instinct. The intersection of words and music in Rita's work—an aspect we find extremely fascinating (if at times difficult for transcribing)—is at the core of the repertory of songs we have participated in "making" together.

Rita

I (R.J.) was a songwriter before I became a poet.¹ From the time I was a little girl I was what you would call a hummer. Melodies would roll around in my head... not knowing if I picked them up as hymn songs, the roll of an incoming wave, or wind sounds. I am a shy native so the songs were put away and I sang only when I was speaking at a school or a gathering. Most of the tunes were for special performances of some sort, such as "The Wishing Game." I created that one for a speaking engagement at the Province House [the Nova Scotia Legislature in Halifax] for literacy. I remember I sang it with the help of a translator doing the hand signs. The reaction on her part was beautiful—she understood my song and as the saying goes, "She made my day."

During the Oka crisis, the incidents that happened affected me tremendously. The reaction was the creation of the Oka poem and the Oka song (Ex. 2, below).² I wrote the verse from a Native viewpoint, an attempt to touch my

audience and their heartstrings. Usually when I am speaking to the audience I point out the inconsistent attitude of what happened at the time, then end my speech with the Oka song. Many times I received a standing ovation. Most of the people in our country see the Native viewpoint as hearing the other side of the story. I always try to move my audience in poetry and song, making fun of myself at times but always emphasizing the wronged nation, and the teachings of my cultural background.

The Oka song became a popular, often-requested melody, so I thought I had better find someone who would transcribe it to the songsheet. I asked Elizabeth Cremo, the daughter of the famous fiddle champ, Lee Cremo, from Eskasoni. She told Professor Gordon Smith of Queen's University about the Oka Song when he was visiting Mr. Cremo. I saw this white-haired person walk up to me near my craft shop and ask if I was Rita Joe and did I want a song written on a song sheet. I asked, "How in the world did he know?" as I had told only one individual.

He took my song ("Oka Song") on a cassette tape and the typed words, and returned in a day or so with the transcribed song sheet. My reaction of disbelief expressed in Micmac and English was laughable to say the least. Gordon asked if he could take the song to his students at Queen's University, and later asked if I had other songs. I taped the other dozen songs with my old woman voice, hoping that the words were understandable, my disbelief still in mind at the turn of events.

Gordon

I (G.S.) transcribed the Oka song first in a literal, note-for-note, word-for-word fashion. The text was especially moving, given the recent events at Oka it described, as well as the theme of gentle protest that is present in much of Rita's poetry. The text was ominous for me, a non-native, and the experience of participating in this work took on an extraordinary kind of honour. Within two weeks, Rita had recorded another eleven songs and gave me the tape. Some were poems she had already published, and others were new. It was apparent that the songs, although folksong-like in style and overall structure (verse-refrain), were different from much Western folksong in their irregular line lengths, extra syllables, and free relationship between the words and the music. Did Rita write the words before the music? Or vice versa? Did she think—even dream—the two together? I felt my part at once sensitive and challenging.

What fascinated me was the creative process behind the song, and my educational (and general) background drove me to explore this topic, perhaps as a means of validating on an aesthetic level what might be looked upon as inferior in musical terms. This became evident when I asked a class of students at Queen's University where I teach to make their own transcriptions of the Oka song. All of them liked the words, but found the melody difficult to transcribe, mainly for reasons we decided were related to its irregular nature. One student suggested a reason for this could be that she and her colleagues

were thinking along the lines of writing fugue subjects, the current topic of composition class. The consensus was that the presence of the words was also a cause of the “problem.” Another student suggested that a wordless fiddle tune usually does not present the same kind of difficulties for transcription—we had also been working on fiddle tunes.

Subsequent discussions of spiritual ideas, symbolism, and politics in First Nations music cultures created other, broader perspectives within which to view Rita’s songs. One student in the class, Kevin (my co-author here), found Rita’s work intriguing from the start. Discussions of issues and problems surrounding the presentation of the songs led to a collaborative—dialogic—effort which, in itself, has become the support of a creative process.

Kevin and Gordon: Finding a Way

After discussions with Rita about presenting and publishing the songs, it became clear that her intention is educational: she wants the songs to be sung by children and adults from any ethnic background who are interested in First Nations culture. Rita’s goal, and subsequently ours, is to make the songs accessible to a broad, inclusive audience. Given this aim, and my experience working on the Oka song, it was evident that a detailed transcription incorporating everything and adapting nothing, could represent one stage in our (G.S., K.A.) work. As ethnomusicologists we were reminded of Charles Seeger’s descriptive and prescriptive levels of transcription in which he distinguishes “between a blueprint of how a specific piece of music shall be made to sound [prescriptive notation] and a report of how a specific performance of any music actually did sound [descriptive notation]” (184f.).

Perhaps this could be a legitimate way to proceed, that is to provide two transcribed versions of each song—authentic (descriptive) and definitive (prescriptive). In this way we would satisfy our scholarly inclinations not to distort the “original,” and would, at the same time, satisfy Rita’s wish to produce accessible, performable versions of each song. One way of justifying this methodology—and we were continually trying to do this—was twofold: this was what Rita wanted—definitive versions, or in her words, “nothing fancy.” Second, the definitive versions would be the result of working closely with Rita, in a sense reworking the songs. In ethnographic terms, we were reminded of the dialogic aspect of the field encounter, an ongoing process that emphasizes dialogue in interpretation, the negotiation of divergent viewpoints and, as Gary Tomlinson comments, “the intersection of differing interpreters, texts, and contexts” (6; cf. James Clifford on ethnographic authority, 21-54). During our work together, the convergence of our (G.S., K.A., R.J.) different backgrounds and viewpoints became more than a fact of passing interest. Rather, it was an enriching dialogue in which other, new voices emerged, shifting power boundaries and dislodging entrenched ideas.

Kevin and Gordon: Making the "Authentic" Transcriptions

The first set of transcriptions were descriptive. In them we sought to reproduce faithfully the melody, rhythm, structure, and text of Rita's songs. These transcriptions to us became the "authentic" versions. They represented an initial stage. We tried to represent text and music without any adaptation, knowing that "definitive" or prescriptive versions would follow. Mantle Hood emphasize the need for accuracy in transcription: "The process must begin with the most specific and detailed transcription possible"(320). In fact, these transcriptions became an important stage, and are an integral part of the dialogic aspect of our work. Problems in compiling these transcriptions were mainly interpretive. We were working (at this stage) from a cassette made on a small portable machine and hence the sound (voice quality, diction, etc.) was not always the best. Microtonal inflections and pitch fluctuations in Rita's performance were frequent; most of the material was quite free in metre, and sometimes contained sudden shifts in pulse resulting in forms of syncopation. The issue in making the transcriptions became interpretative: were these irregularities mistakes, or were they intentional?

In coming to terms with this question we were concerned to maintain a respect for the words, since we knew that Rita's message (i.e. the educational intent) would be conveyed inevitably through the song texts. At the same time we wondered whether what *we* were regarding as irregularities were really part of Rita's performance, her musical style. After working further with Rita in sessions during which she sang the songs again (in some cases repeatedly), it was evident that her performance was remarkably consistent. Many, in fact most, of the irregularities in the taped versions were present in her live renditions.

The "authentic" transcriptions, then, are an attempt to give a detailed report of how the music did sound, to refer again to Seeger's "descriptive" level of musical transcription. Bruno Nettl has pointed out that a dominating issue throughout the history of musical transcription has been the difference between descriptive and prescriptive notation, and his observation that Seeger might also have named his two kinds of notation "emic" and "etic," or perhaps "cultural" and "analytical," has a particular resonance with our two-level approach to transcribing Rita's songs (67; 69).

Kevin: Making the "Definitive" Transcriptions

To facilitate the project, I spent three months in the fall of 1993 in Eskasoni, during which time I was fortunate to have the opportunity of living and working with Rita on the songs. We knew that creating definitive ("prescriptive") versions of the songs would be accomplished best through continuous work.

As with the first set of transcriptions, the "definitive" versions demanded attention to aspects of musicality, cultural integrity, and unavoidable conceptual issues. We knew the songs were to be directed at school children, among other groups, and we decided the acoustic guitar would be the preferred

accompaniment, based on its accessibility. Given the projected audience and performers, and the intention of the material, we worked toward transcriptions which maintained the textual themes of each song, and a stylistic directness that aimed at ease of performance.

As a poet, Rita Joe has an innate sense of rhythm, phrase, and melodic shape which became apparent to me when working on the second set of transcriptions. Often I saw the intimate connection of the rhythmic values to her poetic text metre. From a variety of musical influences she has learned certain melodic styles, melodic chordal structures, and cadential formulas. I found most of her material contained strong stylistic traits which suggested the root influences responsible for the musical creation. Some songs maintained a distinct country-and-western feel. When I began to place chords over the melody I found that I played the material with the musical feel I had picked up in Rita's version. Others derive from the Roman Catholic chant and hymn-singing tradition, which is often changed and, indeed, enriched, with the addition of the Micmac language. Her versions suggested a type of stylistic setting which I picked up and attempted to maintain in the transcriptions. This sense of feel is purely subjective, and this is where this kind of ethnographic work loses empirical objectivity, moving into the intangible realm of musicality and creative sensitivity.

An experience early in my stay at Eskasoni was a significant catalyst, and provided an important breakthrough in the course and purpose of our work. A week and half after I arrived in Eskasoni, Rita arranged a meeting with a local songwriter, and performer. Gordon, Rita, and I drove up with guitar, tape recorder, and music and unloaded ourselves into the living room. We were all talking about music and things began when I pulled out my guitar and started singing the Oka Song.

Peter [our host] played a few of his own songs and talked about his work. They were good songs, well constructed, with clear structure and singable melodies. His text was well phrased, and we could tell he was a good writer and a sound musician. I played another of Rita's songs and we talked about them. Eventually he offered some comments and asked what we would do with it. Then he played some of the same song, following along with the music [the authentic transcription]. He was into a five-bar phrase when he fumbled over it. He tried it again, and fumbled again. He played through once more and, near the end of the phrase, at the beginning of the fourth bar of the stanza's cadential pattern, he said, "the G [tonic] should be there. The text doesn't fit. It's too long." What he had just pointed out was that the melody and text did not fit a standard four-bar phrase structure.

Peter found it awkward to hold out the cadential pattern to five bars which was the length of Rita's last musical line of that stanza. Her musical construction was based around the textual/syllabic structure of her text; this accounted for the length of the cadential pattern. Peter suggested that he change Rita's

text to fit the predictable four-bar phrase structure so common in modern folk and popular music. Rita was not pleased at his overall reception of her material, nor was she entirely pleased with his comments. But the difficulty that an accomplished singer and performer would have with the phrase made it disappointingly obvious that we would have to do some revisions to establish a balance between our attempt at cultural and creative integrity in the authentic versions, and our attempt at a performable, more “Western” approach in the definitive versions.

When I noted the songwriter’s suggestions, and played them through, I began to realize that the musical and textual issues most crucial in terms of revision would be elements of rhythmic and syllabic match. The revisions would have to maintain an exact strophic match for ease of performance. Since Rita’s original approximated strophic structure, this was not difficult, nor unacceptable. Consistency was an important consideration. Pick-up values and placement could be revised, as well as phrase and verse length. I started to consider again the function of the songs, and the genre that they should be known as. Are they songs, or poems? What is the most important feature of the material: text or music? Obviously the text is the most important aspect of the song. The music would have to be “subservient” to the text, and not detract from the communication of the text. I realized that these were poems with music.

The aim of our co-revision became more obvious to myself and Gordon after this experience, and I began to examine the music closely for basic consistency in rhythm, pickup values, and metre. I studied the text to discover the relation of textual metrical stress to musical metre. The goal was to maintain textual stress with musical stress. Further, we had to match the text syllabically to the music and maintain a consistent syllabic, musical relation within the song. It was possible for a text phrase to have too many syllables for a syllabically-set musical phrase. In this case I would mark the text that would need our attention and Rita and I would work over a textual or musical revision together.

Two examples in the Appendix illustrate the transcription process. We have included both the authentic and definitive versions for each. In “Five Hundred Years” (Ex. 1, below),³ the question of symmetrical phrase lengths within a strophic structure is seen at measure 16 where, in her performance, Rita extends the cadential resolution by two quarter notes, placing the tonic—final note of the phrase—on beat three instead of beat one of measure 16. She continues the song using the same melodic pattern, only now the former three-note pick-up to the second measure (the opening of the song’s first phrase) is reduced to one beat. Since one half of the song can be regarded as a sixteen-bar phrase, we puzzled how to show this essentially strophic construction, and maintain the song’s deceptive simplicity. One solution—and to us the most obvious one without distorting the original material—was to let the

musical strophe be two phrases long, thereby maintaining the integrity of each phrase as well as the integrity of the strophic construction. Indeed, the song seems to fit together best with three verses of two sixteen-measure phrases and a chorus.

To some, the apparent simplicity of this kind of "problem" might not warrant the kind of attention we feel it did. As our songwriter friend urged us, "Why not *rewrite* the phrases so they fit? Otherwise no one will ever want these songs for anything." In "The Oka Song" (Ex. 2), the text was changed to accommodate the music. The syllables of the original text of the second verse ("Though my heart is beating like a drum today") did not match the musical metre. Though the line had the same number of syllables as the first verse, the text's metric stress did not match the melody. Rita and I decided to begin the first line of the text with "My" thereby eliminating one syllable from the line ("Though") but matching the text and music. As much or even more important than this innocent alteration was the dialogue involved in arriving at it: process over product in this kind of instance, to invoke some familiar academic jargon.

Rita, her family, and I gradually settled into co-existence, and our editorial sessions came to follow a pattern that became very efficient. I learned the time when we could work on the material (usually early morning) and the time she needed for herself, or with family and community. I was fortunate to be included in the activities of her family and the community. Our work was not an interruption of Rita's day but an extension of her natural creative time. Every session I would set up my tape recorder, sit down beside her with my guitar on my lap, and play the musical and textual changes needed for musical consistency and accessibility. Rita would tell me if she liked it or not, and would suggest changes in tempo, playing style, and textual/musical adjustment. Many long telephone conversations with Gordon (then in Kingston) were also part of this dialogue.

Kevin and Gordon: Responses

Over the course of my stay in Eskasoni, Rita and I (K.A.) performed her songs on a number of occasions. Our first performance was at the now annual Micmac/Scottish concert at Eskasoni which consisted of traditional Micmac drumming, dancing, Cape Breton fiddling, and step dancing. Rita and I performed "The Columbus Songs" and "Five Hundred Years," myself on the guitar and Rita playing a small hand drum. Our second performance was in Halifax, at the annual meeting of the Society for Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA), September 1993. We were asked to play at a dinner honouring two artists: Alex Janvier and Daphne Ojig. Our third performance took place in the Nova Scotia provincial legislature at a televised ceremony marking Treaty Day. Rita and I stood on the floor of the legislature with the Micmac Grand Council behind us, some three hundred people in the audience witnessing this historic meeting. The next day we performed at the Celebration of Nova Scotia

Folklore. There were other more informal performances, usually at schools in front of school children, and one for a gathering of educators.

At every performance the material was positively received, often overwhelming people in the audience and raising great interest in the project. Singing songs at the end of a talk or speech is not unfamiliar to Rita. She nearly always ends her speaking engagements with a song, usually accompanying herself on a hand drum. Our singing (and Rita's poetry) was/is an extension of storytelling, an old Micmac custom.

Another context in which we (K.A. and G.S.) presented the songs with commentary was at a conference of the Canadian Society for Musical Traditions (since renamed the Canadian Society for Traditional Music) at the University of Ottawa in November 1993. To accommodate the performing and academic interests of the Society membership (itself a longstanding topic of discussion that Paula Conlon recounted in the 1993 issue of the *Journal*), we presented the work in two parts: first, an account of the project, and then a "live" performance of two of the songs. Response was generally encouraging.

Most people found the idea of "working together" an interesting example of reflexivity, and emphasized aspects of the process. Conversely, comments concerning the actual songs, texts, and music, were less enthusiastic. Two people in the forum were concerned about genre and wondered whether these were actually folksongs. This was not the first time we had encountered this reaction (cf. the reaction of the Micmac songwriter described above). Upon hearing this, Rita commented: "You can't expect people to understand what I am saying without explaining it. These songs are *my story, my people's story*. You guys are my helpers." Again we were reminded of Nettl's comment relating Seeger's transcription levels to emic (cultural) and etic (analytic) concerns.

Responses to our work together on Rita's songs have been generally positive. In the Micmac community of Eskasoni, as well as on other reserves in the Maritimes and beyond, Rita's songs are gaining recognition. The Oka song, for example, has been translated into Mohawk and sung in Quebec communities on several occasions. The Christmas song "And Then We Heard a Baby Cry" has been performed at midnight Mass in the church at Eskasoni, and was performed in arrangement by the Cape Breton Chorale at its annual Christmas concert in Sydney in December 1994. Rita now sometimes sings "Five Hundred Years" when she speaks in various settings. Its message and music appeal to school children, both as listeners and performers, through adults. Currently, the popular Micmac drumming group Sons of Membertou is preparing a recorded version that combines rock interpretation and sections of Micmac chanting—different indeed from Kevin's country-and-western way of singing this song. Creative interpretative choices and performance adaptability are critical to this project.

The idea of us “feeding back” our work to the community from which it originated, elaborated upon by Sheehy in his discussion of applied ethnomusicology (333), has a certain resonance with the gradual dissemination of, and subsequent responses to, Rita’s songs. The “community” in this context extends beyond the Micmac reserve to other First Nations groups, and people from other ethnic backgrounds living in Cape Breton and elsewhere. And perhaps Sheehy’s third strategy for applied ethnomusicology, which is “the dissemination of knowledge about cultural strategy itself among a wider public, spreading the issues, models, and techniques out among the populace” (333), can be considered, especially in view of Rita’s “educational” aims and the pervasive themes in the song texts.

In all its aspects we have found this project fascinating. Rita Joe’s songs represent an engaging combination of cultural values, values we can both identify and learn from. We hope these words and music will extend and enrich the process of sharing between natives and non-natives, and aid the process of dealing with difference and the ways in which we look at ourselves and others. One reading of our work might be that we have perpetuated Eurocentrism by emphasizing the transcriptions of the songs, and have not explored, or at least not acknowledged, fundamental interrelationships between Micmac music, art, and language. Our emphasis on transcribing the songs is deliberate. We do not mean to distort or turn a blind eye to crucial contextual issues. Rather, the field research and transcription processes described in part here have led us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of such important connections. In this respect, the intersection of divergent backgrounds and viewpoints of three individuals—inherent in the dialogic aspect of this research—has led each of us to new knowledge of the others.

NOTES

1. Born in Whycocomagh (another reserve on Cape Breton Island) in 1932, Rita Joe lived in foster homes after her mother’s death in 1937 and attended the residential school in Schubacadie. Rita’s work as a poet and spokesperson for First Nations peoples has been recognized by her appointment to the Order of Canada in 1990, and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Dalhousie University in 1993. The author of three books of poetry, numerous articles, and an active speaker in schools, on university campuses, and in government forums, Rita remains extremely active despite the increasing debilitation brought on by Parkinson’s disease.

“I am,” she says, “a daughter or grandmother to everyone in Eskasoni. Who can ask for more? I want to be an exceptional writer, a memory I want to leave behind, an orphan child, picking herself off the misery of being a nobody, moving little grains of sand about the nation of the land.... Representing my people gives me a good feeling, a natural high, just reading from the book or singing an Indian song with a drum. I wish more of my people would write beautiful stories I hear them tell. The Micmac are good storytellers. That bridge I have crossed, the insecurity of being a minority is no more. There [have been] many helping [me] across, but it takes one to be brave on one’s own to cross that bridge....” (Joe 1993). See also Rita’s recently published life story (Usmiani, 21-63) and her soon-to-be-released autobiography.

2. "Oka Song" was written following the 1990 Oka crisis in Quebec. The poem was published in Joe (1991, 64), and with music, in Usmiani (31f.).
3. Rita wrote "Five Hundred Years" in 1993, the International Year of Aboriginal Peoples.

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Résumé: *Gordon E. Smith et Kevin Alstrup décrivent leur collaboration avec la poétesse micmaque Rita Joe lors de la transcription de deux de ses chansons: Five Hundred Years et Oka Song. Cherchant à produire non seulement des transcriptions savantes et «authentiques» mais aussi des partitions «définitives» pour grande diffusion, Smith et Alstrup font part de leurs découvertes à partir des impressions qu'ils ont pu échangées, entre eux et avec la célèbre écrivain, sur ce travail de transcription.*

Example 1.a: Five Hundred Years (Authentic Version)

Original pitch: D = middle D

Drum:  etc.

Verse 1



So long a - go, you came to the land.



My cul - ture there you did not un - der-



stand. You tried to change my life to your own: Five



hun - dred years, I need to know the ho - nour gone.



So long a - go, I tried to help your kin.



My lear - ning there, I showed the hum - ble way. You



tried to see, but held by hid - den tale: Five

Example 1.a (cont'd)

hun - dred years, we long to know the me - mo - ry.
Chorus
 Dear Ca - na - da, I cried the road of tears,
 Try - ing to show my life, we al - ways care.
 Five hun - dred years is a long and
 lone - ly way. Stran - gers we are: why
 don't you see we are the same?
Verse 2
 Dear Ca - na - da, my life is on the
 land; Tra - v'ling the roads the way my
 fa - thers did. Wa - ter and land, the

Example 1.a (cont'd)

source of gi - ven life: Five hun - dred years, I long to
 know my ways and rights. So long a - go is
 the five hun - dred years. My lear - ning
 there, I showed the hum - ble way. Don't let me
 down, let us try, try a - gain: Five hun - dred
 years, the ho - nour there, don't let it fade.

Chorus
 Dear Ca - na - da, I cried the road of
 tears, Try - ing to show my life, we al - ways care.
 Five hun - dred years is a long and lone - ly way. Stran -

Example 1.a (cont'd)

gers we are: why don't you see we are the same?

Verse 3

Five hun - dred years, it is to come in time.

Re - mem - ber me: I am the lone - ly one.

Wa - ter and land, the source of given life, Re -

mem - ber this: we must re - main to see the light.

Five hun - dred years, we long to know the song. The

gi - ven time, we show the hum - ble way. Don't

let me down, let us try, try a - gain: Five

hun - dred years, the ho - nour there we gain as one.

Example 1.a (cont'd)

Chorus

Dear Ca - na - da, I cried the ri - ver of tears, Try -
 ing to show my life, we al - ways care.
 Five hun - dred years is a long and lone - ly way.
 Stran - gers we are: why don't you see we are the same?

Example 1.b: Five Hundred Years (Definitive Version)

Drum: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ etc.

1. So long a - go, you came to the
 2. Dear Ca - na - da, my life is the
 3. Five hun - dred years, the days come in
 land.
 land; My cul - ture there you did not un - der -
 time; Tra - vel the roads the way my fa - thers
 Re - mem - ber me: I am the lone - ly
 stand. You tried to change my life to your
 did. Wa - ter and land, the source of our
 one. Wa - ter and land, the ring of our

Example 1.b (cont'd)

own: Five hun - dred years, I need to know the
 life: Five hun - dred years, I long to know my
 life, Re - mem - ber this: we must re - main to

ho - nour gone. So long a - go, I tried to
 ways and rights. So long a - go is the five
 see the light. Five hun - dred years, we long to

help your kin. My lear - ning there, I showed the
 hun - dred years. My lear - ning there, I showed the
 know the song. The gi - ven time, we show the

hum - ble way. You tried to see, but held by
 hum - ble way. Don't let me down, let us try,
 hum - ble way. Don't let me down, let us try,

hid - den tale: Five hun - dred years, we long to
 try a - gain: Five hun - dred years, the ho - nour
 try a - gain: Five hun - dred years, the ho - nour

Chorus

know the me - mo - ry. Dear Ca - na - da, I
 there, don't let it fade.
 there we gain as one.

cried the road of tears, Try - ing to show my

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a D chord, followed by C/G, G, and C/G. The second staff begins with D and G. The third staff begins with D. The fourth staff begins with G. The fifth staff begins with D, C/G, and G. The sixth staff begins with C/G, D, G, and C/G. The seventh staff begins with G and D. The eighth staff begins with G and D. The lyrics are aligned with the notes of the melody.

Example 1.b (cont'd)

life, we al - ways care. Five hun - dred years is a
 long and lone - ly way. Stran - gers we are: why
 don't you see we are the same?
 are the same?
 Five hun - dred years, the ho - nour
 there we gain as one.

Example 2: Oka Song (Definitive Version)

Drum: ♫ ♫ ♫ ♫ etc.

1. The Na - tive of the land is still a stran - ger, The
2. My heart is bea - ting like a drum to - day, My

Na - tive of the land in no - man's - land, The
heart is in my thoughts that I will vow, I'll

fen - ces of our feel - ings for the stran - ger We
pave the way to make a - mends and say this: We

tend to hold and not to un - der - stand, The
start - ed wrong; let's just be friends for now, And

sol - diers' guns don't look too good to - day, Our
all the chil - dren's spi - rits must be ben - ding, They

coun - try does not un - der - stand the way, How
see our fa - ces and our eyes that shine, The

Example 2 (cont'd)

D

do we mend the sad - ness that is there?
sad - ness of the eyes we can - not hide

G

Lis - ten just this time and pre - tend you care.
They show our world all the hurt in - side.

Chorus C/G G

Why don't you try to take the hurt a - way? Why

D G

don't you take my hand and say, "I

C/G G

was so wrong in cau - sing pain that way"? The

D C/G D G

O - ka war we tried to stop that day.