

Digitization, Recirculation and Reciprocity: Proactive Archiving for Community and Memory on the Gaspé Coast and Beyond

GLENN PATTERSON and LAURA RISK

Abstract: This article describes an ongoing archival project intended to recirculate home recordings in Douglstown (Gaspé), Québec. This project stems from the authors' work on a CD featuring music from those home recordings, and is situated within a larger context of music- and research-based community collaborations. This article proposes a novel reimagining of proactive archiving (Edmondson 2004), founded on principles of dialogic community collaboration in the procurement and description of materials. The authors detail their archival protocol and use ethnographic methods to demonstrate the project's potential for creating a shared resource for the community and its diaspora.

Résumé : Cet article décrit un projet d'archivage en cours qui a pour finalité de remettre en circulation des enregistrements locaux à Douglstown (Côte-de-Gaspé), au Québec. Ce projet est issu d'un travail des auteurs sur un CD d'enregistrements de musique domestique, et se situe dans le cadre plus large d'une recherche sur les collaborations communautaires dans le domaine de la musique. Cet article propose une réinvention novatrice de l'archivage proactif (Edmondson 2004) se fondant sur les principes d'une collaboration communautaire dialogique dans la façon de se procurer et de décrire le matériau. Les auteurs exposent en détail leur protocole d'archivage et recourent à des méthodes ethnographiques pour démontrer le potentiel qu'a ce projet de créer une ressource partagée pour la communauté et sa diaspora.

In July 2010 we independently found ourselves, fiddles in hand, at a small festival in the historically anglophone village of Douglstown, Québec, on the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula. Glenn was there to play and study the local fiddle repertoire; he had met guitarist Brian Morris, the son of celebrated Douglstown fiddler Erskine Morris, at bluegrass and American old-time jam sessions in Montreal and together, in early 2010, they began a blog about Erskine Morris' life and music (<http://gaspefiddle.blogspot.com>; the blog features digitized recordings from a vast collection of homemade cassettes

and reel-to-reels made by Erskine between the early 1960s and the mid-1990s). Laura was there to perform at the festival, Douglastown Irish Week, and to assist in the early stages of a local ethnography project spearheaded by the village community centre. That project, “Descendance irlandaise et musique traditionnelle,” sought to document traditional music and dance in 20th-century Douglastown via oral history interviews and the collection of home recordings and personal photographs, and to make a commercial CD of material from those home recordings.

We would eventually co-produce that CD, entitled *Douglastown: Music and Song from the Gaspé Coast* (released July 30, 2014; available at <http://douglastown.net>), selecting a scant 73 minutes of music from over 70 hours of home recordings (see Fig. 1). During the production process we became increasingly mindful of the cultural, archival and emotional value of the recordings, and as we digitized and catalogued we developed an archival protocol to facilitate the eventual incorporation of these materials into a yet-to-be-developed community sound archive in Douglastown.

In this paper, we argue for our work on the *Douglastown* CD as a form of proactive archiving, a novel strategy whereby an archive, rather than simply reacting to user requests, proactively engages with a community to initiate access to and use of its materials (Edmondson 2004). Departing from recent proactive archival projects that have sought to repatriate recordings—usually made under the auspices of colonialism and stored in distant Western archives—to their communities of origin or their diasporas (Brinkhurst 2012; Gray 1996; Landau and Topp Fargion 2012; Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012), we have used proactive archival practices to recirculate materials within the community. We have taken a multi-dimensional approach that relies upon intense collaboration and outreach with community members and local institutions, digitization, reformatting and reciprocity. This approach both resulted from, and has been facilitated by, additional initiatives of collaboration and advocacy that we have undertaken in Douglastown. In keeping with the goals of earlier proactive archival initiatives (Gray 1996;

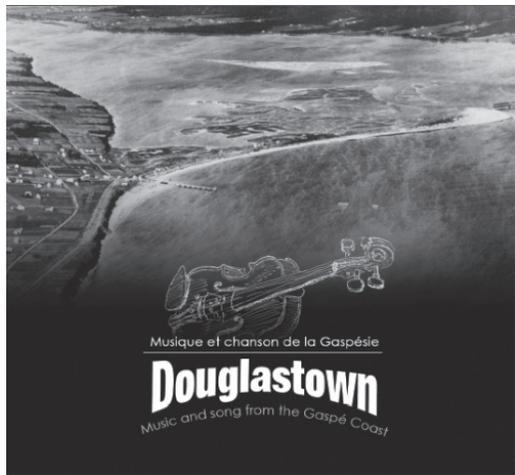


Figure 1. *Douglastown: Music and Song from the Gaspé Coast*.

Fox and Sakakibara 2008; Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012), we hope that our work will help lay the foundations for an enduring community resource—a future community sound archive—that is at once accessible to, and useful for, current and future generations of local and diasporic Douglastowners and Gaspésians. Following Titon (2013a), we argue that such a resource may promote a certain local cultural sustainability despite various demographic challenges (discussed later) by providing local and diasporic community members with a consolidated inherited musical commons from which to craft their present and future cultural life (see also Brinkhurst 2012; Landau and Topp Fargion 2012).

In the following sections, we describe our close collaboration with local and diasporic members of the Douglastown community and with the village's Douglas Community Center, and our ongoing efforts to make our research transparent to, useful for and inclusive of the community through blogs, non-academic articles and personal communication. We see these various forms of engagement as a crucial collaborative context from which our proactive archival activities emerged. We then describe our cataloging and digitization methods, tangible outcomes of the project to date, expected future outcomes and both short-term and long-term benefits of this sort of collaborative approach. This paper begins with a brief socio-historical overview of the Douglastown area and its musical culture and a discussion of local home recording practices.

Settlement, Demographics and Music-Making in Douglastown

Douglastown is located along the eastern edge of the Gaspé Peninsula, roughly 20 kilometres from the Town of Gaspé on the southern side of the Bay of Gaspé at the mouth of the St. John River (see Fig. 2). Founded in 1785, it was one of two Loyalist towns planned on the Peninsula (the other at New Carlisle) to settle families of Loyalist refugees and discharged soldiers from the British forces. These settlements marked the first large-scale influx of English speakers along the Gaspé coast after the fall of New France to the British two decades earlier (McDougall n.d.).

In the 19th century, the Gaspé coast developed into a multi-ethnic and multilingual milieu with people of French, *Canadien*, Mi'kmaq, Irish, English, Channel Islands and Scottish ancestries.¹ Despite diverse ancestries of the first settlers, a unique Catholic, English-speaking population that self-identified as of Irish heritage rose to predominance (over 95%) in Douglastown during the 19th century, a position it held until the last quarter of the 20th century (White 2000). The decline of the region's principal

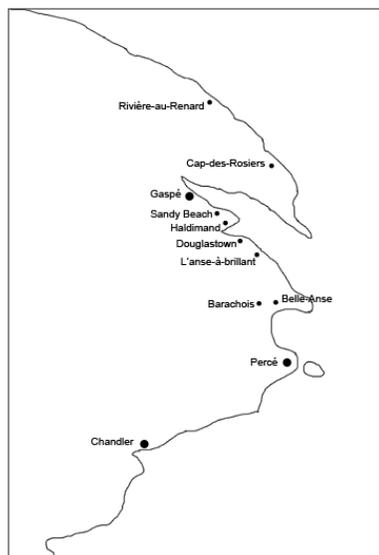


Figure 2. The Gaspé Peninsula.

industries (fishing, lumber and mining) during the 20th century led to massive out-migration from the Peninsula, with the English-speaking population dropping from its peak of roughly 50 percent in the mid-19th century to just under 12 percent by the time of the 2006 Canadian Census (Bélanger, Desjardins, and Frenette 1981: 562; CASA 2010: 5; Rudin 1985: 183). Douglastown and other communities along the coast currently face socio-demographic challenges that include: “a decline in numbers, an aging population, dependency on government support and a precarious labour market. For English speakers, these challenges are often compounded by isolation, language barriers and lack of resources and access to

services” (CASA 2010: 3). Faced with such challenges, the English-speaking population tends not to rely on official social services and institutions, instead turning to informal networks among family, friends and their local communities; as such, community volunteerism is especially prevalent among people 50 years and over. However, this informal support network is strained as “the social fabric that many of the community’s seniors wove for themselves and which sustained them through the years is disappearing,” with Women’s Institutes, Legions, and other cultural organizations closing due to decreasing and aging membership (CASA 2010: 23).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the Douglastown area saw an influx of young francophone families from more urban areas of Québec. Douglastown today is majority French-speaking and, like neighbouring villages, functions primarily as a bedroom community for the Town of Gaspé, the regional economic hub. Although most of the descendants of the older, primarily anglophone Douglastown are dispersed across North America, many return each summer for a week to several months to visit friends and family; still others, having spent their adult lives working elsewhere, have chosen to retire “back home.”

Like many villages in Québec, Douglastown had an impressive number of fiddlers, singers and dancers until the late 20th century, and house parties and kitchen dances were frequent. The oral history interviews of the “Descendance irlandaise et musique traditionnelle” project furnished biographical information for approximately 50 musicians from Douglastown

and the surrounding communities and determined over 20 sites of summer “picnic dances”—outdoor square dances on purpose-built wooden platforms. After World War II, dances were held primarily in halls in the neighbouring villages of Haldimand, Sandy Beach, Wakeham, York, and Belle-Anse (there was no hall in Douglastown with an equivalent capacity). These halls were identified as Protestant due to their owners and attendees, however, and several interviewees recalled Communion being denied to parishioners if the clergy discovered they had attended a “Protestant dance” that week.

Until 2011, Douglastown organized concerts of local talent for Christmas and St. Patrick’s Day at the Holy Name Hall, a former cinema built in 1938 next to the parish church. These concerts included a mix of popular Irish songs and North American country music; Christmas carols; instrumental music played on fiddle, piano, accordion or harmonica, usually for step-dancing or square dancing; short plays and skits; and humorous stories and jokes. At their peak in the 1960s, the annual St. Patrick’s concerts drew crowds of over 400 to the 270-person hall, including government officials, bishops and other senior Roman Catholic clergy in the province.

Home Recording in Douglastown

The out-migration of Douglastown residents to urban areas throughout North America coincides roughly with the invention and development of home recording technologies. By the mid-1950s, several local and diasporic Douglastowners had purchased reel-to-reel recorders and were recording local musicians and radio broadcasts. Audio cassettes became the medium of choice for home recordings in the late 1960s and have only recently been supplanted by digital cameras and small mp3 and smartphone recorders. Home recording in Douglastown and among its diasporic community is therefore now entering its seventh decade. During this time, recordings have been copied and shared in person as well as through the mail and the Internet, and their physical trajectories connect Douglastown with the urban centres of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver; smaller Maritime cities such as Bathurst, New Brunswick and Truro, Nova Scotia; and various American states including New Jersey and Nevada.

Certain of these recordings were made with exceptional care and sonically framed as valuable documents while others suggest a more casual and perhaps disposable approach to magnetic tape (Risk 2014); both sorts, however, testify to the place of music in the everyday lives of local and diasporic Douglastowners. Among the recordings we have received, digitized,

and catalogued are square dances and house parties; family reunions; Saint Patrick's Day concerts; Christmas and New Year's parties; radio and television broadcasts (including multiple episodes of "The Johnny Cash Show"); and solo musicians recording themselves in their own kitchens or living rooms as a gift for a faraway relative. Some of these tapes are well-preserved, while others have been stored in boxes in attics, garages, basements and cupboards, where they have been prone to varying degrees of long-term degradation. Today, copies of many of these original recordings can be found on the shelves of Douglastown's older residents and throughout the North American diaspora, alongside commercial recordings of Ivan Hicks, Hank Snow, Rita MacNeil, and compilations of popular Irish and Tin Pan Alley songs.

Several of the fiddlers recorded by Douglastowners in the late 1950s were born as early as the 1880s. Their music demonstrates a dynamic playing style with probable Acadian, Mi'kmaq, Gaspesian, Irish, Scottish, French and English influences, and features certain local tunes not encountered elsewhere in Québec. Interestingly, these early recordings were made during the same years that the celebrated radio broadcasts of *Don Messer and His Islanders* aired from CFCY in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Many Douglastown families would gather around their radios for this Saturday night ritual to listen to Messer's professionally executed fiddle tunes and Charlie Chamberlain's sentimental Irish and lumberjack songs. Country music broadcasts from WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia also reached Douglastown in these years, and well-loved artists such as the Carter Family and Hank Snow (who performed at Douglastown's Holy Name Hall in the 1940s) served as sources of new repertoire for several younger musicians who had begun learning the guitar in the 1940s and 1950s (Norma McDonald interview, 9 August 2010). Thus, the music contained on the earliest extant reel-to-reels aurally documents how rural Gaspesian musics rooted in the 19th and early 20th centuries adapted to, and often incorporated, the mass-mediated fiddle stylings and country sounds coming from distant radio broadcasting centres and early commercial records.

Collaborative Context

Our various forms of collaboration—what we call our "collaborative context" in this article—with the local and diasporic Douglastown community have been the foundation of our proactive archival initiatives and have governed the emergence and shape of our archival protocol. Much of this collaborative context derived from our work on the *Douglastown* CD. As stated above, the CD was part of the "Descendance irlandaise et musique traditionnelle" project,

itself under the auspices of the Douglas Community Center and operated with a combination of local, regional and provincial funding. Luc Chaput—a resident of Douglastown since 2003—was the project coordinator; he worked with Douglastown painter and hair stylist Linda Drody to conduct over 60 oral history interviews in the community. Dr. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin provided valuable mentorship and institutional alliances with the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University. We (Glenn and Laura) had primary responsibility for the digitization and archiving of home recordings and for the selection of material for the CD. We also worked closely with Luc Chaput and the Douglas Community Center to acquire written authorization for all selected recordings, write liner notes, verify the graphics and French translation, develop a distribution plan and organize a July 2014 CD release event.

Our involvement with the Douglastown Irish Week—held annually during the first week of August—has given us a certain legitimacy within the extended Douglastown community, and facilitated our initial contacts with local and diasporic musicians, dancers and aficionados. Since 2010, we have both been regular Irish Week attendees and frequent performers, presenters and/or teachers. The festival, hosted by the Community Center and directed by Luc Chaput, has proven a natural setting for informal conversations with community members about music and social dance in the region. These have often led to more focused interviews or invitations to house parties. We feel that our recurring presence at the festival has served to legitimize our work on the CD and, more generally, our work promoting and advocating for Douglastown’s musical culture; community members have been increasingly open to sharing treasured home recordings and cultural insights as they have come to know us through the festival.

The Douglastown Irish Week programming includes large evening concerts, more intimate daytime concerts, informational presentations and hands-on workshops. We have participated at all of these levels, though our roles have increasingly shifted away from those of featured artists and towards those of facilitators and house musicians. In 2010 and 2011, Laura performed in the large evening concerts as one of five or six invited fiddlers from elsewhere in Québec and Canada. Her participation in these events initially marked her as a musical outsider, albeit one with an interest in local tunes (at the 2011 concert, she led the fiddlers in a group performance of “Joe Drody’s Jig,” a Douglastown standard). Meanwhile, in 2011 and 2012, Glenn gave presentations on the life and music of local fiddlers Erskine Morris (1913-1997) and Joe Drody (1884-1965), respectively. These presentations—featuring both home recordings and live music—attracted capacity crowds and allowed for public dialogue between Glenn, audience members and the

featured musician's family and musical collaborators. Glenn began teaching beginning and intermediate fiddle classes in 2011, focusing on local repertoire and stylistic nuance; Laura joined him in this work in 2013. We have also supported older community musicians in concert, joined local bands for their mainstage spots, played for square dancing, and performed concerts of local repertoire garnered from home recordings.

Our ongoing affiliation with Douglastown Irish Week has thus offered us valuable forums, both musical and verbal, for sharing the results of our research while demonstrating our interest in, and appreciation for, the community. Indeed, we feel that the changing nature of our appearances at Irish Week since 2010 reflects our gradual integration into the musical and social life of Douglastown. This may seem a strong claim, given that we are usually in Douglastown for only a few weeks of the year. However, as our visits overlap with the annual summer homecomings of many diasporic musicians and community members, our brief but regular appearances in Douglastown are perhaps far less remarkable to community members than a single extended period of fieldwork.

Throughout, we have worked to keep our research process transparent and the community well-informed of our activities. Since 2010, Glenn has collaborated with Brian Morris on their blog "Erskine Morris: Old-Time Fiddle Music from the Gaspé Coast," posting recordings, videos and short articles about the fiddle and dance traditions of the Gaspé coast, and updating readers on their work promoting and disseminating those traditions within and outside of the community. We have each also published non-academic articles about music in Douglastown, and shared those with community members (Patterson 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Risk 2013). Whether writing articles or preparing academic presentations on Douglastown's music, we communicate regularly with community members whom we quote or feature, both to confirm the accuracy of our writing and to ensure their continued willingness to be publicly represented.

Lassiter (2005) considers what collaboration means for ethnographic writing, noting that collaborative ethnography "*deliberately and explicitly* emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process" (16, italics in original). The point of collaboration is not simply reciprocity with the community, according to Lassiter, but a process that moves towards deeper co-interpretation, co-editing and co-writing within the text itself. In his vision, negotiation determines the roles played by researchers and consultants, the goals and audiences of the ethnographic project, and ultimately the interpretations presented.

Though much of the collaborative context described above stemmed from our work on the *Douglastown* CD, we recognize that the CD itself is not fully collaborative in Lassiter's terms. Our desire to include community members in the process was tempered by the practicalities of producing a CD on time, within budget and, for much of the year, at a distance. Our involvement in Irish Week and our ongoing efforts to share our research likely demystified portions of the CD process for community members and encouraged community support for the project, but we did not ask community members to co-write the booklet or help select tracks. Rather, we worked with Luc Chaput at the Community Center to gather tapes, write liner notes and select repertoire and performers, and retained for ourselves those tasks requiring specialized knowledge or technical skills (namely, archival digitization and description).²

Proactive Archiving and Protocols: Expediency, Philosophy and Best Practices

Edmondson (2004) describes two distinct paradigms of user access to archival materials. Traditionally, archives have provided reactive access, whereby users request access to archival materials from the archivist. However, an archive may also proactively engage with potential users, employing various strategies to invite them to access archival materials of possible interest. Edmondson notes that "the only limit to *proactive access* is imagination": proactive engagements may include the broadcast of archival materials on radio or television, public screenings or listening sessions, the creation of products such as CDs and DVDs, digitization and online presentation and dissemination, and lectures and presentations using the materials (20, italics in original).

The role of archives in ethnomusicological research diminished considerably over the second half of the 20th century, largely in response to trends in anthropology that placed the fieldwork experience—rather than "armchair methods"—as the foremost epistemological tool (Landau and Topp Fargion 2012: 126-127). Yet, as Anthony Seeger observed in the mid-1980s, this scholarly malaise for archival research was paralleled by an increased interest in archives among many of the communities from whom material had been collected (1986: 264). In the postcolonial era, the disciplines of anthropology, ethnomusicology and folklore have increasingly problematized issues of power and reciprocity with respect to the people and communities whose lives form the basis for research (see Hofman 2010; Lassiter 2005; Titon 1992). It is in this context that many scholars are reconsidering the role of sound archives as

they strive for a more equitable ethnomusicology (Landau and Topp Fargion 2012), and are re-envisioning archives as potential “live and dialogic space[s] where communities of ordinary people, fieldworkers, researchers, archivists, educators, donors, and cultural policy makers interact” rather than passive storage sites for unused documents and artifacts (Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012: 224-225).

Several proactive archival initiatives in recent years have sought to repatriate recordings housed in the archives of various Western academic or governmental institutions.³ While these scholars acknowledge the complex ethical and logistical issues associated with such repatriation efforts, they also describe these initiatives as effective in engendering a sense of both pride and gratitude as the voices and music of neighbours, family members and deceased community members are heard once again (Gray 1996). For researchers, collaboration with community members during the repatriation process via listening sessions, documentation of archival materials, and the creation of new fieldwork recordings not only resulted in rich ethnographic insights, but also allowed for a “critical and reflexive discourse about the social relations of power in cultural representations, and a model for dissembling and potentially undoing those relations” (Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012: 209; see also Brinkhurst 2012; Landau and Topp Fargion 2012). The proactive repatriation of archival materials may thus lead to critical re-evaluations of prior and existing representations of the cultural community, including those articulated by prior fieldworkers and ethnographers.

Our work in Douglstown is emphatically not a repatriation project: the recordings in question were made, distributed and used almost exclusively by community members. Rather, we see ourselves involved in a *recirculation* project by which we collaborate with the community to gather diffused materials into a cultural “commons” (Titon 2013b), remove technological and geographic barriers to accessing and using the music and re-engage community members with their recorded musical heritage.⁴ In practical terms, this means digitizing recordings made on lower-quality or obsolete formats such as cassettes and reel-to-reel tapes (most Douglstowners no longer own reel-to-reel players), returning the original carriers along with high-quality CD copies and, when possible, engaging in listening sessions with collaborating community members. Nonetheless, our ultimate goals are quite similar to those scholars who pursued the repatriation projects described previously: to facilitate the recirculation of musical heritage within a community and encourage its continued use (Gray 1996; Fox and Sakakibara 2008). The processes and goals of the Douglstown project thus align closely with a number of the recommendations for archivists and fieldworkers made by Nannyonga-

Tamusuza and Weintraub, including tailoring the project “to community-defined needs and circumstances,” securing local institutional support, and focusing on the access to and use of materials as well as on their preservation and protection (2012: 225). Achieving these goals, we feel, is essential if our archival recirculation project is to contribute to the sustainability of musical culture in the local and diasporic Douglstown community.

Unlike other scholars engaged in proactive archiving, we did not start with an existing archive, or even a geographically proximate body of recordings, and many of the distinctly proactive components of our work emerged organically from the imperatives of the CD project. In July 2013, for instance, we arrived at Irish Week with a list of a dozen reels and cassettes that we hoped to digitize. The resulting collaborations with community members—borrowing items for on-site digitization, conducting interviews about the origins and musical contents of the recordings, returning high-quality digital copies and offering listening sessions—suggested the plausibility of following the CD project with the building of a physical or digital archive from the ground up and, through close collaboration with the community, tailoring the creation and eventual operation of such an archive to the evolving needs of local and diasporic Douglstowners.

We see this intensely collaborative approach as a sort of *slow* archiving: here the goal is not the efficient collecting and stockpiling of the greatest quantity of recorded media, but instead an ongoing process of collaborative, “intersubjective and dialogical coproduction” between researchers and community members (Titon 1995: 290; see also Ruskin 2006: 3).⁵ Extending Paul Connerton’s theories on places that function as effective carriers of cultural memory (2009: 30-31), we suggest that by focusing on the process as much as the product, our slow (or at least slower) archival approach can engender greater affective investment in the archive as a living institution and a site of production for new cultural memories in dialogue with the community’s recorded past.

To these ends, we have developed a systematic cataloguing and description protocol intended to facilitate continued community contribution to, and maintenance of, a local sound archive well beyond the immediate imperatives of the CD project. This protocol, detailed below, is based on archival best practices and is intended to facilitate the community’s long-term access to, use of, and ownership over a large and growing body of music. Our goals for this cataloguing and description protocol were fourfold: (1) to simplify the immediate task of locating potential tracks for the CD; (2) to describe the recordings in enough detail that they might serve as the basis for research projects, both our own and those of future researchers; (3) to

provide clear documentation to donors—and later, to other community members—so that they might easily locate specific pieces or performers on the digital copies returned to them with their original recordings; and (4) to facilitate the eventual incorporation of these recordings into an archive while providing rich item-level descriptions to improve their accessibility for community members.

Slow Archiving: Digitization, Cataloguing and Item-Level Description

Our archival process is based on accepted best practices coupled with customized protocols that we developed during the digitization process. A labour-intensive and time-consuming series of subtasks, this work is clearly the efficiency bottleneck in our proactive archival workflow (see Fig. 3). Broadly speaking, our workflow has involved the procurement of home recordings; archival processing of those recordings, including digitization of the original carriers, documentation of our technical set-up, documentation and cataloguing of various aspects of the original carriers, and a systematic item-level description of each carrier's sonic contents; the return of the original recordings to their owner, along with digital copies; and interviews and collaborative listening sessions with donors and other community members. In this section, we describe our archival processing in detail in order to suggest possible technological and cataloguing protocols for researchers engaged in similar projects.

Our on-site digitization activities in Douglastown in July and August 2013 were carried out using our own laptops and a professional-quality Sony cassette deck. The IASA-TC04 guidelines for producing digital audio heritage emphasize that the analog-to-digital conversion process “should not colour

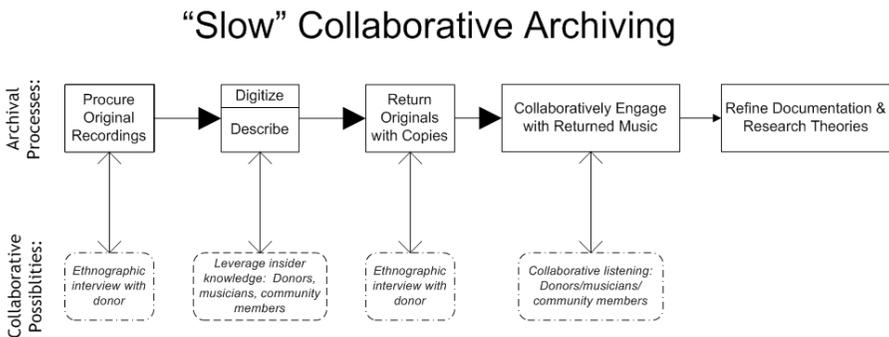


Figure 3. Schematic representation of archival processing workflow.

the audio or add any extra noise” and therefore, the A/D converter in a laptop sound card is generally inadequate for digitizing audio materials for archival purposes (IASA Technical Committee 2009). For this reason, we purchased an external USB audio interface (an ART USB Phono Plus) that allowed us to bypass our laptops’ sound cards, producing clean transfers at a 48 kHz sampling rate with 24-bit samples, and the option to boost the source signal with up to 45 dB of clean gain. According to standard archival digitization practices, all files are saved in the lossless WAV format. During both our on-site digitizations in Douglstown and our digitization work with audio engineer Denis Martin in Montreal, we have adhered to the IASA philosophy that the preservation transfer should be an unmodified file containing no “subjective alterations or ‘improvements’” (IASA Technical Committee 2005). This implies that the preservation master file has no EQing or other audio processing (such as noise reduction), and that every moment of the source carrier is copied with maximum fidelity (as allowed by the available technology), no matter how seemingly irrelevant certain moments may seem to the digitizer. This rigour is motivated by the fact that researchers and users cannot anticipate which aspects of these sonic materials will be valued in the future (“Sound Preservation & Access”; see also IASA Technical Committee 2005).

For most archives, the full safeguarding of original audio carriers implies the creation of derivative working copies of the master preservation files for listening use by researchers, staff and end-users. When creating these working copies, an archive may apply digital restoration, EQing, and other processing, and may also divide the source audio into separate tracks. To facilitate the usability of the Douglstown recordings, Denis Martin created multiple digital versions of the audio material including raw preservation files, each of which contains an entire cassette or reel-to-reel side; cleaned-up copies (noise reduction and EQing) derived from the preservation files; and copies of the latter files split into tracks and saved in both CD-quality and high-resolution formats.

It must be noted that splitting a digital copy of an analog carrier is not an entirely unproblematic operation from a heritage perspective. In certain cases, the recordist started and stopped the machine during a recording session, and we generally followed their lead in creating track divisions at these clearly audible moments. However, many of the cassettes and reel-to-reels that we digitized were recorded in informal contexts such as parties, jam sessions and concerts at the parish hall. On these recordings, the definition of track boundaries is often unclear as musical performances emerge between moments of audience response and informal conversation (including discussion of the previous and/or following tune). In such cases, our decisions regarding track separations

were necessarily subjective. Given that such semi-arbitrary divisions might create false notions of bounded performances and thus obscure extra-musical detail and cultural contextualization, we created a track identification protocol based on the time within the original preservation file in order to allow for alternate track divisions in the future.⁶

Our standardized documentation protocol is intended to facilitate access to the digitized materials while preserving a link between the digital files and the original physical carriers. Following standard archival practice linking the creation of recorded sounds to the person who made the physical recording (ANLA 2002), we organized the files into archival *fonds* (collections) corresponding to each recordist. When the original recordist is unknown we have provisionally designated the lender of the carriers as the fonds owner.⁷

We are indebted to the model established by the Berea College Sound Archives for our cataloguing protocol (Harry Rice interview, 12 March 2013). We designated each carrier by a unique catalogue number that includes: a two-letter abbreviation indicating the fonds owner; a carrier format code (CS - cassette, OR - open reel tape, CD - compact disc, etc); a three-digit sequential identifier (starting at 001); and a letter indication of the cassette or reel-to-reel side (A, B, C, D). The sequential identifiers were arbitrarily assigned unless the fonds owner had already created his or her own numbering system for the original carriers. Thus, the preservation transfer file containing the A side of the third audio cassette that we received from Sharon Howell is catalogued as SH-CS-003-A.

For each fonds, we created an Excel workbook with multiple spreadsheets (see Fig. 5). The first sheet gives an overview of the fonds contents, including the catalogue number, the given title, the performers and the physical description of each original carrier. Each of the following spreadsheets contains a detailed description of a single original carrier, including specifics of the digitization process (technical set-up, input gain levels, software, location and personnel present), a description of the physical object and an item-level description of the sonic contents with start and end times of musical performances (as noted earlier, such divisions are not entirely unproblematic). When we split the longer preservation file into a series of derivative working files according to these start and end times, we label the resulting tracks by augmenting the carrier's catalogue number with a six-digit time-stamp. For example, SH-CS-003-A-00_19_09 indicates a performance that begins at 19 minutes and 9 seconds into side A of the audiocassette SH-CS-003. This labelling system allows for easy location of musical material within the longer preservation files and is well suited to the automated creation of additional split tracks. For each split track, we also record the name(s) of the performer(s) and local

and standard tune titles, when known. Once a cassette or reel-to-reel has been fully digitized and catalogued, we return to the owner the original item, a digital copy and a slightly simplified print-out of our spreadsheet for that item.⁸

Despite being a workflow bottleneck in our proactive archival activities, the process described above has created an invaluable space of reflection for us as researchers and collaborators with the community. Specifically, the time spent in these activities gave us an opportunity to understand and better appreciate the impressive scope, eclecticism and dynamism of the individual and social practices of home recording in Douglastown. The CD project required that we seek out recordings of the local fiddling and song traditions but, more often than not, that repertoire was intermingled with recorded radio broadcasts, television shows or commercial recordings. By processing these cassettes and reel-to-reels in their entirety and producing item-level descriptions of their contents, we have been forced to confront the fluid relationships between traditional and popular music in Douglastown and to critically reflect on our own preconceived analytical categories. As we carefully catalogued the extra-musical contents of each carrier—taking high-resolution digital photographs of all annotations on storage cases, cassette sleeves, paper inserts and carrier labels—we have also come to better appreciate the ways in which these materials were personalized and customized by their creators and users. We hope that our efforts to carry out such systematic and rigorous item-level description and cataloguing will ultimately help create a body of archival music that reflects the complexity and scope of Douglastown's musical culture and proves accessible and useful to current and future generations of community members and researchers.

Proactive Engagement: Effective and Affective Archiving

In this section we use ethnographic interviews and observation to demonstrate the range of proactive archival activities that emerged from our ongoing multi-dimensional collaboration with the community. These descriptions highlight the valuable role that proactive archiving can play for a community such as Douglastown that is attempting to sustain its musical culture in the face of a range of demographic challenges.

In our experience, community members have little or no interest in seeing their home recordings preserved in a remote archive for unknown future users. Home recordings in Douglastown have long been used to strengthen social bonds, particularly in the face of geographical distance,

and many community members see our digitization efforts in an immediate, practical sense: we are helping them to liberate their music from old and obsolete formats so that they might more easily hear and share the music as it was played by their friends, family and neighbours—many now deceased or living far away.

To give one example: fiddler Joe Howell (1916-2004) was renowned for his strong dance playing and willingness to participate in any and all local events requiring a fiddler. However, acquiring a high-quality recording of him had proven difficult. In late 2012, his daughter Sharon Howell, unwilling to even temporarily part with her original tapes, supplied Luc Chaput with a second-generation cassette of tunes and songs recorded by her father. While this dubbed cassette confirmed the vitality of Joe Howell's fiddling and the individuality of his repertoire, the poor audio quality precluded its use for the CD project. In August 2013, however, Sharon Howell attended Laura's beginning fiddle class during Irish Week. After the second day of class, Laura approached her about borrowing the original cassettes for digitization purposes and she agreed, provided that we return the cassettes within 48 hours. Sensitive to the emotional weight of home recordings in the community, we had brought archive-quality digitization equipment to the festival in order to offer an on-site option for community members unwilling to send their treasured cassettes to Montreal. We digitized and catalogued all five of Sharon Howell's cassettes the next day and returned them to her promptly. Upon returning to Montreal, we passed the raw audio files to audio engineer Denis Martin, who removed tape hum and split the files into individual tracks.

In December 2013, Laura phoned Sharon Howell to let her know that the audio processing, track splitting and cataloguing of her cassettes was complete and that she would receive CD copies in the mail shortly. Sharon's response was to describe the technical difficulties she had previously encountered when making cassette dubs: she had borrowed her neighbour's two-deck cassette player but experienced many problems with the auto-reverse function. She appreciated having the recordings "in a format that we can use," as the CD format would allow her to more easily make copies (though likely still onto cassettes) for elderly members of the community: "These are older people.... It was nice to give them some music that they were familiar with" (phone conversation, 23 December 2013). In this case, proactive archiving meant bridging the gap between our own needs as researchers and producers for the CD, and the needs of community members to have their music in an accessible format once again.

On the surface, this is a fairly straightforward story of digitization and return. At a deeper level, however, this vignette illustrates how our long-term,

multi-faceted collaboration with the local festival engendered bonds of trust, which in turn allowed us access to treasured home recordings. This trust was also evident in the interview that Sharon Howell granted us several days after retrieving her original tapes: withdrawing the cassettes one at a time from a small cloth bag, she held each in her hands and spoke of the many personal, historical and emotional associations that the cassette held (personal interview, 5 August 2013; see figure 4).

In proactive archival initiatives that use pre-existing collections from established archives, the principal form of engagement between researchers and community has been collaborative group listening sessions involving several community members in a public setting. While we engaged in similar listening sessions (described below), we also sought to interview donors about their cassettes and reel-to-reels prior to or early in the digitization stage. Given that we are building a digital archive primarily through one-on-one encounters with community members, the seemingly trivial event of procuring a source recording frequently afforded a space of rich reflection and cultural dialogue between the donor and us as researchers. For many donors, simply holding the recordings, taking stock of their physical condition or browsing through them before passing them into our care inspired moments of rich ethnographic insight similar to those encountered by Brinkhurst (2012) and Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub (2012) during pre-organized listening sessions.



Figure 4. Sharon Howell discusses her father's homemade cassette recordings, Douglas Community Center, August 2013 (photo by Laura Risk).

On August 6, 2013, just after the close of Irish Week, Bernard Rooney, a former fiddler and local aficionado of fiddle and country music in Douglstown, joined us in the kitchen of the Douglas Community Center after dinner. He had brought seven reel-to-reels, mostly dating from the late 1960s and early 70s, which he had stored in a cupboard for the past several years. As the three of us sat around the table, the reels in a white plastic bag in front of Bernard, we asked

if we could record him speaking about making the reels and the musicians he had recorded.

He began by telling us that he no longer had a machine to play the reels and described an earlier, largely unsuccessful attempt by the Douglas Community Center to digitize them in 2012. We explained that we would take his reels to a professional digitization engineer in Montreal (we were not equipped for on-site digitization of reel-to-reels, only cassettes), and that we would return CD copies to him along with the originals. He expressed his gratitude and then transitioned into a humorous and fond anecdote about his good friend, Douglastown fiddler James Henry Conley (1886-1980):

Bernard: I'd like that. Because when they done them the last time, all this here, because I know they were all full. And with all this here, I got about, I don't know, I'd say maybe 14 minutes of it.... I had to listen very carefully because I had this old Mr. Conley.... He was a very dear friend of mine, even though he was an old, old man. And he used to come to my place and I have such good stories. He came to my place from the time of my father, when I was a child, to play for parties. And I have him telling stories on them and that, and I would just *love* to get some of that back, you know, it's true....

I went into his place one evening. I had this nice white Buick. The old fella he was terrible strong, he was a big-boned man. A *big* man. And anyway I went in there, I don't know maybe I was 18, 19 ... And, I had a bottle of gin with me of course, you know, 'cause the old guy would get the fiddle out when I'd go in, I'd take my guitar with me. So there was an old, open well above the house ... When I went to turn, I backed one wheel into that and I got stuck, you know? "Oh that's nothing," he said, "I'm gonna get you outta there." And I didn't notice what he was doing 'cause them old cars had a bumper chromed solid, you'd lift ... never noticed he put his pry right behind my back wheel, and he give that a reef, and the fender *just doubled* [bent in half]. I couldn't say nothing to him. No, he was a nice old man. I'll tell you. *Very* nice. Yep.

Laura: Do you remember about when that was that you recorded him?

Bernard: Oh my God almighty, I'm going to go '65—from '65 to '70 because—I got the tape recorder ... I bought the tape recorder in Gaspé from Légaré's store. And everything [that]

moved on the property, I think then I recorded it. But I have people singing on there like Paul Foley ... was a wonderful singer. I have Leslie Morris over here, singing. Then as far as a fiddles, my Jesus, anybody [that] could pull a bow across the string, I had 'em ... Yep. It was just constant. (Personal interview, 6 Aug. 2013)

Taking stock of this exchange, we see how the act of procuring recordings through one-on-one collaboration between the researcher and community member allowed Bernard a space to share his knowledge both about important figures in Douglastown's musical culture and about his practice of home recording within the community. Reflecting on how he could not bring himself to reprimand his "very dear friend" and "a nice old man," Bernard's words and expression demonstrated the profound affective bond between the aspiring young guitar player/fiddler and his mentor (62 years his senior). Bernard's description of his first reel-to-reel recorder shows a glimpse of his devotion to capturing the music of friends, neighbours and "everything that moved."⁹ As he listed many of the performers he had recorded on the reels lying haphazardly on the table before us, his sense of pride in his recordings, and his desire to have this music in a listenable format once again, was palpable.

Digitizing and cataloguing these reels took several months, and Laura mailed the results—23 CDs and 23 pages of documentation—to Bernard in early 2014. (Bernard had had no accompanying documentation for the reels.) In a sort of extended, long-distance collaborative listening session, she spoke with Bernard on the phone about the musical contents of the reels on multiple occasions over the following months. The imperatives of the CD project, then coming to a close, guided all of these conversations: we needed contact information in order to send permission release forms to musicians or their family members, and biographical details for the liner notes. Far from restricting the flow of conversation, however, these practical needs seemed to function as an invitation into the archival process for Bernard, and he graciously spent hours on the phone answering Laura's questions and offering commentary and corrections.

After listening through all the CDs, Bernard called Laura with dates, locations and musicians' names for over 100 tracks. The music had sparked other memories as well: when Laura asked about a series of tunes by local fiddler Johnny Drody, Bernard remembered the latter's regular visits and recurring repertoire: "Johnny was here pretty much every day. He used to make Christina [Rooney, Bernard's wife] play the guitar with him. He'd sit down and play five or six tunes, then the next night he might play them over" (phone conversation, 29 April 2014).¹⁰

As this and the previous examples demonstrate, our ongoing conversations with musicians, family members, recordists and donors regarding the original tapes, the digitization process and the CD project resulted in a “live and dialogic space” shared by community member and researcher, rich in cultural and biographical description and insight into past performance practices in Douglstown (Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012: 225). We conclude this section with a thick description of one such dialogic space: a collaborative listening session that Glenn conducted with local musician Norma McDonald and her husband Brian McDonald immediately after Irish Week 2013.

Norma McDonald was born in Douglstown in 1940 and has lived and made music there throughout her life. As a singer, guitar player and, more recently, fiddler, she has played at countless house parties and community events, and for patients at the Ross Sanatorium in the nearby Town of Gaspé. From August 7 to August 16, 2013, Glenn stayed with Norma and her husband Brian at their home on top of McDonald’s Hill while he completed our on-site digitization work for the CD project. Norma expressed interest in hearing the music that Glenn had been digitizing upstairs, and soon they developed a ritual: each day, Glenn would burn a CD of the newly digitized recordings and he, Norma and Brian would listen to it later the same day in their kitchen. Norma and Brian were intimately familiar with the music, the performers and the events on most of the recordings, and frequently supplied additional details during these listening sessions.

On the morning of August 8, Glenn digitized a cassette loaned to us by Nancy Briand, a local resident. The two sides of the cassette had been recorded at two separate “song parties,” as they were termed locally, at which local singers would take turns singing with guitar or pump organ accompaniment. The A and B sides of the cassette were labelled, respectively, “Party at Mac’s, No. 1” and “Day at Hartley’s, No. 2.” This cassette was made by Nancy’s mother, Marie Bond—who also played the pump organ for many songs on the B side—sometime in the 1980s or early 90s. The contents demonstrate the wide range of genres that have been filtered through the community’s musical experience: popular ballads (“My Mother Was a Lady”), fiddle tunes, sentimental Irish songs (“Isle of Innisfree”), early country music (“Blackboard of My Heart”) and an ABBA song (“I Have a Dream”) performed by one of Douglstown’s most renowned singers of “the old songs,” MaryEllen Drody-Savidant. (See Fig. 5 for a complete repertoire list from this cassette, NB-CS-001.)

The following description traces Glenn’s field experience that afternoon (the times indicate minutes and seconds into side B of the digitized cassette). To convey the alternating ethnographic voice and tense in the remainder

NB-CS-001-A

<i>Catalogue Timestamp</i>	<i>Tune/song title</i>	<i>Instrumentation</i>
NB-CS-001-A-00_00_00	(reel)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_01_37	The Old Man and the Old Woman	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_03_34	Maple Sugar	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_04_26	(reel)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_06_51	(reel)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_07_10	(reel)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_08_37	Ragtime Annie	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_10_20	Patronella	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_11_30	The Irish Washerwoman	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_12_31	The Old Man and the Old Woman	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_13_59	(reel)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_15_49	I Have a Dream (from ABBA 1974)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_18_40	One Day at a Time	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_21_41	Mocking Bird Hill	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_22_38	(waltz)	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_23_55	Big John MacNeil	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_24_55	The Snowshoe Reel	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_26_27	A Daisy a Day (Jed Strunk 1973)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_29_31	Rose from the Garden of Prayer (Hank Snow)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_31_04	My Mother was a Lady (Written by Edward Marks 1896, recorded by Marty Robins)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_35_25	We're Trading Hearts (Stompin' Tom Connors)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_37_07	May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You (Written by Meredith Willson 1950, Recorded by Jim Reeves)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_38_33	Cottage by the Sea	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_42_49	Amazing Grace	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_44_38	I'm So Afraid of Losing You Again (Written by Dallas Frazier and A.L. Owens, Recorded by Charley Pride 1969)	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-A-00_46_35	(song fragment)	Vocal, guitar

NB-CS-001-B

NB-CS-001-B-00_00_00	Crystal Chandelier	Vocal, guitar
NB-CS-001-B-00_01_39	The Montreal Reel	Fiddle, guitar
NB-CS-001-B-00_02_36	One Day at a Time	Vocal, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_05_31	Pick Me Up on Your Way Down	Vocal, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_07_19	She's a Rose From the Garden of Prayer (Hank Snow)	Vocal, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_09_43	The Blackboard of My Heart (Hank Thompson)	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_12_05	Wild Colonial Boy	Vocal, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_15_57	Where the River Shannon Flows	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_19_29	The Broken Wedding Ring	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_23_13	My Old Pal	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_25_46	I Had a Hat (James Mooney 1941, recorded by Dan Dailey and the Andrews Sisters 1949)	Vocal, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_28_26	The Isle of Innisfree	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_32_14	My the Good Lord Bless and Keep You	Vocals, pump organ
NB-CS-001-B-00_33_41	Remember Me I'm the One Who Loves You	Vocals, pump organ

Figure 5. Contents of the cassette NB-CS-001.

of this section, we use indented text blocks for our reconstruction of the unfolding experience from Glenn's field notes and return to standard margins when offering our present (i.e., after-the-fact) observations and reflections on these moments during the collaborative listening session in Norma and Brian McDonald's kitchen on August 8, 2013.

Norma, Brian and I are congregated in the kitchen, their conversation animated by the ever-present radio (tuned, as always, to CBC Radio 1 from Québec City) while Norma prepares a traditional "boiled dinner," a stew of salt meat, cabbage and root vegetables. When the conversation turns to my work digitizing tapes that morning, I suggest we listen to a CD copy of Nancy Briand's cassette.

As the sounds of a half-dozen male and female voices singing "the old songs" in perfect and octave unison with pump organ accompaniment play from the speakers of the GE cupboard-mounted kitchen CD player/radio, Norma and Brian recall the biographical details of the recorded musicians. When the conversation slows, Norma joins in with the CD, singing along quietly at the counter while chopping vegetables. I notice how many times her kitchen knife halts mid-chop and, sometimes for 30 seconds or longer, she remains still, focusing completely on the sounds coming from the speaker. Several times she leans her ear towards the stereo speaker, listening even more intently, this close listening allowing her to pick out individual singers from the chorus of voices. Although the cassette was recorded many years ago, Norma assures me that she remembers this particular song party, recalling how she and Brian were supposed to have been there but had to miss out for some reason or another.

[00:09:48]—From the speaker above the kitchen sink comes the sound of two female voices singing an old Hank Thompson song, "The Blackboard of My Heart," in unison. Norma says it's Julia Briand and Briget Bond singing. Briget's sister, Marie Bond, is likely at the pump organ. When Norma comments that Briget Bond was married to their neighbour (and Brian's cousin) Graham McDonald, Brian joins in, weaving a spoken web connecting friend and family, living and deceased, present and past. My pen struggles to keep up with the torrent of names and relations as Brian recounts how Graham's brother William, who was their

next-door neighbour, would, once he became a widower, visit every evening in their kitchen for the last fifteen years of his life.

[00:19:33]—The voices of MaryEllen Drody and William McDonald begin an early Hank Snow song, “The Broken Wedding Ring,” their slow rubato tempo dictating the pump organ’s chordal accompaniment. Their interpretation transforms the steady bass-strum guitar rhythm of the original cowboy song into a slow and reflective sentimental ballad. After Norma remarks on William McDonald’s voice, Brian mentions how William’s brother Graham struggled in adulthood as a World War II veteran; at 25 years of age, he had been shot in the spine and left for dead before being rescued by the Red Cross. Brian describes Graham’s impressive resolve and recalls how, despite his handicap, he would sing and dance all evening at local house parties in Douglastown.

Although a non-musician and non-singer, Brian has been present at many, if not most, of the musical parties and events at which Norma sang or performed. Not considering himself knowledgeable about music (a point on which we have occasionally challenged him), his engagement with the recordings during the collaborative listening session was primarily narrative, and he frequently drew on his vast understanding of the complicated webs of local kinship in Douglastown to explain how the musicians on the recordings were connected to each other and to himself through both lineage and shared experiences. Brian’s particular style of engagement with the recorded sounds points to the rich potential that home recordings offer as a means of inspiring community members to describe the webs of interpersonal relationships that so often confound the outside researcher.

[00:25:48] - Next on the recording is the novelty song “I Had a Hat” (written in 1941 by James Mooney and popularized in a 1949 swing arrangement by Dan Dailey and the Andrews Sisters). While listening, Norma casually observes that “those old songs should be done with the pump organ . . . that’s how I heard them,” and lists several houses that had pump organs when she was growing up. She describes the pump organ as a physical gathering point around which singers congregated at song parties. I think about her use of the term “old songs” to describe a wide swath of vocal repertoire in Douglastown. As a researcher, how does this challenge my preconceived ideas of genre and song style? What

are the “old songs” and how do they relate to the more familiar genres of country, Irish, old-time or cowboy? When were they performed and what meanings are found in them? How did these songs, many in fact popular radio hits of the 1940s and 1950s, become “old”?

“I Had a Hat” most likely passed into the community through the swinging Andrews Sisters’ version, the sisters’ close vocal harmonies alternating with Dan Dailey’s solo vocal line sung in a staged Irish brogue. On Nancy Briand’s cassette, the song is reinterpreted as a slow, unaffected narrative ballad and the single male voice and pump organ accompaniment reconnect this mid-20th century Irish-themed song to an older, sentimental Irish vaudeville aesthetic. Norma’s discussion of pump organs thus points towards the means by which community members reappropriated and recontextualized various mass-mediated repertoires to suit individual and collective aesthetics and performance practices.

[00:32:13] - Several voices join together for “May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You” (a Meredith Williams song published in 1950 and popularized by both Jim Reeves and Eddy Arnold). Hearing the first line, Norma tells me that the CD must be almost over because “that was always the last song of the evening. Everyone would join in on the last verse.” She mentions how Reggie Rooney, a dear friend, would always encourage her to lead this song at parties, saying “Come on, Norma, ‘May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You’!” I ask about the lack of audience conversation during the CD—surprising, given that audience chatter is ubiquitous in home recordings of fiddle music at parties. Norma replies, “Oh yes, the room was full. They would listen and the singers would be in the corner ... people would all be quiet when the tape was on.” (Norma and Brian McDonald, interview and collaborative listening, 8 August 2013)

Here, the casual conversation sparked by a collaborative listening session revealed (1) a collective ritual of using a specific song to end song parties, (2) the enhancement of Norma’s personal relationship with Reggie Rooney through this song and its ritual use in the community and (3) a culturally cultivated mode of audience listening at recorded song parties that was distinct from audience listening at recorded house parties animated by fiddle music.

In this listening session, Norma related to the recorded sounds as an absent participant: although she had not been physically present at that particular party, she understood the creation of those sounds in a profound sense as a result of having been involved in countless similar song parties. Like Brian, she also related to the sounds through ties of family and friendships with the recorded musicians. Norma and Brian could therefore offer Glenn insight into aspects of performance practice, musical aesthetics and categories of repertoire, and connect each of those with specific individuals, offering a wealth of cultural knowledge associated with a specific home recording, as well as a richer and more nuanced understanding of Douglastown's musical culture.

Critical Reflections and Conclusions

As with proactive archival projects elsewhere, our work in Douglastown is animated by the possibility of cultural sustainability or renewal. Yet sustainable culture is largely contingent on a sustainable population. In this article, we have considered our responsibilities as researchers to an older local demographic and its North American diaspora. However, Douglastown's historical Irish-identified community is aging, as young adults and families continue to leave the region. What are our responsibilities to the new Douglastown, increasingly francophone and without multi-generational ties to the area? Should we strive to bridge cultural, linguistic and generational gaps as we work towards a local sound archive in Douglastown? How will Doulgastowners—both “old” and “new”—relate to or contribute to such an archive? We have described our proactive archival activities as recirculation but as we look ahead, dissemination may be a more apt term.

As co-producers of the *Douglastown: Music and Song from the Gaspé Coast* CD, we were responsible for deciding how to musically and discursively represent the Douglastown community not only to the outside world, but also to itself and its future generations. Through intense collaboration and a slow proactive archival process, we strove to create a product that aligned with the desires of the community and respected the diversity and vitality of its musical heritage. Long-term, intense, highly detailed listening to large quantities of local music has grounded us as scholars and advocates for the community, allowing us to better appreciate the diversity of local repertoire, particularly those elements that are less familiar to us (we both began this project with a highly fiddle-centric bias).

Nonetheless, our approach deserves several justifiable critiques from the perspective of established archival practice and scholarship. Clearly, our slow archiving is not scalable in the traditional archival sense. To date, we have devoted

countless (unpaid) hours to listening, digitizing and item-level cataloguing. The implicit trade-off of slow archiving is forgoing an extensive body of materials contextualized primarily at the collection level in favour of a much smaller body of materials that are highly contextualized at the item level and therefore more accessible to community members. Yet we have also approached our current collecting and digitization efforts with an eye towards the long-term creation of a more traditional sound archive in Douglastown. How may we need to compromise our slow archival approach to take this project forward and ultimately leave it in the hands of the community?

Our focus has been on digitizing local home recordings, and then returning those recordings and CD copies to their owners. (We have also, on request, supplied digital copies of recordings to the family members of deceased musicians.) The flexibility of digital formats has allowed us to reach out to diasporic community members more easily, most notably via Glenn Patterson and Brian Morris' blog but also through emails with individual collaborators. Nonetheless, digitization is a contentious subject in archival scholarship and practice. Although a solution to physical storage constraints and a means of improved accessibility, digitization is problematic in several ways for the long-term safeguarding of cultural heritage. First, the process of digitization separates sounds from their original physical carriers and, as noted earlier, these carriers are an essential part of Douglastown's material culture of music, often customized and inscribed with deep affective value. Second, the historical obsolescence of digital readers and file formats every five to ten years forces archives to undertake periodic large-scale reformatting initiatives that are both costly and time-consuming. Finally, our emphasis on digitization presents short-term problems in the local context of our proactive archival initiatives: many of the people who most fondly remember this music have not fully embraced CD technology (let alone purely digital technologies such as mp3s), and remain loyal to the cassette format that forms the basis of their existing collections of local and commercial music.

We believe that, even in a climate of increasing global digitization of cultural forms, physical sound carriers still hold an invaluable place in community archives. In essence, our protocols create a digital shadow of an expansive, dispersed collection of physical recordings made over seven decades.¹¹ It is our hope that the multiple, ongoing feedback loops that we have established in Douglastown with both community members and community organizations will ensure that this shadow is indeed an accurate, welcomed and accessible representation of this community's recorded musical heritage and a first step towards the recirculation of this music within the community and beyond.¹² 🍀

Notes

1. See Patterson (2014a) for a more detailed portrait of the historic settlement of the Douglstown area and the Gaspé coast. For a comprehensive description of Douglstown's cultural history, see Al White's *Douglstown Historical Review*, a series of bulletins published in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

2. The Douglas Community Center digitized approximately 25 hours of home recordings in 2010 and 2011. Unfortunately, the Center did not have access to high quality playback and digitization equipment and we subsequently had to re-digitize many of those cassettes and reel-to-reels. Although this double digitization slowed down the process considerably, it may have ultimately been a blessing in disguise. By 2013, when we approached community members a second time to borrow their home recordings, we had established reputations as regular contributors to Irish Week and public advocates for local musical culture. As a result, we were frequently given not only the requested cassettes and reel-to-reels, but also additional recordings.

3. Between 1979 and 1985, The Federal Cylinder Project repatriated the contents of more than 10,000 cylinder recordings stored in the Archive of Folk Culture at the American Folklife Center to over 100 Native American communities by making cassette copies of the original cylinders. Gray (1996) describes the technical and ethical challenges the team faced in trying repatriate a massive body of relatively poor-quality recordings to a large number of disparate communities. Landau and Topp Fargion (2012) describe a project to disseminate archival recordings of Moroccan music held at the British Library among diasporic Moroccans living in London, arguing that this initiative allowed diasporic Moroccans to "reclaim (when it has been lost in history) and proclaim (to future generations) their cultural heritage, as well as to evoke memories and reinforce a sense of identity" (259). Importantly for our purposes, they argue that engaging a diasporic community through proactive archiving may cultivate forms of cultural sustainability (275). Brinkhurst (2012) shared archival recordings from the British Library with a substantial Somali refugee community around London's Kings Cross and notes that, despite the geographical proximity of the library and the community, this collaboration between an official literary institution and the largely oral culture of the refugees resulted in certain tensions. She argues that proactive archival work, through group listening sessions, may reconnect diasporic and displaced peoples to a sense of identity rooted in a shared past elsewhere, while engendering the sense of belonging to multiple locales (243). Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub (2012) describe an initiative to repatriate copies of original recordings, again from the archives of the British Library, to the newly-created Klaus Wachsmann Music Archive at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. The university used the repatriated sounds to engage with several communities of origin. Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub pay particular attention to the ethical dimensions of such work and critically reflect upon the meaning of repatriation, the proper recipients of repatriated

sounds and the dilemmas of reintroducing sounds from the past into a community's present.

4. This "commons" is under development and resides principally in the Douglas Community Center. To date, it consists of digital copies of the analog source recordings (over 70 hours) processed during the production of the *Douglastown* CD, and the oral history interviews carried out by Luc Chaput and Linda Drody for the "Descendance irlandaise et musique traditionnelle" project. This commons also extends into the Internet through the recordings (over 77 tracks) and writings on Glenn Patterson and Brian Morris' blog. Access to the non-Web-based portion of this commons is not yet systematized for either community or outside users, but rather occurs informally through our outreach to musicians, recordists and their families, or by request.

5. Few archivists would describe professional archival processes as anything other than slow. However, the intensely collaborative approach we propose is necessarily slower, at least in the phases of archival accessioning and description.

6. During our on-site digitization work in Douglastown in August 2013, time and technology did not generally permit track splitting. Thus, CDs were usually given to our collaborators with only two tracks (the first and second sides of the original cassette).

7. It is common practice within the Douglastown community to dub home recordings for family members and neighbours, particularly those living at a distance, meaning that multiple copies of certain cassettes are in circulation within the community. When one is accessioning a collection into an archive and is confronted with several nearly identical copies of an item, the constraints of physical (and to a lesser extent, digital) storage necessitate selecting the copy that has the highest perceived archival value. This decision factors in the physical condition of the media, its uniqueness or level of customization and the provenance and cultural importance of a particular copy.

8. In the few cases where we lacked the resources to split the preservation files into individual tracks, this printed documentation has been important in giving donors a detailed sense of the contents of their CD copies, and in allowing them to access specific musical items.

9. Bernard Rooney used his reels for two purposes: first, to record items of temporary interest (radio and television shows, his own practice sessions) and second, to record family and friends (i.e., James Henry Conley). It is these latter recordings that Bernard recalled when he lent us his reels for digitization. In general, he seems to have been motivated not by a desire to preserve styles or repertoires, but rather by a desire to capture shared musical moments with certain significant people. See Risk (2014) for further discussion of home recording practices and motivations in Douglastown.

10. Between February and May 2014, we spoke or emailed with over twenty musicians or their family members regarding permissions and biographical details for the CD. In general, these practical imperatives served to invite community

members into the archival process and often facilitated conversation about cultural life in Douglstown.

11. If, eventually, the community should choose to create a physical sound archive, it will have to work backwards from this shadow to create its physical counterpart. This will require confronting a set of problems associated with archival storage and the long-term physical protection of archival holdings. The village does not currently have a proper space for archival storage/preservation, although the nearby Musée de la Gaspésie has excellent archival facilities. However, the strong identification of archival materials with the village of Douglstown proper may create tensions were the community confronted with the choice between the professional safeguarding of holdings in nearby Gaspé or keeping the materials within the community and perhaps risking less secure storage and more rapid degradation.

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