



Musicians of the Midnight Sun

Thank you for visiting the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website. Even though these blogs are being posted many weeks after the launch of the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website, my hope is that they will remain as a document along with the website itself with the intention to give a little bit more of a personal story of my relationships with these featured artists.

Angus Beaulieu:

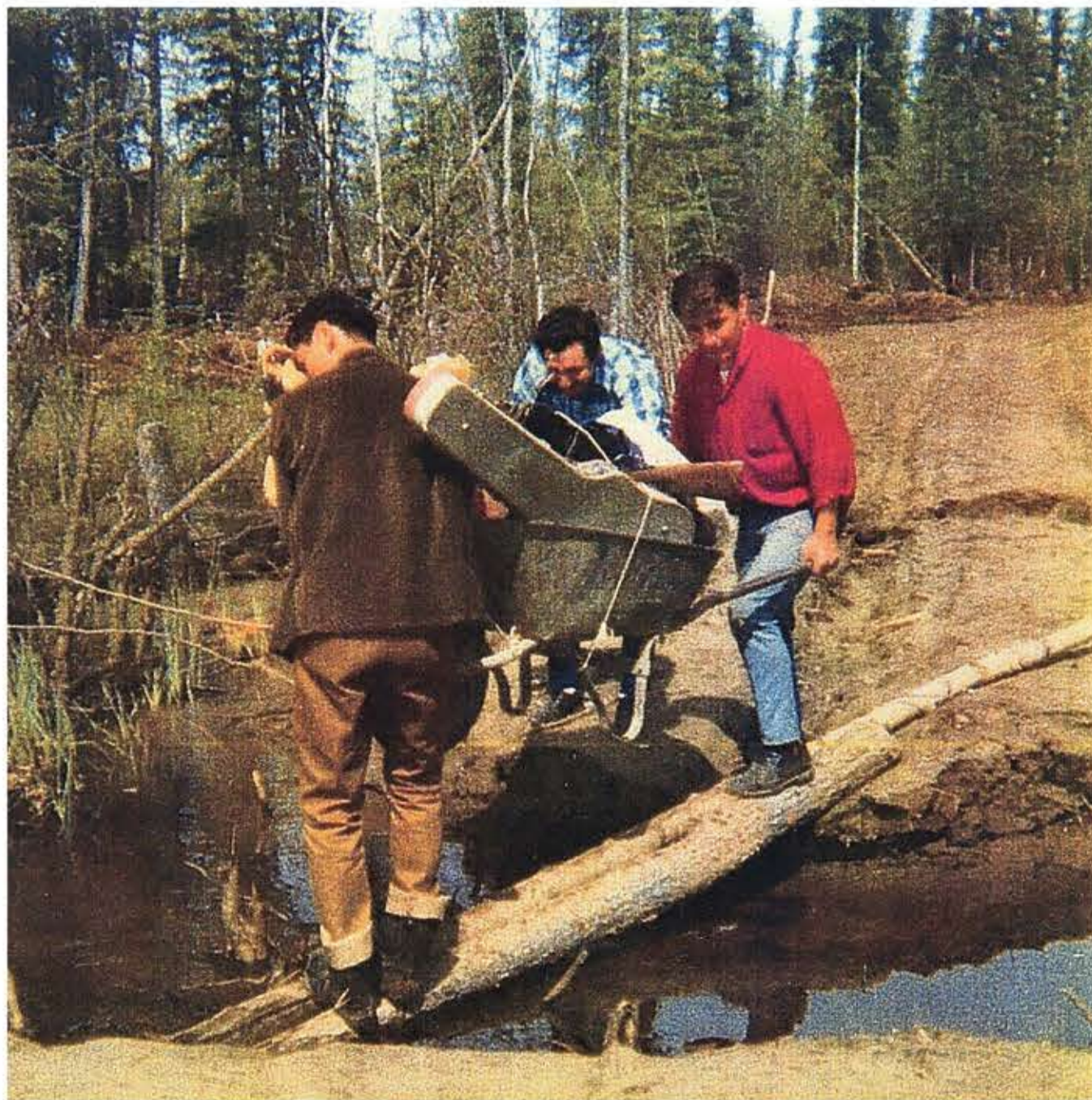
I started to play with some of the old time fiddlers up here in the mid 1980s or so. Up until then, almost all of my playing was with pop, rock, jazz, blues and country bands in Yellowknife and in the south. In the late 1980s, I was a partner in a recording studio of sorts. Norman Glowach and I would facilitate recordings with some of the old time fiddlers from that time, some of whom have since passed on. I think one of the first was with the late Ed Lafferty and his son, the late Herbie Lafferty. Herbie and I had played in bands together years before as had Norman. I didn't realize then I was playing with this father and son who came from a very strong family lineage of players along with Ed's brother's Morris and Peter from Łíídlıı Kue, Fort Simpson, NT. The next fiddler to come into my life was the late Frank Cockney from Ulukhaktok, Holman Island. Frank was an elder then but always seemed to look at the world through the eyes of a young boy, an innocent, seeing something as if for the first time and being totally amazed by it. I have met maybe 2 other musicians in my life that have this same big eyed outlook on life and I find it quite infectious. Frank was always chasing after the girls, none were safe from his flirtatious ways. He reminded me a lot of playing with Edmonton Blues man, the late Big Miller.

(<http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/arts.php?themeid=22&id=7>) Big was larger than life Jazz vocalist and trombone player and he always had the most beautiful women in the club under his arms at break time. I always felt close to Frank, not really knowing why and felt really bad when he passed on. Years later, I was visiting the cemetery in Tuktoyaktuk and found his grave site there. He and I were born the same day, August 26.



Angus Beaulieu playing the fiddle with a coat hanger for a talent show, Aklavik, 1977 (photo © Angus Beaulieu)

I was already playing some with Richard Lafferty around that time at festivals and jamborees and would bump into Angus Beaulieu at some of these events. He was renowned as the father of "The Native Cousins" who were always the most popular northern bands to play at major events. As well, some of the northern players I was playing with seemed to have all played with or through Angus' bands in the past. When I started to interview these other northern musicians like George Mandeville and Tony Buggins, they enlightened me as to how important and influential Angus' encouragement and direction was in their own musical lives.



L-R, Isdore Tourangeau, James Fabien, Angus Beaulieu on their way to a gig in Hay River from Fort Resolution, 1966, (Photo © Angus Beaulieu)

When I finally did get to spend a couple of days with Angus and Dorothy in Deninu Kue, Fort Resolution for his interview, I was amazed at his recall of places, names and stories from the recent and distant past. The breadth of his life experience is so broad, from living a traditional hunter-gatherer existence as a Metis man in Rocher River, to his community life and on to his musical life, playing through all of the changes in musical styles and technologies over the last 60 plus years. I know many others have heard and documented Angus' stories before, a few are repeated here but come with a deep and introspective snapshot of a true northern musician through his own eyes and in his own voice.