

# Meet The Folk...

## Dan McKinnon



**Blessed with a glorious baritone voice, a graceful mastery on guitar, and a hearty laugh that delights any room, Dan McKinnon has carved out his own unique, musical path. From early beginnings in the coffee houses, pubs and bars of Atlantic Canada, to yearly tours throughout the UK, Dan's performances reveal an enduring respect for the past, tempered by a profound attachment to the present. His keenly observed stories and passionately delivered songs convey a deep inquisitiveness into the human condition combined with the rich heritage of the Maritimes.**

### **What started you on this path and when?**

Growing up in the sixties, in Nova Scotia, on Canada's east coast, we were very privileged and spoiled. The local CBC station (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), one of the only two channels, produced two nationally broadcast shows. The first, *Don Messer's Jubilee*, was a show of great Atlantic Canadian talent, hosted by Don Messer, a fiddler who played old time fiddle, swing, jigs and reels, with little touches of jazz and bluegrass thrown in.

The second show was called *Singalong Jubilee* and was supposed to have been hosted by Pete Seeger, but they opted for a Canadian-born five string banjo player, Bill Langstroth, because they were more than a little concerned with Pete's political leanings.

*Singalong Jubilee* was a half hour of mostly acoustic music, folk, traditional, locally written, even current acoustic pop oriented songs, with a large group of Atlantic Canadian singers, songwriters, instrumentalists and arrangers. Two of the more recognised performers were singer, Anne Murray, and singer/songwriter, Gene McLellan, who wrote songs that were performed and recorded by many singers world-wide, including Elvis.

So the roots were there, it just took a chance discovery, while hitching a ride to a folk festival in 1979, that I heard for the first time a little known Canadian folk singer, Stan Rogers. I believe this was the one defining moment that set me on a path I had not intended.

### **Where do you hail from?**

Nova Scotia has always been my home. It is a place of incredible beauty and a slower, calmer way of life. Almost totally surrounded by water, you are never more than 45 minutes from some body of water - the Atlantic Ocean, the Northumberland Strait, or the Bay of Fundy that boasts the highest tides in the world - a place where the land meets the sea and dreams begin.

### **Describe yourself in 5 words.**

Inquisitive, passionate, loving, moral, serious, procrastinatory. (Sorry that's six.)

### **Where are you on the journey?**

I find there are many beginnings and endings and even though I have come so very far, I feel as though I am just beginning. I feel this especially when inspired to write. When immersed in a writing phase, I will usually write half a dozen or more songs in the span of a few weeks. It's at times like these, when

inspired, that I am occasionally overwhelmed by the excitement of creation - something new, something untried... that new beginning.

Confidence also plays a very large role, as well as whether I am on one of those seemingly never-ending plateaus or if I am going through a period of learning and development.

### **What is your greatest achievement thus far?**

There are many, especially the relationships I have with my wife, my son, my family and good friends. Musically, however, I would have to say being able to touch people through my performances in such a way that causes them to feel something they have not felt in a while, showing them they are not alone. It's these things that tell me I am on the right path.

### **What is your passion or cause celeb?**

My passion is life, love and music. However, regarding causes, here in Canada, over the past 30 years, more than 1200 indigenous (aboriginal) women have been murdered or have gone missing, and politically, little is being said or done to look into this atrocity. One woman is one too many, 1200 is inexcusable.

### **Who is your idol and why?**

I really don't have an idol. I have had major influences, many people who inspired me, not only musically but also who have made an impact on me personally. It is their thoughts, words and deeds that have gone into making me who I am. Musically, Stan Rogers is, without a doubt, one of the greatest influences on my writing, however, people who are passionate about human rights, freedom, conservation and peace I do hold in high esteem - Stephen Lewis, a great Canadian educator, politician and diplomat, is certainly one of the people I respect immensely.

### **Who is your rock?**

Without a doubt my wife, Nancy! She is one of the strongest people I know and when I need reassurance, or a kick in the backside, she is always there. (Most often I think it's the kick in the backside...) She's also there to help turn my thoughts around when I start down a dark, difficult patch.

### **Why do you do it?**

For no reason other than that I have to. Because next to love, nothing has ever given me so much inherent pleasure.

### **Anything to add?**

I think it best to say thank you to all who support live music! Thank you for listening and taking part each evening. Without your support, folk music and the community that encompasses it would not exist. And it is such a wonderful community to be a part of.

Dan is touring in the UK from 15th April to 3 June. Dates and information can be found on his website: [www.danmckinnon.ca](http://www.danmckinnon.ca)