

Graduate Student Profile

Monique Giroux, York University

Monique Giroux is the Student Representative for the CSTM Board, and thus a perfect candidate for the first instalment of the Graduate Student Profile. This column will feature a graduate student working in the fields of ethnomusicology, musicology, and folklore every issue, highlighting their experience, research plan, and publications.

Monique's current research draws equally on her longtime experience playing in Manitoba fiddle contests and on the subject of her master's research, country music. She is currently exploring the relationship between Aboriginal and old-time fiddling in Manitoba. While understanding the continued stylistic exchange between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian nations is one aspect of her work, the social aspects of meeting places are of particular interest to her, that is, understanding how fiddling is used, on the one hand, to reinforce old ways of relating, or, on the other, to create more equitable and respectful relationships between nations. Although fiddling is almost always presented as apolitical by fiddle communities – as non-threatening entertainment, or diversion – she has found through her field research that fiddling often has political, even life-changing consequences. She is currently doing archival research to better understand the changing meaning of the Metis, old-time, and Red River styles (i.e., how the terms have been used interchangeably or to emphasize difference) in public discourse, and to better understand the implications of this changing discourse. Monique is finding that these terms were used interchangeably until the late twentieth century, and that the relatively recent emphasis on the Metis style as clearly distinct from the old-time and Red River styles mirrors the revival of public celebrations of Metis culture. She is also researching sites for competitive Metis fiddling, exploring how the context influences the development of Metis fiddle styles, and the social implications of these varied contexts. She has found particularly striking differences between Metis fiddling at old-time competitions, and Metis fiddling at Metis festivals (such as International Metisfest). In fact, she has discovered that the clearest distinction (or the desire for the clearest distinction) between Metis and old-time fiddling is found in primarily 'white' contexts. Her research is unique because of its focus on the connections between fiddle styles, building on the work of Indigenous researchers who emphasize the importance of understanding relationships. She is currently engaging with the fiddle communities on a

number of different levels, regularly attending competitions, Metis events, rehearsals, and fiddle concerts at a variety of venues, and building relationships with fiddlers, and other community members, through casual conversations and more formal interviews.

Monique recently presented a paper on defining Metis fiddling at Manitoba fiddle contests at the joint ICTM/CSTM conference in St. John's, Newfoundland, which was co-written with Sarah Quick. She has presented at past CSTM and SEM conferences on country music and Metis fiddling. She has a chapter that explores old-time and Metis styles of fiddling at the Miami Fun and Fiddle Festival in 2006 and the Manitoba Open Old-Time Championships in a forthcoming book on music on the Canadian Prairies. During the 2011-12 academic year, she will be teaching a course on Girls, Women, and Popular Culture at the University of Winnipeg. She currently lives in Winnipeg, where she is conducting research for her dissertation.

