Native American Audio Project Research Guide

Preface

“Every soul has a distinct song.” – Joy Harjo, Crazy Brave: A Memoir

The Native American Audio Project aims to highlight the history of commercially recorded Indigenous music within the United States and surrounding areas. Native American communities have always used music as a way to express both individual and tribal identity; furthermore, many artists use their music and lyrics to critically engage with the stereotypes of Native American cultures and assert their own community values and traditions. Collective singing of tribal songs during powwows and potlatches takes place alongside the creation of new music as musicians strengthen and adapt traditional practices to reflect their contemporary experience. Using their knowledge of traditional styles, Native musicians continue to shape the foundation of popular music, ranging from jazz to heavy metal.

The Library’s holdings include musicians across all geographic regions and includes a distinction for powwow music, which is often performed by intertribal singing groups. The Library holds over 400 recordings of contemporary Native artists and powwow groups from as early as the 1940s. Spanning multiple genres, the collection highlights around 140 record labels, many of which began as small family operations that travelled to homes or community powwows to record singers. Despite these humble beginnings, record companies like Canyon Records and Silverwave Records have achieved international recognition with artists such as R. Carlos Nakai, a Ute/Diné flautist who is popular in both European and American markets. These labels continue to produce music for a diverse audience of Native and non-Native listeners.

This guide follows the regional format of the Encyclopaedia of Native American Music of North America set forth by Elaine Keillor, Timothy Archambault and John M.H. Kelly. The format emphasizes the influence of geography on traditional music practices and highlights the important relationship between Native cultures and their environment. Rather than separating tribes by alphabetical classification, the format reflects the ways in which tribes historically interacted with each other across regional boundaries. Each regional summary draws from current scholarly work that may be found in the bibliography. Other foundational scholarly texts include Beverley Diamond’s Native American Music in Eastern North America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture and Brian Wright McLeod’s Encyclopaedia of Native Music.

Along with each regional summary, the guide features a popular artist who impacted the music industry and their community through music. Each artist’s music may be accessed through the Library’s catalog. The guide also includes a brief history of important record labels – both Native and non-Native owned – that produce Native American musicians, as well as a description of powwow music.

In addition to music produced by tribes of the mainland United States, Polynesian and Hawaiian musicians have their own extensive history with the recording industry. As early as
1905, the Victor Talking Machine Company began recording Aboriginal Polynesian people of the Hawaiian Islands, releasing 53 records the following year. The popularity of Hawaiian music expanded to include artists of Western, Puerto Rican, and Jamaican descent. Genres of “Jawaiian” – Hawaiian and Jamaican reggae – and “Kachi Kachi” music – Puerto Rican style dance music – are still popular today. Consequently, smaller labels such as Tradewinds Records, Music of Polynesia (MOP), and Aku Records began producing their own music for a Hawaiian audience that included artists who identified as state residents or as ethnically Hawaiian. Due to the large scope of this history, we have decided not to include Hawaii within our regions. A brief description of the Hawaiian music industry is included under the Mountain Apple Company entry in the Major Record Labels section.

2019 Junior Fellows Sally Smith and Brianna Gist authored, researched, and organized this research guide, compiling holdings of over 150 Native musicians for the Native American Audio Project. They continue to draw inspiration from Native musicians and are enthusiastic about the growth of the Library’s holdings of Native American music.


Foundational reading:


**Helpful Links:**

- [National Museum of the American Indian resource: Did You Know?](http://nationalmuseumofamericanindians.si.edu/)
  - NMAI discusses terminology and common misconceptions in its FAQs on Native American history and culture.

- [National Museum of the American Indian resource: Native Knowledge 360°](http://nationalmuseumofamericanindians.si.edu/)
  - “Native Knowledge 360° is the National Museum of the American Indian’s national initiative to inspire and promote the improvement of teaching and learning about American Indians.”

- [How to Find Recordings](http://nationalmuseumofamericanindians.si.edu/)
  - How to access recordings using the Library of Congress Online Catalog and the *Recorded Sound Catalog (SONIC)*
Arctic

The Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions encapsulate the vast area between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, from the northern states of Canada to portions of Alaska and the Arctic Circle. Comprised of thousands of miles of tundra, lakes, and islands, this region is home to communities of the Eskimo-Aleut, Northern Athapaskan, and Algonquin language families. Individuals of Inuit heritage are the most populous in Northern Canada, including the Iglulik (Iglulingmiut) and Caribou bands. The Yup’ik Inuit population is also significant in the Alaska portion of the Arctic region. In the Sub-Arctic Region, the Algonquian language family includes groups such as the Cree and Montagnais (Innu) peoples.

Music in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions focuses primarily on the drum and voice. Many songs are exclusively vocal, and drums are traditionally used to supplement songs and dances. While Arctic drums are traditionally made of stretched animal skins over wooden frames, Sub-Arctic drums tend to be smaller in size and often include snare strings or porcupine quills, bird bones, or other percussive sounds. Throat singing or “katajjaq” is a particularly unique style of singing practiced by Inuit communities in which women traditionally engaged in a friendly competition of rhythmic vocal patterns.

The band Sugluk was among the first contemporary groups of Inuit heritage to obtain a large following after its debut rock n’ roll albums in 1975. Since then, artists like JUNO Award Winners Susan Aglukark and Tanya Tagaq, Jerry Alfred, Willie Thrasher, David Campbell, Lawrence Martin, Sikumiut, Morley Loon, Red Cedar, and Lloyd Cheechoo are famous in Canada and in the United States, along with Pamyua, a Yup’ik folk group that showcases Inuit culture through music and dance.

Major Tribes: Aleut; Eskimo-Aleut; Yupik; Inuit; Sallirmiut, Netsilik (Netsilingmiut); Copper (Ulukhatokmiut); Yukon (Inuvialuit); Yup’ik (Cup’ik); Dena’ina (Tanaina); Dane-Zaa; Attikamek; Algonquin; Northern Ojibwa; Eskimo; Tlicho (Ta’ichô)

Search Terms: Cooper Inuit—Music; Athapascan Indians—Music; Inuit—Canada, Northern—Music; Yupik Eskimos—Alaska—Songs and Music; Eskimos—Music;

Featured Artist: Tanya Tagaq

Library’s Holdings: Ilgok by Tanya Tagaq (Song, 2002); Tulugak by Tanya Tagaq (Song, 2014)

Tanya Tagaq is an Inuit throat singer from Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada who gained international recognition for her unique style of music that infuses a centuries-old Inuit tradition of throat singing with punk rock and metal. In her youth, she recalls the horrors of being a
student in the Canadian government’s Residential School System, and in her free time discovered throat singing as a way of reconnecting with her heritage. As a survivor of the system, Tagaq advocates for environmental justice, indigenous rights, and women’s rights, primarily speaking out against the legacy of injustices resulting from the colonial period. In 2014, she won the Polaris Prize for her work in Animism and has received nominations for the Native American Music Awards and the JUNO Awards.

Additional Resources:


Pacific Northwest

The peoples of the Pacific Northwest reside along the coasts of British Columbia, Washington state, and parts of Alaska, Oregon, and Northern California. The region contains over forty language groups including Athapaskan, Salishan, Wakashan, and the linguistically isolated Haida group. Major tribes include the Haida Gwai, Tsimshian, Tutuni, and Snoqualmie, among others. Many of these tribes divide further into clan groupings that identify themselves according to a specific crest. For example, the Tsimshian of northern British Columbia contain clans with killer whale, wolf, raven and eagle crests. Each crest has its own stories and songs that can either be shared with the clan or individually owned. Ownership of clan symbols, including individual images and songs, is rigorously protected and seen as a sign of respect to individual creators.

Traditionally, songs were created in response to a specific event such as a marriage or death ceremony paired with a potlach, a ceremonial feast characterized by acts of gift-giving between hosts and guests. Singing at these feasts allowed for cross-cultural exchange as clans learned new songs and dances through the use of vocables that could be translated across languages. However, in 1884, the Canadian government amended the 1880 Indian Act to ban potlatches, forcing tribal members to celebrate in secret. The Gitxsan village of Gitsegukla openly defied the law in 1945, leading the U.S. Government to eradicate the restrictions in 1951.

Dancing of the Pacific Northwest often depicts the movements of specific animals and details a significant event in the dancer’s life. Traditional instruments include beating logs or planks with batons, and using single-headed drums or suspended box-like wooden drums. Carved shakers were also used and made to represent the animal of the clan’s lineage, such as a raven or eagle.

Today, communities continue to celebrate the potlach through dance and song, especially as museums and institutions return items of cultural significance and religious importance to many tribes. Rodeos and powwows have become popular forms of entertainment, such as the Four Nations Powwow in Lewiston, Idaho, and the All-Indian rodeo sponsored by the Western States Indian Rodeo Association in Oregon.

Major Tribes: Southeastern Alaska – Eyak, Tlingit; Haida Gwai/Alaska; Tsimshian – Nisg’a (Nisgha, Niska), Tsimshian (Smalgyax), Gitxsan (Gitskan); Wakashan-Speaking – Haisla, Wuikinuxv (Oweekeno), Nuxalk (Bella Coola or Coast Salish), Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Kwakw’akw (Kwakiutl), Nu-chah-nulth (Nootka), Makah; Central and Southern Na-Dene – Dakelh, Wet’suwet’en, Tututni; Salishan-Speaking – Sliammon (Comox), Shíshálh (Sechelt), Homalco, Klahoose, Squamish, Sto:lo, Hul’qumi’num Group, Skagit, Northern Straits Salish, Lushootseed speaking Puget Sound Peoples, Klallam, Quinault, Skokomish, Snoqualmie,
Tillamook; Chimakuan Speaking – Quilcute; Pacific Coast Cultures of Penutian Phylum – Yakama, Coos – Lower Umpqua – Siuslaw, Takelma, Confederated Tribes of Siletz

Search Terms: Indians of North America—Northwest, Pacific—Music; Salishan Indians – Music; Skokomish Indians – Music; Snoqualmie Indians – Music

Featured Artist: Billy ThunderKloud and the Chieftones

Library’s Holdings: All Through the Night (1973, Superior Records), Off the Reservation (1974, 20th Century Records), Billy ThunderKloud and the Chieftones (1975, 20th Century Records); Where Do I Begin to Tell a Story (1976, Superior Records)

Formed in 1964, Billy ThunderKloud and the Chieftones consisted of Jack Wolf, Barry Littlestar, Richard Grayowl, and Billy ThunderKloud. They were known as “Canada’s All-Indian Band.” Billy grew up in the village of Kispiox, British Columbia and was a hereditary frog clan chief, Chief Dau-Hkanswu, of the Gitksan tribe. He attended the Indian Residential School in Edmonton, Alberta where he met the three other Chieftones. Their first two singles “Rang Dang Doo” and “Mona Lisa” launched their career, and led to their signing with a series of labels between 1965 and 1968. Ultimately, 20th Century Records signed them in 1974 and two years later, the band made the Billboard Country Chart for their releases “Indian Nation” and “Try a Little Tenderness.” The highlight of their career came when they performed at Richard Nixon’s second Inaugural Ball in 1973. The following year, Walt Disney gifted Billy with his pet mountain lion. Their albums include All Through the Night (1973 Superior Records), Off the Reservation (1974 20th Century Records), Billy ThunderKloud and the Chieftones (1975 20th Century Records) and Where Do I Begin to Tell a Story (1976 Superior Records).

Additional Holdings:


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Great Plateau

The Great Plateau region occupies parts of Northwestern United States and Southwestern Canada between the Cascades and Rocky Mountains. Major language families include Salishan,
Sahaptin, Kutenai, Modoc, and Klamath. The region is divided into seven areas that are home to the Secwepemc, Okanagan Nation, Kootenai, and Yakama peoples, among many others.

Traditionally, songs represent a way to communicate between the human and natural world. These songs are divided into three categories — personal guardian spirit and curing songs, songs of ancient ancestors, and songs from prophets of the Old One, the Chief of the Dead or Chief of the Land of Souls. Adolescents usually receive protective guardian songs after a ritual of fasting, dancing, and praying, and the guardians will advise them on proper hunting, fishing, and food gathering among other concerns. Songs may also accompany specific events such as the birth of twins, and may honor animals killed through hunting. Additionally, prophets use songs to relay important information regarding spiritual wisdom. Other songs include war songs, “going home” songs after hunting expeditions, or songs that detail birth and death events.

Vocables are used to convey bird and animal sounds, and are usually accompanied by instruments like birch bark drums, basket bottoms, or bark kettles. Cross-cultural exchange greatly influenced musical traditions such as the introduction of horses and Plains riding songs and ghost dance songs preached by the Paiute prophet Wovoka. European religious traditions such as Shaker instruments and hymns were also very influential.

**Major Tribes:**
- **Northern Plateau** — St’át’l’imcets (Stl’atl’imx, Lilooet), Secwepemc (Shuswap), Nlaka’pamux, Tsilhqot’in; **Okanagan** — Senijextee (Lake), SylIx/Okanagan (Nselxçin, Nespelem, Sanpoil), Shuyelpee or Colville, Wenatchee, Columbia; **Kutenai** – Ktunaxa (Kutenai, Kootenay, Kootenai);
- **Middle Columbia River** – Salish (Flathead), Kalispel (Pen d’Orielle), Schitsu’umsh (Skitswish, Coeur d’Alene); **Eastern Sahaptins** – Nimi’ipuu, Nimipu (Nez Percé);
- **Northern Oregon** – Umatilla (Umatilla-Tenino, Cayuse, Columbia River Sahaptin, Warm Springs, Celilo), Yakama (Klickitat, Yakima), Molale (Molalla, Molala); **Great Basin Influenced Cultures** – Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin

**Search Terms:** Indians of North America--Northwest, Pacific—Music; Indians of North America – Oregon – Music; Umatilla Indians – Music

**Featured Artist:** Mildred Bailey

**Library’s Holdings:** From the Land of Sky Blue Water (1938, Vocalion); They Can’t Take That Away From Me (1940, Columbia); With You On My Mind (1935, Decca)

Born in 1903 in Tekoa, Washington, Mildred Bailey (née Rinker) frequently visited family on the Coeur d’Alene reservation where she developed a strong connection to traditional music and Catholic Indian hymns that influenced her throughout her career. Along with her brother and friend, Bing Crosby, Bailey moved to Los Angeles in the early 1920s and began performing in speakeasies. She gained popularity when she became the first female singer to perform with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and one of the first women to professionally sing with an orchestra. She is known as the “Rocking Chair Lady” after her hit song written by Hoagy Carmichael. She recorded with renowned labels such as Brunswick Records, Decca Records, Parlophone Records, and Vocalion Records. Bailey later went on to host her own radio show, The Mildred Bailey Show, between 1944 and 1945. Her appearances on NBC may be found in Recorded Sound’s NBC
collection. She also appeared on CBS and the radio shows of George Jessel and Willard Robison. Her music has influenced countless musicians including singer Tony Bennett, and she is credited with discovering Billie Holiday and helping Frank Sinatra in his early career.

**Additional Holdings:**


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**California**

The modern state of California is home to a widely populated and diverse group of indigenous peoples. At the time of European contact, there were estimated between 300 and 600 tribes usually grouped under one common name. These groups share a common language group and are further divided into tribelets. Major language families include Algonquian, Athapaskan, Hokan, Penutian, Uto-Aztecan and Yukian. Tribes of the Northwest, such as the Yurok and Karuk, celebrate the fishing cycle through dances such as the White Deerskin Dance and the Jump Dance. Dancers arrive to the dancing area using vocables, and their movements continue throughout a thirty minute song cycle. Traditional instruments include deer toe rattles, shells, clapsticks, whistles, and flutes, along with rattles made out of butterfly cocoons and white stone.

The Ajumawi-Atsugewi Nation, which consists of eleven bands such as the Shasta and Yana bands, use songs to convey medicinal characteristics of plants as well as community stories. In North Central California, the loss of land and colonial forces resulted in the disruption of traditional music practices. Revitalization movements, however, allowed groups to once again celebrate their culture including important ceremonies such as the Coming-of-Age Ceremony of the Winnemen Wintu in 2006 – a ceremony not practiced since the early 1900s.

For the tribes of the San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada, songs may accompany ceremonies or work activities. The male puberty ceremony includes a ritual in which boys drink crushed Datura root in order to receive a vision from a guardian spirit. More personal songs like
mourning or power songs are owned by individuals. Other groups, like those living on the Central Coast, were heavily influenced by the introduction of Spanish culture and Catholic religious traditions. Catholic missions often forced tribes to abandon their music in favor of European religious hymns and Western instruments. The blending of the two traditions have become a unique component of contemporary music.

Indigenous Latino:

In accordance with the terminology used by the *Encyclopedia of Native American Music of North America*, this library guide uses the term “Indigenous Latino” to refer to artists who claim Latino and/or Indigenous heritage. According to the editors, Indigenous Latino reflects an all-encompassing category of individuals who trace their heritage to indigenous communities throughout Mexico, Central and South America, in addition to their European ancestry. Other scholars, such as Brian Wright-McLeod in *The Encyclopedia of Native Music: More Than a Century of Recordings*, use the term “Chicano” to refer to artists of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry. However, some musicians who use Chicano to identify their ancestry may not claim any Indigenous heritage. In order to promote clarity, this guide uses “Indigenous Latino” to refer to musicians of mixed ancestry cited in both encyclopedias. Additionally, the guide includes these artists within the California region as many of the leading bands and record labels operate within the Los Angeles and California metropolitan area.

Major Tribes: Northwestern Cultures – Tolowa/Taa-laaw-wa Dee-Ni’ (Hawwut), Yurok/Oohi (Olekwo’l), Karuk/Karok, Hupa/Natłnoo-kwâ, Chimariko, Chilula, Whilkut, Wiyot, Nongatil, Mattole, Sinkyon, Lassik, Wailakil; Northeastern Cultures – Ajumawi – Atsugewi Nation, Shasta, Yana; North-Central Cultures – Maidu, Wintun, Cahto/Kato, Pomo, Wappo, Miwok/Mi-Wuk/Me-Wuk; San Joaquin Valley/Sierra Nevada Cultures – Yokuts, Mono/Monache, Tubatulabal/Bahkanapul/Kern River, Kawaiisu/Mu/Notche/Cobijin/Noo-a; Central Coast Cultures – Marin Miwok/Miwuk/Mi-wik/Me-wuk, Ohlone/Costanoan/Esselen, Salinan, Chumash, Kitamura, Tataviam/Fernandeño – Southern California Cultures – Serrano/Vanyume/Kitanemuk, Tongva (Gabrielino), Acjachemen (Juaneño), Luiseño, Cahuilla, Cupeño, Kumeyaay/Kamia/Kumiai/Diegueño/Tipaai

Search Terms: Indians of North America – California – Music; Yurok Indians – Music; Tolowa Indians – Music

Featured Artist: Chuck Billy of Testament


Born in 1962, Chuck Billy has both Pomo and Mexican ancestry. He often traveled to the Pomo reservation in Hopeland, California with his father who grew up there as one of thirteen kids. Growing up as a Native American in the suburbs of California, Billy often felt like an outsider and relished the freedom he felt when visiting his Pomo family. At the same time, he recognized the economic hardship that existed before the tribe established their own casino, the Sho-Ka-Wah Casino. Billy found freedom through music and auditioned for the band Legacy,
which became Testament in 1987. Their albums include Legacy (1987 Megaforce Worldwide), The New Order (1988 Megatone), The Gathering (1999 USG Records) and Brotherhood of the Snake (2016 Nuclear Blast). Billy’s trips to the reservation informed his song, “Native Blood” which he was inspired to write in order to give a voice to his community, saying “I wrote it - because I'm a Native American - about what I saw on our reservation as a kid, but the song really is about anywhere in the world in any culture that has indigenous people. I feel like they’re the underdog who doesn't really have a voice, but has an opinion, but either doesn't say it or they say it and nobody's listening” (Interview with Greg Prato, Songfacts). In 2013, the California State Assembly honored Billy for his influence within the Native American community and his district.

Additional Holdings:


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Great Basin

The Great Basin covers the western mountain region of the United States including Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, eastern Oregon, and parts of northern California, Arizona,
and New Mexico. Native cultures in this region include the Paiute, Ute, Shoshoni, and Neme (Newe) peoples who have lived among the forests of the Humboldt, Wasatch, and Rocky Mountain Ranges for generations. Fishing, hunting, and tree-nut gathering are staples of the economy, and many communities in the area are speakers of Numic languages within the Uto-Aztecan language family.

Music of the Great Basin has traditionally been used for various social events such as the ceremony for a girl’s arrival to womanhood and in short passages of storytelling. The Great Basin is famous for its circle and round dances, and music is situated at the center of these gatherings. The Ghost Dance Movement began in the 1860s and was popularized by Wovoka, a Paiute shaman, who inspired communities in the region by emphasizing the restoration and renaissance of traditional ways through the ghost dance. The Basin’s simple styles of music historically followed a paired phrase system with a small melodic range that repeated phrases throughout the song. Popular instruments in the Great Basin include shakers made of rawhide or butterfly cocoons, rawhide bass drums, hand drums, willow flutes, external duct flutes, and the mouth bow.

Contemporary music is rooted in the ghost dance, circle dance, Forty-Niners Dance, and round dance, along with influences from the Western music of Mormon missionaries, Christian hymns, cowboys, and other country music. Notable artists include Redbone (Yaqui/Shoshoni), which reached no. 5 on the U.S. Billboard with their hit single, “Come and Get Your Love”, and R. Carlos Nakai (Ute/Diné), a flautist whose albums Canyon Trilogy (1989) and Feather, Stone and Light (1995) propelled him to international fame. Other notable artists include rap group Without Reservation (Paiute), Beverly & Earl Crum (Western Shoshoni), Judy Trejo (Paiute), Edward Beat Box “Red Ute”, and Arvel Bird (Southern Paiute).

Major Tribes: Shoshoni; Ute; Paiute; Newe; Neme; Bannock; Washo; Uto-Aztecan; Numa

Search Terms: Shoshoni Indians—Music; Paiute Indians—Music; Ute Indians—Music; Indians of North America—Great Basin

Featured artist: Judy Trejo

Library’s Holdings: Circle Dance Songs of the Paiute (1997, Canyon Records)

Judy Sam Trejo was a singer, storyteller, educator and member of the Walker River Paiute tribe in northern Nevada. She was born in Alturas, CA and received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in counseling from the College of Idaho (Albertson College of Idaho). Trejo was vital to the preservation of the Numu language and consulted with numerous communities to record their heritage through music. Her album Circle Dance Songs of the Paiute (1997) highlights traditional circle dance, flag dance, and pine-nut songs, and is sung with her daughters Delgadina and Christina Rodriguez. In 2000, her second album Stick Game Songs of the Paiute was awarded best historical recording at the Native American Music Awards. Although she passed away in 2002, she is survived by her daughters and her people.
Other sources:
http://www.wisdomoftheelders.org/judy-trejo/

Additional resources:


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**Southwest**

Stretching from the states of Arizona and New Mexico to southern parts of Colorado and Utah, the Southwest region is home to the Yuman/Quechan, Diné-Navajo, Diné-Apache, Yaqui, and multiple Puebloan Peoples such as the Hopi and Tewa peoples, among many others. Most Southwestern languages stem from the Uto-Aztecan family group, although the Navajo and Apache languages belong to the Athapaskan family. Among the Pueblo, religious ceremonies contain a strong musical element as *katsina* ceremonies emphasize a particular song for each animal or corn dance. Similarly, the Navajo and Apache utilize music in their ceremonial life. The Navajo *Blessingway* ceremonies are especially prominent and comprise a set of eight songs each sung to the spirit world in hopes of prosperity. Among the Apache, the female puberty ceremony - sometimes referred to as the Sunrise Dance – is still a central and common ceremony celebrated on the reservation. Other secular songs of the Diné, which means “The People,” include the Squaw and Yeibichai Dance.

European musical influence is also present the region as many tribes were actively colonized by Spanish missions and government. Consequently, tribes adopted Western instruments such as the snare drum and fiddle and incorporated them into their traditions. Waila music or Chicken Scratch was developed by the O’odham people in the 1700s and represents this unique blend of traditions.
Canyon Records, American Indian Sound Chiefs, and Indian House were among the first Native-owned labels to record and distribute Southwest Native music. Today, Canyon and other small labels, like Cool Runnings Music, continue to produce artists in the region. Genres range from traditional folk to country, rock, reggae, and hip-hop. Major artists include Edward Lee Natay, Stevie Salas, and XIT.

**Major Tribes:** Yuman/Quechan (Mohave/Mojave, Cocopa, Yuma), Diné – Navajo, Diné – Apache, Pueblo cultures (Hopi, Tewa – other various distinctions), Yavapi, Pai, Akimel O’odham (Pima), Tohono O’odham (Papago), Maricopa (Popatsje), Yaqui (Pascua)

**Search Terms:** Apache-Indians Music; Indians of North America – Arizona – Music; Chicken Scratch Music; Indians of North America--New Mexico; Pueblo Indians--Music.

**Featured Artist:** XIT

**Library’s Holdings:** *The Plight of the Redman* (1972, Rare Earth Records); *Silent Warrior; Relocation* (1977, Canyon Records)

Formed in 1968, XIT - pronounced “exit” and referring to the “Crossing of the Tribes” - was the first Indigenous rock band. In 1970, the band signed to Rare Earth Records, a subsidiary of Motown Records, and originally consisted of Michael Martin, Leeja Herrera, Jomaz Suazo, R.C. Garriss, and Tom Bee. Their first two albums, *The Plight of the Redman* (1972, Rare Earth Records) and *Silent Warrior* (1973, Rare Earth Records), were recorded in response to the activism of the American Indian Rights Movement. These albums explore the themes of Native American sovereignty and cultural recognition. Released during the Occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, *Silent Warrior* was met with mainstream resistance and Motown refused to release another “political album.” Consequently, XIT released their next album, *Relocation*, under Canyon Records in 1977. In 1979, Tom Bee went on to create his own label named SOAR (Sound of America Records) that continues to produce Native American artists and music. XIT re-released their four original albums and a new live through SOAR. Today, former members A Michael Martinez, R.C. Garriss, Mac Suazo, and Lee Herrera, continue to make music as the OZ Boyz.

**Additional Holdings**


Great Plains

The Great Plains region spans the territory from northern Texas to the Saskatchewan River Valley in southern Canada, between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River Valley. Divided into the Prairies and the High Plains, the region is home to many tribes who either originated there or were relocated to the area as a result of colonization. Some of these nations include the Pawnee, Omaha, and Quapaw of the Prairies who relied on both hunting and horticulture to support their economy. The Sioux (which includes the Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and Nakoda), Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Plains Cree, Plains Ojibwa, and many other tribes of the High Plains were known for their success as nomadic buffalo hunters.

Music of the Great Plains is primarily vocal with songs that traditionally accompany a host of events such as hunting, government procedures, and social gatherings. The Métis people of mixed French and Native (Ojibwa, Cree) heritage established a type of fiddle music that borrows from a blend of traditional native melodies, Scottish and English square dances, round dances, and jigs. Songs are central to religious rituals in the central plains such as the Sun Dance (Rain or Thirsting Dance). In the mid-1850s, the American and Canadian governments banned the Sun Dance Ceremony, and during the ban, traditional music was kept alive through the non-religious grass dance. Canada eventually lifted the law in 1951, and the U.S. Government followed suit in 1978 when it passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, allowing Native groups to freely practice their religious beliefs. The popularity of the grass-dance and other music continues today in powwow culture with the powwow drum and through dance competitions.
Powwow drum music is a staple of contemporary music from the Great Plains and is largely produced at inter-tribal gatherings and other social settings. Popular genres of Plains music include country music with artists such as **Buddy Red Bow** (Lakota-Sioux), and rock music, led by trailblazers like **Buffy Sainte-Marie** (Cree First Nations) and **XIT** with lead singer **Tom Bee** (Dakota). After touring with singers like Eric Clapton and John Lennon, **Jesse Ed Davis III** (Kiowa & Comanche) became one of the most famous guitarists to hit the pop scene. Other influential artists include flautist **Kevin Locke** (Lakota Sioux) and Rap & Hip-hop group **Robby Bee & Boyz from the Rez** (Dakota).

**Major Tribes:** Métis; Plains Cree; Plains Ojibwe, Salteaux, Chippewa; Blackfoot Confederacy, Piikani, Blackfeet, Blood; Lakota; Sioux, Dakota Sioux, Lakota Sioux, Nakota, Nakoda; Crow; Cheyenne; Omaha; Pawnee; Arapaho; Kiowa; Osage; Quapaw; Comanche; Wichita; Tonkawa; Eastern Diné-Apache; Kichai; Gros Ventre; Arikara; Mandan; Hidatsa; Ponca; Iowa; Otoe; Missouri; Kansa; Kitsai; Assiniboine; Stoney; Sarcee; Taos

**Search Terms:** Cheyenne Indians—Music; Indians of North America—Great Plains—Music; Dakota Indians—Music; Songs, Dakota; Cree Indians—Music; Indians of North America—Oklahoma—Music; Indians of North America—Alberta—Music; Lakota Indians--Music; Songs, Lakota; Comanche Indians—Music; Kiowa Indians—Music; Tonkawa Indians—Music; Taos Indians-Music

**Featured Artist:** Buddy Red Bow

**Library’s Holdings:** *Journey to the Spirit World* (1983, Tatanka Records); *Black Hills Dreamer* (1991, Tatanka Records)

**Warfield Richards “Buddy” Red Bow** was a country vocalist and guitarist of Lakota heritage from Pine Ridge, South Dakota. As a child, he was adopted by a couple on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and grew up learning western music. After enlisting in the Marines and returning from service in the Vietnam War, Red Bow pursued a career in music and recorded his first song in 1976 on Mr. Dog Music. From there, his career blossomed and he released hit albums such as *Journey to the Spirit World* (1983, Tatanka Records) and *Black Hills Dreamer* (1991, Tatanka Records) which infused country, folk, and protest with his activism in the Red Power Movement. He passed away in 1993 and was inducted into the Native American Music Hall of Fame in 1998.

**Additional resources:**

Northeast

The Northeast region encompasses the area between the lower Great Lakes and the Atlantic seaboard, from coastal North Carolina to Nova Scotia. It is home to a host of Native American heritages, principally the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) peoples. The Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Mohawk, and Tuscarora Nations formed a powerful confederacy known as the Six Nations, which became an influential actor in the St. Lawrence River lowlands and beyond. The Six Nations are also referred to as the Haudenosaunee meaning “People of the Longhouse” and as Iroquois by the French. The Anishinaabe people include the Chippewa, Ojibwe, and Salteaux Nations who have historically been concentrated around the Great Lakes.

Music in the Northeast region was traditionally used to accompany hunting, and it included a variety of percussive instruments such as rattles, large drums, and hand-held drums. The Mi’kmaq people are recognized for their instrument, the ji’kmaq, which is a “clacking” stick made of soft wood. Europeans introduced the violin and brass instruments to the area, and these were used alongside existing woodwinds such as the end-blown flute. Songs were commonly sung in dialects of the two dominant regional languages, Iroquoian and Algonquian, and are still sung today.

Contemporary Native music of the Northeast has branched out to cover a variety of genres and music disciplines, and artists have leveraged their heritage to inspire a new generation of music. Os-ke-non-ton Louie Deer, a chief and healer for the Mohawk, was among the first vocalists to distribute his music on a national scale. Guitarist Link Wray (Shawnee) also achieved international recognition for his song “Rumble” which made him a pioneer of rock music. Robbie Robertson (Mohawk), Joanne Shenandoah (Oneida), and Keith Secola (Anishinaabe) are also significant artists who have diversified the music industry and become famous around the world.
Major Tribes: Anishinaabe (Anishinabe), Chippewa, Ojibwe, Ojibwa, Saulteurs; Mamaceqtaw, Menominee; Iroquois; Winnebago, Ho-Chunk; Fox, Mesquakie; Miami; Illini; Bode’wadm, Potawatomi, Nishnabek; Shawnee, Savannah, Sewanee; Odawa, Ottawa; Algonquin; Kamienkehaka, Mohawk; Oneida; Onondaga; Powhatan, Powhaton; Tuscarora; Lumbee; Mi’kmaq, Mikmak; Passamaquoddy; Pequot

Search Terms: Songs, Ojibwa; Menominee--Indians Music; Iroquois Indians--Music; Mohawk Indians—Music; Passamaquoddy Indians—Music; Songs, Passamaquoddy; Oneida Indians—Music; Onondaga Indians—Music; Potawatomi Indians—Music

Featured Artist: Joanne Shenandoah (Oneida)

Library’s Holdings: Matriarch (1996, SilverWave); Covenant (2003, SilverWave)

Joanne Shenandoah-Tekalihwakhwa is a Grammy Award-Winning acoustic guitarist, vocalist, and composer of Oneida heritage from upstate New York. Considered a “national and local vocal treasure” by Syracuse University, Shenandoah infuses songs from her Iroquois heritage with contemporary themes and is an ardent humanitarian and peace advocate through the Hiawatha Institute for Indigenous Knowledge, a non-profit organization on which she sits as a board member. She has had the privilege of performing for individuals like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Additional reading:


Southeast

The cultures of the Southeast, traditionally living in the area between the Carolinas to the Mississippi River, have a complex relationship with the forces of colonialism and Western trade – influences that greatly impacted the region’s musical traditions. Southeastern language families range from the Muskogean group to the Caddoan language spoken by Caddo tribes. The Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole tribes belong to the Muskogean family, whereas other tribes such as the Cherokee and Tuscarora belong to the Iroquoian group. Other language families include Algonquian (Pamunkey, Mataponi) and Siouan (Biloxi, Catawba).

Music represents the fundamental component of Southeastern music with most music traditions emphasizing continuous vocal movements between high and low pitches. Singers usually begin and end with shouts or yells consisting mainly of vocables or non-translatable sounds.
Such songs also bring accompanying dances whose names are inspired by animals such as the Garfish Dance or Horned-Owl Dance among the Yaqui and the Creek. Much of Southeastern music resembles African traditions in that men and women may sing the same series of notes in complementary octaves, suggesting a blending of the two traditions during early colonialism. Additionally, Western music traditions such as Methodist and Baptist hymns greatly influenced post-contact music.

The United States policy of removal began with the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed by the Choctaw Nation. Similar treaties were made with the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole. The Trail of Tears has now come to represent the series of relocations and removals of Southeastern tribes by the Federal government.

Although relocation disrupted many traditional ceremonial and music customs, tribes continue to emphasize the vitality of their cultural practices. Today, traditional gatherings continue which include stickball games, communal dances, and powwows. For example, the Creek continue to partake in the annual Green Corn ceremony that includes a series of stomp dances among other purification rites, feasts, and speeches. In the 1960s, the number of powwows in the region increased due to the dismantling of Indian schools, and became a way to celebrate tribal heritage and community identity. One of the most popular powwows is the annual Thanksgiving Homecoming Powwow held by the Poarch Creek band of Alabama.

Notable Southeastern recording artists include Joy Harjo (Muskoke/Creek), Pura Fé (Tuscarora & Taino), rapper Shadowyze (Cherokee), and Ulali, an all-female group consisting of Pura Fé, Soni Moreno (Yaqui, Apache, and Mayan), and Jennifer Kreisberg (Tuscarora).

**Major Tribes:** Rappahannock, Mattaponi, Pamunkey, Chickahominy, Tuscarora, Haliwa-Saponi, Cherokee (Aniyun-wiya, Tsa-la-gi), Coharie, Lumbee, Catawba, Chickasaw, Alibamu, Biloxi, Creek (Muscogee), Yuchi, Caddo, Choctaw, Tunica-Biloxi, Coushatta, Chitimacha, Houma, Apalachee, Seminole, Miccousukee

**Search Terms:** Creek Indians—Music; Lumbee Indians – Music; Indians of North America – Music; Seminole Indians – Music; Yuchi Indians – Music

**Featured Artist:** Pura Fé

**Library’s Holdings:** *Ulali* (1993), *Hold the Rain* (2008 Dixiefrog Records, Music Maker)

Born and raised in New York City, Pura Fé (Antonia “Toni” Crescioni) is a singer-songwriter of Tuscarora and Taino heritage. She studied as a professional dancer and performed on Broadway. As a singer, she started in the Mercer Ellington Orchestra and later taught herself the slide guitar. She formed the group Ulali, named after the Tuscarora word for “wood-thrush” with her cousin, Jennifer Kreisberg (Tuscarora), and Soni Moreno (Mayan/ Apache/Yaqui). Originally touring with Robbie Robertson in his Red Road Ensemble, Ulali blends the musical traditions of jazz, gospel, soul, blues, and Southeastern Native traditions in order to explore the intersections between Native American and African-American music. Their albums include *Makh Jchi* (1996 Corn, Beans, Squash Music), *In the Spirit, Ulali* (1993), and *Corn Beans and Squash*. Pura Fé’s solo albums include *Follow Your Heart’s Desire* (2004 Music Maker), *Hold*
the Rain  (2008 Dixiefrog Records, Music Maker), Sacred Seed  (2015 Nueva Onda Records),
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Powwow

“Whether as social, cultural, psychological, economic, or political statements, powwows have
become one of the most powerful expressions of identity in the contemporary Indian world.”

– Clyde Ellis (“The Sound of Drums Will Revive Them” in Powwow)

Powwows (pow wows, pow-wows) consist of community gatherings during which songs
and dances are performed, exchanged, and celebrated as rich expressions of heritage and
tradition. The term “powwow” originates from the Naragansett words “pau wau” meaning
“he/she dreams,” and originally referred to healing and medicine men. Inter-tribal powwows date
back to the late 19th century and were based on ceremonial songs and dances performed by elders
and centered around the Drum. After a period during which they were banned by the U.S.
Government, powwows re-emerged in the 1930s and 40s in a revival of a more secularized
powwow culture so that Native communities could socialize and preserve their heritages.

In the 1950s, the first modern powwows became a means to honor World War II veterans
and to unite urban communities of Natives relocated from their reservations. Powwows became a
type of homecoming that publicly reinforced the importance of rituals, dances, goods, and Native
culture. The traditional powwows of the Northern and Southern Plains regions represent the
foundation for the modern powwow. Later on, contests and competitions were introduced to the powwow and to this day, many are sponsored by a host of organizations and clubs that offer cash prizes. Modern powwows center on the drum with the large Drum, also known as the Big Drum or powwow Drum, providing the music for the whole event. Dancers, musicians, and artists compete in a broad range of activities during the typical weekend-long celebration as they sing, eat, and dance together.

Powwow dancers and singers differentiate themselves between northern and southern styles. Northern style powwows originated among tribes living in the Northern Great Plains and the Great Lakes. They begin with the Grand Entry, or the first song, in which flag bearers, head dancers, important community members, and veterans enter into the arena from the east. First, the men compete in the categories of traditional, grass, and fancy categories, followed by the women who compete in the traditional, fancy shawl, and jingle dress competitions. Younger age groups are the last to compete. Northern powwow music is often characterized by high-pitched singing and fast, increasing tempos.

Southern style powwow music originated among the peoples of the Southern Plains, including Oklahoma and Kansas. The Drum is the center of the powwow, but the tempo varies by song. Key components of the Southern powwow include a grand entry, round dancing, intertribal dancing, princess contests, and hoop dances. The event contains six different dance categories: for the men - traditional, grass, and fancy dances - and for the women - traditional, butterfly, and jingle dances. Southern style powwow music is often characterized by low-pitched singing.

Powwows are identified as either traditional or competition, and many are differentiated into northern and southern styles of song and dance. The largest powwows in the United States include the Gathering of Nations Powwow in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Intertribal Indian Club of Tulsa (IICOT) Powwow of Champions in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Red Earth Powwow in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and the Denver March Powwow in Denver, Colorado.

**Search terms:** Powwow; Powwow songs; pow wow; pow-wow; war dance; grass dance; round dance; intertribal; sun dance; snake dance; fancy dancing; gourd dance; Forty-nine dance; Omaha dance; rabbit dance; powwow songs; Northern Plains; Southern Plains; Great Plains


**Additional Resources:**

Major Record Labels

The Native American recording industry within the United States began in the 1940s with the establishment of Tom Tom Records by Manuel Archuleta and American Indian Soundchiefs by Reverend Linn Pauahty. Their methods of recording Native music for Native audiences continue to influence contemporary Native labels such as Indian House, Canyon Records and Sound of America Records (SOAR). Early recordings captured of singers at home or on the powwow circuit were sold primarily as 78s out of the backs of cars. The advent of LPs and cassettes allowed labels to reach to audiences outside of Native communities. Canadian labels like Sunshine Records, Arbor Records, and Silverwave Records are successful labels that broadened their music for a host of audiences. The state of Hawaii has its own diverse recording history of both Native Hawaiian and Hawaiian-influenced music, including the popular label Mountain Apple Company.

Tom Tom Records – 1940s

Manuel Archuleta, whose Pueblo name is Tse-we Ant-yen, began Tom Tom Records while working at the Albuquerque Indian School in the early 1940s. His first recordings were of the school’s singers and he later released them as 78s under the Tom Tom label. He also released two LP albums entitled Indian Chants – Vols. 1 and 2 which established his popularity among Native and non-Native communities of the Southwest. His recordings include “Squaw Dance Song” of the Navajo and two songs of the Laguna Pueblo – “The Corngrinding Song” and “The Harvest.” Archuleta, his wife and three daughters, performed in an unsuccessful group called the Tom Tom Family Singers. Tom Tom no longer produces music.

American Indian Soundchiefs – 1940s

Established by Reverend Linn Pauahty, a Kiowa Methodist Minister in Oklahoma, American Indian Soundchiefs began in the mid-1940s and operated alongside Tom Tom Records as one of the first Native owned record labels. Pauahty first recorded traditional tribal church hymns of communities living in Oklahoma and before expanding to include other tribal music.
First published on 78s and later transferred to LPs, Soundchief records were predominately produced for and distributed within a Native audience.

According to Tony Isaacs, founder and owner of Indian House Records, Pauahty’s style of recording represents a unique approach as he understood exactly what his Native American customers wanted. Rather than recording old songs and combining them with other song types, Pauahty emphasized an in-depth approach that gathered new songs of a single genre and tribe into one recording. His approach reflects the manner in which many Native communities wish to listen to and perform their music. Today, most major Native American record labels use his approach when producing and marketing their music. Indian House Records acquired and re-released many of the Soundchiefs recordings as well as published previously unreleased recordings on cassette. American Indian Soundchiefs is also referred to as Sound Chief Enterprises, Sound Chief Singers, and/or American Indian Soundmaster. American Indian Soundchiefs no longer produces music.

Canyon Records – 1951 to present

Ray Boley of Canyon Films began recording Native American music after hearing Natay, an accomplished Navajo singer, perform for him and a friend. Boley and Natay went onto record Canyon Records’ first album, Natay, Navajo Singer, in 1951 which included Navajo, Hopi, Kiowa, Tewa, Zuni, and Pueblo songs. Natay’s original album art provides Canyon with its signature drum logo. Canyon began recording Native music for a non-Native audience but later became extremely popular within Native communities. Soon, Boley expanded his commercial recordings beyond the Navajo nation to include other Southwestern tribes. Beginning in the 50s and 60s, Canyon transferred its 78s and 45s onto LPs. Robert Doyle purchased Canyon Records in 1992 and the label continues to exist as the largest producer of Native American music with over 200 artists. Canyon also continues to reissue music produced under smaller labels. The Recorded Sound Section holds a variety of printed Canyon catalogs.

Taos Recordings – 1961

“Taos Recordings and Publications is a non-profit corporation formed in 1961 to record and publish the traditional songs, chants, folk-tales and music that yet survive in Northern New Mexico” – Taos Recordings Catalog, held by the Recorded Sound Section. Taos Recordings no longer produces music.

Indian House Records – 1966 to present

Tony and Ada Isaacs began Indian House Records in Taos, New Mexico with the goal of “filling in the gaps” of commercially produced Native American music. Tony Isaacs’ first records include field recordings of Oglala Lakota singers at a powwow in Flagstaff, Arizona. Later, he and his wife began producing LPs of studio-recorded Native music that were later rereleased as cassettes and CDs of over 150 sessions. Like Rev. Pauahty, Isaacs utilizes an in-depth approach to produce Native music in order to explore the nuances of a particular type of music from a specific tribe. Tony Isaacs has written essays about the early history of the Native
American recording industry and the origins of Native Music. They may be found on the Indian House website and in the bibliography of this guide.

**Indian Records, Inc. – 1968 to present**

Oscar Humphries started Indian Records, Inc, as a Native American supply store called Cheyenne Indian Village. Humphries detailed his first recording experience, saying “I bought our first reel-to-reel recorder and traveled to Lame Deer, Montana to find a Northern Cheyenne friend of mine. He agreed to let me record his group and we made our first recording on June 22, 1968 in his living room. It took the entire night to make that first album and the sun was coming up over the mountains when we finished.” Today, they offer their LP and cassette recordings on CD and digital download.

**Sunshine Records – 1972 to present**

Non-native Ness Michaels established Sunshine Records in 1972 and began producing a range of recordings that included Métis and Ukrainian fiddle music, Native and non-Native rock, folk and country. Today, Sunshine continues to produce Native music, including a substantial portion of powwow music. Sunshine is based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

**Mountain Apple Company – 1974 to present**

Mountain Apple Company was started in 1974 by Jon De Mello, the son of Jack De Mello who established the label Music of Polynesia (MOP). Jon’s first recordings included albums of the Brothers Cazimero and local comedians. Today, Mountain Apple continues to produce Hawaiian and Polynesian music with artists such as Israel “IZ” Kamakawiwo’ole (N dis Life, Alone in IZ World), Makua Rothman (Soundwave), and Kuanna Torres Kahele. The Library also holds an extensive collection of other Hawaiian labels such as Poki Records, ‘Ohe Records, 49th State Hawaii Records, and Kahale Music. For more information about the history of Hawaiian music and its recording industry, consult George S. Kanahele’s encyclopedia, Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History.

**Sound of America Records (SOAR) – 1979 to present**

Tom Bee (Dakota), former lyricist of XIT, founded Sound of America Records (SOAR) in 1979 to provide Native American artists a platform through which they could distribute their music to a mainstream audience. As an artist, producer, and writer for Motown Records, Bee learned the ins and outs of the recording industry, providing hit songs for The Jackson 5, Smokey Robinson, and Michael Edward Campbell. After his departure from Motown, Bee created Souled Out, a small label focusing on the rhythm and blues, which included recordings that Bee sold out of his own car. He later created SOAR after the financial success of his song “Red Hot,” a dance single for Taka Boom. SOAR produces music for over two hundred artists and includes several subsidiaries, such as Warrior which focuses on rap and rock, and Dakotah which focuses on spoken-word and children’s music. Bee also successfully lobbied the National Academy of Recording Artists to include a category for Native American music, and received the inaugural Grammy as producer for A Gathering of Nations Pow-Wow.
Tatanka Records – 1980s

Named for the Oglala Sioux word for “buffalo,” Tatanka Records began recording and releasing Native American music sometime in the early 1980s. Their first release was *Journey to the Spirit World* by Buddy Red Bow (Oglala Sioux), a Sun Dance Chief and actor. Other recordings include the album *Fools Crow* by Leonard Fools Crow. The Recorded Sound Division holds a physical copy of their first catalog. Tatanka Records no longer produces music.

High Star Productions – 1986 to present

Howard P. Bad Hand and John D. Pruitt established High Star Productions in 1986 with the goal of exposing Native American music to a wider audience.

Silverwave – 1986 to present

Founded in Boulder, Colorado, Silverwave Records began producing new age and jazz music for a wider audience in 1986. Their catalog expanded with the introduction of contemporary Native American Music in 1990. Their first featured Native American artist was flautist R. Carlos Nakai who collaborated with Peter Krater on two albums, *Migration* and *How the West Was Lost*. Today, Silverwave produces other Native artists including Joanne Shenandoah, Mary Youngblood, and Robert Mirabal.

Arbor Records – 1991 to present

Brandon Friesen, a former sound engineer of Sunshine Records, established Arbor Records in 1991. Friesen, a non-Native who recognized the immense popularity of powwow music within the Native community, began recording powwow artists for Sunshine. Throughout his time at Sunshine, he produced over 90 different powwow recordings. In the fall of 1998, he began his own recording studio, Studio 11 which became the affiliate studio of Arbor Records.

Cool Runnings – 1991 to present

Cool Runnings began as a traveling business in 1991 that sold CDs of Native American music during powwows. Today, they operate their own storefront in Window Rock, Arizona, specializing in music production, herbs, powwow items, t-shirts and other goods. Their first recording was “Dineh Prayer Songs” by Blackhorse, recorded in 1998. Since then, they have expanded their catalog to include over 150 recordings of Native American Church songs, Round Dance songs, and other contemporary and Tribal music. Their artists include Gerald Primeaux and Pauline M. Begay.

Makoché Studios – 1992 to present

Opening in 1992, Makoché Studios derives its name from the Lakota word for earth, *maka*. Along with recording and producing Native and non-Native artists, Makoché also provides video editing, post-production services, and audio/video restoration. One major restoration project included restoring over 1500 audio cassette recordings for the Mandan, Hidasta, and Arikara Tribes.
Sweet Grass Records – 1993 to present

Based in Regina, Saskatchewan, Ted (Cree) and Darlene Whitecalf established Sweet Grass Records in 1993. They exclusively produce powwow and hand drum (round dance) recordings on cassette tapes and CDs.

Turtle Island Music – 1996

Beginning in 1996, George and Kelly Parker established Turtle Island Music in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. They produced contemporary and powwow music. Turtle Island Music no longer produces music.

Wacipi Records – 1998

Established by Curtis Assiniboine (Sioux/Ojibway) in 1998, Wacipi Records produced and distributed only powwow music. Assiniboine was a well-known powwow singer and drum leader. Wacipi Records no longer produces music.

Indian Sounds

Currently, Crazy Crow Trading Post distributes a selection of recordings from this small label. Indian Sounds no longer produces music.

In his book Recording Culture: Powwow Music and the Aboriginal Recording Industry on the Northern Plains (2012), Christopher A. Scales provides the following information regarding smaller labels distributed at and during powwows:

“Wonksheek Records, run by a vendor who travels the Northern circuit; Drumgroups.com, an online record label and distribution company started by George Parker (former co-owner of the now defunct Turtle Island Music) and singers from Walking Buffalo, Blackstone, and Wildhorse; Drumhop Productions, a label started earlier that year by a veteran Grass dancer and professional graphic artist named Rusty Gillette and Everett Moore, a long time singer with the Minneapolis-based intertribal drum group The Boyz; and War Pony Records, another brand-new label owned and operated by none other than my good friend Mike Esquash. All of these new labels were being run by powwow participants” (269).

Other small labels include RezCue Records, Waltiska, Powwow, Tribal Music International, Featherstone and Diné Records.
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