Ethnologies

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Virtual (music) exhibits as critical spaces of community engagement
The diversitycapebreton.ca web portal

Marcia Ostashewski, Eric Favaro, Ely Rosenblum, Patricia Nalepa, Jana Zoric et Jelka Vukobratovic

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Résumé de l'article

Bon nombre d'immigrants venus travailler dans les mines et les aciéries de l'île du Cap-Breton au XIXe et au début du XXe siècles venaient de l'Europe Centrale et de l'Est. Cependant, malgré leur contribution continue à la région, les habitants du Cap-Breton d'ascendance européenne centrale et orientale ont été éclipsés, dans la mémoire et le savoir officiels de l'île, par les communautés écossaises et acadiennes plus familières. Cet article porte sur un projet ayant rassemblé un groupe international et interdisciplinaire de chercheurs vivant au Cap-Breton et à l'étranger, ainsi que de nombreux partenaires des communautés locales, dans le but de combler cette lacune. Les participants avaient pour objectif concret la création d'un portail Internet – diversitycapebreton.ca – ouvrant sur des sphères de matériel muséal numérique, celles-ci venant s'ajouter à un programme de diffusion auprès du grand public. Cet article aborde la façon dont ce projet de conservation numérique a servi (et continue de servir) d'espace collaboratif de re-création continue de communautés et d'histoires.

Virtual (music) exhibits as critical spaces of community engagement
The diversitycapebreton.ca *web portal*

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with

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Cape Breton, Nova Scotia is a craggy island on the Atlantic coast of Canada. Long known for its industrial history, Cape Breton is now challenged by its economy's precipitous decline. However, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, its mines and steel mills flourished. Among the laborers were great numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans who were drawn to the island for work. Despite their continuing contribution to the region, Cape Bretoners of Eastern and Central European descent have been overshadowed in public memory and scholarship by the island's more familiar Scottish and Acadian communities. This article addresses a project through which, working with an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars living locally in Cape Breton and abroad, as well as numerous community partners, I aimed to address this lacuna. The project involved the investigation of the historical and contemporary expressive cultures of the island's Central and Eastern communities, focusing on their music and dance practices. The participants' concrete objective was the production of a web portal – *diversitycapebreton.ca* – that opens up onto reams of curated digital material. The portal contains a living repository (what is generally thought of as an "archive"), a virtual musical world, online exhibits and curriculum materials. These digital media complement the project's program

of activity, object and text-based materials including public workshops, concerts, gallery/museum installations, publications and presentations. All its contents draw on media-rich ethnographic research about Eastern and Central European communities and cultures in Cape Breton. We held a public launch for the web portal in a community centre on Canada's "Heritage Day," August 1, 2015.

More specifically, this article focuses on ways in which this digital curation project served (and continues to serve) as a space for the continual collaborative re-creation of communities and histories. Because I am interested in critically examining and further developing research practice and methodologies through public engagement and service, I work to facilitate collaborative creation, presentation and critical scholarly inquiry in innovative, creative music and dance projects. Through projects like *diversitycapebreton.ca*, I aim to collaboratively address concrete social problems with the communities that face them (Creese and Frisby 2011; Kirby, Greaves and Reid 2006; Wallerstein and Duran 2003). My research has included continued engagement with digital humanities to demonstrate the kind of analysis, participation and dissemination that is possible using technological innovations (Castaing-Taylor 2010; Schnapp and Oehler 2011). Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada *Public Outreach: Dissemination* program, the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal project applies ethnomusicology to address specific challenges and opportunities articulated by local communities, educators and scholars.

This web portal research contributes to scholarship in at least three major ways. First, it has a combined focus on different Eastern and Central European musics and dance among newcomers to Canada and their descendants. There are historical silences about these groups in this part of Canada, both from within and outside the regions of Cape Breton and Atlantic Canada more broadly. Second, it has encouraged critical inquiry and experimentation through creative and collaborative investigation, as well as through innovative and digital research. Third, it addresses several of the knowledge and capacity needs outlined at the time the research was begun by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada Atlantic Regional Panel,[1] including citizens' engagement and governance, immigration, demographics, language and rurality. As well, as I recount in the conclusion to this article, our web portal has expanded the possibilities

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1.   http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/Imagining_ Canada_s_Future_Technical_Report-Rapport_technique_d_imaginer_l_avenir_ du_Canada-eng.pdf, retrieved 2013-06-21.

for ethnomusicological research praxis and the capacities of all of our team members, academic and non-academic.

The web portal project arose at the intersection of two themes in ethnomusicology: (1) collaborative, community-engaged methodologies; and (2) the integration of emerging technologies in the curation, representation and dissemination of research. The project's aims and its collaborative research process engaged many different communities and partners in critical and creative work: articulating a "problem;" designing a research program and proposing outcomes; conducting research; developing ways of representing our findings; and sharing the results. Every aspect of the portal project, from early research, to design, to launch, has allowed our team to (re)consider traditional forms of cultural and academic expression, while technological advancements have enabled us to delve into new and innovative ones.[22] Throughout the process, the entire team worked together to preserve live cultural interaction through varied means of dissemination and public engagement.

Context for the diversitycapebreton.ca web portal

Despite Cape Breton's multiethnic population, local businesses, special interest groups and governing bodies in Nova Scotia have capitalized in particular on the island's Gaelic roots (Nova Scotia Tourism and Culture 2002). Locals and people "from away" (as locals describe outsiders in Cape Breton) also tend to neglect the island's diversity. Moreover, they are inclined to underestimate the connections that the island's groups have with one another, with populations in other parts of Canada, and with people across the globe.

What are the histories of Ukrainian, Polish, Croatian, and Eastern and Central European Jewish immigrants to Canada in general, and to Cape Breton specifically? What is the significance, and what are the consequences, of their having lived amongst one another in Europe and of their having chosen to live together in their new country? How have the social, economic, political and material conditions of Cape Breton shaped Eastern/Central European music and dance in this region? What roles do music and dance play in the performance of identities of these Eastern and Central European outposts in Atlantic Canadian steel working and

2.   In an article partnered with this one (forthcoming, in the next issue of *Ethnologies*), some of our team's researchers (Michael Frishkopf, Michael Cohen and Rasika Ranaweera) speak more directly to detailed technological innovations and developments.

coal mining communities rather than on prairie farmlands, or in Central Canadian urban centers? What is the place of Eastern/Central European music and dance in Cape Breton in relation to narratives and constructs of nationhood and ethnicity, transnationalism and diaspora, and Canadian nationhood and identity (Anderson 1991; Sollors 1986)? What is its place in relation to such widespread notions of Cape Breton tradition and culture as Gaelic and Acadian?

To begin to answer these questions, I focused my research for the web portal on those aspects of Eastern and Central European music and dance that intersect with race and ethnicity in Cape Breton. I also examined how these music and dance histories and experiences converge with gender, class and region on the island. Ethnomusicology and dance ethnography have conventionally either invoked music and dance as symbols of national pride – of cultural and national unity – or presented these phenomena as typical products of a larger social organicism (Shay 2016). However, the web portal challenges this politics of representation and looks to the ways in which music is historically constructed, socially maintained, individually created and experienced. The web portal also draws attention to connections between groups of people who might otherwise be represented as entirely discrete. Thus, in instances where the distinctiveness of ethnocultural groups might be emphasized – Ukrainians, Poles, Croats, Jews (cultural identifiers which are also meaningful for the people who claim them) – the portal also demonstrates ways in which these groups are interconnected in their histories and homelands, as well as in the ways their lives overlap and intertwine in their Cape Breton homes.

One major finding of the web portal research was the result of a partnership of the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, based at the University of Alberta. Very broadly speaking, the Wirth Institute attends to studies in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Through our collaboration with scholars of the Wirth Institute, we came to a heightened recognition that the specific communities we represented on the web portal all came from a single nation: the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. In other words, these diverse groups had a shared historical context. This shed new light on, for example, the reasons for the internment of Ukrainians during World War I: their passports were from Austria, an enemy of Canada and its allies during the war. As well, religious practices between people of Croatian and Polish descent were generally shared; thus, while the Byzantine Ukrainian church in Cape Breton predominantly serves the adherents of Eastern Christian faith, a Polish Roman Catholic church

serves many families of both Polish and Croatian ancestry.[3]

Although the people who settled in the Whitney Pier district of Sydney were well aware of cultural differences between different groups who lived there, they nevertheless shared the space, working together and sometimes even marrying each other. The portal documents the many families in Whitney Pier who celebrate their joint ancestry through music, dance and other expressive practices. These joint ancestries include Cape Bretoners of Polish, Croatian and Ukrainian descent, among others. When Ukrainian dancers in Cape Breton were unable to find a local dance orchestra to accompany their performances in the late 1930s, a Croatian music ensemble who shared similar music and dance practices were able to offer assistance. In the 1980s, Sydney's Ukrainian dancers performed while being accompanied with music played by the Barra MacNeils, a cherished Cape Breton Celtic group; the Barras, in rendering a traditional Ukrainian tune, somewhat altered the melodies and rhythms to reflect their own traditional music. In both of these cases, were the Sydney dancers performing Ukrainian dance? Those involved in the making of "Ukrainian dance" in a particular situation may not be accurately described as "Ukrainians" or even "Ukrainian Canadians." Though the identities of the participants may not be fixed in a way that such a label suggests, it may still be effective to describe the practice in which they are engaged as "Ukrainian dance" and to indicate that it is a practice in which a particular group of people is engaged. With its focus on practice, the current study intersects with studies of media from the perspective of practice theory (Bräuchler and Posthill 2010). How do we – the researcher-creators as well as the public "users" of the portal – use the web portal digital media, and to what ends? This question underlies much of the writing in the current article.

There are also aspects of the portal that underscore how Cape Breton's many different immigrants and their ancestors are connected both to each other and to the local landscape. For instance, the portal's logo includes silhouettes of the steel plant and coal mine shafts – icons of the industrial labor opportunities that drew these groups to Cape Breton and which became the basis of their settlement in the area.

As well, the image of Cape Breton's ubiquitous shoreline highlights the natural environment that has become integral to immigrant family

3.   Jelka notes that she is aware of at least one family that has Croatian ancestry that is affiliated with the Ukrainian church, but there is a large enough group that attend at the Polish Roman Catholic parish that it is generally thought of as the home parish of most Croatians in the area.
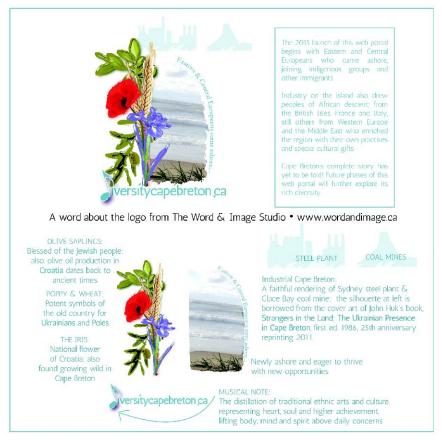
Figure 1. Explanation of *diversitycapebreton.ca* logo. This page was created for the web portal by the logo's designer, Darene Roma Yavorsky. It explains the impetus for the logo's creation and the symbolism inherent in the logo image. Used with permission.

histories on the island. Finally, discrete components of the logo, such as the red poppy, provide further nuances since immigrants of both Polish and Ukrainian ancestry share it as an icon of their heritage cultures. The iris is also significant since it both represents the official flower of Croatia and grows wild and abundantly across Cape Breton. The participants' dialogue about the logo design is indicative of the kinds of consultations, workshopping and engagement with community members we conducted as we constructed the various components of the web portal. I encouraged this sort of collaborative critical analysis on account of my interest in the use of culture as an expedient (Yudice 2003), in the context of a pluralistic, multicultural society (Bannerji 2000; Bissoondath 1994; Guilbault 2007; Ryan 2010).

As I learned through involvement in the web portal project and subsequent community-engaged projects, many people in communities where we work are eager to engage in thoughtful, critical discussions about culture and multiculturalism. Recollections and observations of several of our project team members, in subsequent sections of this paper, further attest to community members' interest in critical engagement. These community participants also venerate their culture and heritage, including customs such as music and dance. For this reason, the web portal honors the continued community celebration of distinctive music and dance practices of a number of the cultural groups featured in the portal. Their practices are a vital part of the cultural landscape, not only of Cape Breton, but also of Canada.

Understanding what the lives of those who make music and dance are like is essential to comprehending music and dance as a human activity rather than as merely sequences of organized sounds and movements. Thus, interview excerpts and material culture in the web portal provide evidence of ways in which music and dance are part of broader life and community events and practices, including: religion and labor activism; celebratory community events that connect people (e.g., caroling during the winter holidays); tender and intimate moments (e.g., two friends singing the songs of their homeland together). My research brings to light the ways in which individuals, communities and their musics have functioned within cultural webs. It reveals shared practices and ideologies within Cape Breton and beyond.

Practicing emergent and innovative ethnomusicology

The web portal project has involved collaboration and consultation with diverse community members (e.g., different ages and genders, various financial situations, distinct skills and interests) who have contributed in different ways. As well, our research team has benefitted from the added capacity of scholars, students and professionals who come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. Dialogic processes value and integrate a wide variety of people and materials, experiences, perspectives, knowledge, memories and practices in order to facilitate respectful and productive dialogue. These processes also change the way research is conceived of and practiced – and they modify how knowledge is created and represented. All the while, these processes stimulate participation by students, scholars and wider communities as social and cultural activists.

The collaborative process on the web portal began at the very outset of the research, and endured through various stages of dissemination, and in

continuing relationships afterward. Shaped in part by my engagement with and practice of indigenous methodologies (Denzin, Lincoln and Tuhiwai Smith 2008; Lassiter 2005), our collaborative research team integrated emic analyses and experience, as well as a concern for the protection of cultural and intellectual property. We strove to do this while maintaining self-reflexivity (Barz and Cooley 2008). One key instance of the integration of different perspectives was in the grouping of items that comprised contributions to the portal's repository. The team's academics, trained in critical cultural studies, were wary of reifying ethnocultural distinctions based on distinctive nationalities (that may not even have existed at the time of a family's immigration). We wanted instead to draw attention to the aspects of history and experience that overlapped and/or were shared. Yet, community members value recognition of their ancestry according to such distinctions, even if an individual's ancestry might involve several of these cultures. For this reason, we grouped items in folders according to Croatian, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian descriptors.

The following practices facilitated the web portal project (some aspects of which are ongoing). As a team, we: developed research relationships and conducted ethnographic interviews with community members of different genders, ages and walks of life; analyzed discourses, music, dance and other media; investigated the numerous historical performance and rehearsal sites on the island; examined intangible and material culture to gain greater insight into the production of Eastern and Central European culture in Cape Breton; consulted archival records, private and public; and explored the ways in which people engage in and with music and dance. Results of this work can be found in the items stored in the web portal's repository, and in the exhibits and resources available through the portal. To help interpret the data, and to actively engage with the material and community members, I also drew on my own knowledge of Slavic languages, and my skills as a musician, dancer and choreographer in performance, teaching and community engagement activities.

In developing this project, other faculty researchers joined me in providing support and teaching/learning/training opportunities for students, emerging scholars and community-based researchers. Team experts provided training in ethnographic interviewing and documenting best practices, as well as in archival and exhibition practices that integrate applied, community service-oriented mandates. We engaged student and non-student research assistants from Croatia, the United Kingdom, India and Canada, all of whom developed their research skills and methods and

built professional networks. We taught research assistants and participants ethnographic techniques, archival research and collection procedures, and multimedia and other materials processing and production. We helped them to hone their skills in writing and editing (in multiple languages), conference planning, project management, content creation and website development, programming and other media-specific tasks. Finally, we instilled in them feelings of ownership and pride in the final products. Future components of this project will involve community-based youth and teachers. Since elder community members shared their stories and expertise with younger community-based and student researchers, intergenerational teams have also been key both to the engagement of larger groups in, and to the widespread public dissemination of, the portal project.

This project also involved archive staff, interactive multimedia producers, conference organizers, curriculum developers, design professionals and web developers. Portable multimedia lab technology supported the involvement of people both on and off the Cape Breton University campus. Community members and committees continue to participate in ongoing research, in consultative, directive and hands-on research and in creative roles. As examples, items continue to be added to the repository, and community members persevere in developing materials that are added to the list of interactive resources. Students and community participants have already begun to author and co-author materials with me (this article is one example). We have also been developing recording/performance-related components with professional artists, students and community members. Further, my strong belief in supporting emerging scholars has inspired their involvement in multiple other research projects. As well, the community connections built through this project have led to other community-based research programs, which have involved graduate students in other programs at my home university, in business, tourism and community development (arising in conjunction with my professional experience in the heritage industry). These results are in addition to providing undergraduate and graduate students with financial support and opportunities for learning and professional development, through my ongoing research projects, that directly relate to their programs of study.

Considering methods and ethics in conducting research for the web portal – with Jelka Vukobratovic

Jelka Vukobratovic is a Croatian graduate student in ethnomusicology. Her participation in the web portal project was facilitated by a fellowship

from the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies. Simultaneous with Jelka's appearance in Cape Breton was the arrival of another web portal team member, Jana Zoric, a Canadian of joint Serbian and Croatian ancestry, who immigrated to Canada with her family as a teen, and who was completing her doctoral studies in ethnomusicology at an American university.

Jelka soon realized that there were two different fieldwork tasks that needed to be managed during her brief 3-week visit to Sydney: 1) the gathering of information, which allowed Jana and herself to find some of the Croatian families still living in Cape Breton and discover whether and how they continue to maintain their cultural heritage; and 2) the selection of the material for the publication on the web portal, which involved negotiating with the community members (Vukobratovic 2015).[4] She notes that it was the selection of material that raised the greatest technical and ethical obstacles and describes the ethical challenges that arose in the context of her web portal research: "In my opinion, it is one thing to convince people to be a part of a research project that is being primarily offered to a scientific or scholarly community and another to convince them to take part in the research that involves their interviews and personal items being offered to the general public" (Vukobratovic 2015).

The very public and widely accessible nature of the web portal made Jelka acutely aware of the sensitive nature of the field research material. Contrary to her expectations, however, most research participants had no hesitation about sharing material and approving its online publication. Out of a dozen research participants with whom she met, only two indicated they did not want their interview material posted online – and even these two participants nevertheless readily provided information about their family histories. Jelka sees two reasons for this willingness to share personal stories and materials. The first is the team's intensive and careful engagement with community members: "The project's mission of actively involving the community in the construction of the web portal was intended to help those members to preserve, share and find new information on their families and community" (Vukobratovic 2015). The second is the participants' recognition that the positive effects of showcasing the Croatian community in Cape Breton are greater than any perceived potential negative effects of invading people's privacy.

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4.   Jelka's contribution in this segment of the article is based on her participation in a round table of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music conference titled "Exhibiting Music," held at Cape Breton University in June 2015.

Training and capacity-building outcomes of the web portal project – with Patricia Nalepa

Patricia Nalepa was an undergraduate student at Cape Breton University when she joined the web portal team as a student research assistant. Her participation was motivated by her interest in engaging with and learning about her Ukrainian heritage. Prior to her work on the web portal, Patricia was a research assistant and exhibit technician on an exhibit I curated to celebrate the centenary of the Ukrainian church in Sydney's Whitney Pier. Eventually, the contents of this centenary exhibit were deposited (virtually) into the portal repository, and the exhibit installation was migrated (via digital documentation) to a virtual, internet-based platform. At the time she began to work with me, in 2009, Patricia had just returned to university after ten years in the workforce. She had no research experience or related skills, but this quickly changed.[5]

Patricia remarks, "Some people say that the best way of learning is by doing, and that is exactly what I did. Another woman from the Ukrainian community and I had begun preparing for the centenary exhibit by combing through the catalogue at the Beaton [Archive], looking for useful information. It was a struggle to learn the [card catalogue] system, but with the very helpful staff we managed" (P. Nalepa, personal communication, July 4, 2016). During the centenary exhibit project, Patricia began to learn basic archival search skills. Over time, she learned skills required for material and other data collection. Patricia also learned ethnographic interview skills and carried out numerous interviews with community members around the island; through ethnography, she also learned about research ethics for work with human research participants. As Patricia took up a greater role as the exhibit technician, she learned methods and techniques for item arrangement and display, how to use technical and historical language while still creating a story, and how to foster public accessibility in the exhibit. As she migrated the exhibit's contents to the portal's repository (which uses an online digital cataloguing system), and the exhibit itself to a digital-only virtual format online, Patricia expanded her skills further: "The web portal provided opportunities to redevelop and grow my technical multimedia skills. I expanded on my web building knowledge, while using new skills as a photographer and transforming my knowledge of creating images into creating 3D images of large spaces" (Nalepa, July 4, 2016). Through all of her work and the different roles she

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5.   During the final year of web portal production, Patricia was teaching English in Japan, but she remained connected with our project remotely.

played, she also became aware of the extent to which research depends upon connections and relationships between community members and organizations, educators, historians, academics, researchers and the media.

In light of the vital interconnectivity of different people and sectors in the community-engaged research we carried out for the centenary project, Patricia says that it made sense that the research would eventually lead to the interactive multimedia format of the web portal. Most of the data collection we carried out on earlier projects could be curated and shared online, providing virtual access to Cape Breton's communities for a wide and potentially distant public. We continue to add to the web portal archive as we progress in our research, as we continue to curate new resources based on previously gathered data, as we learn about new ways in which the public might find it useful, and as we continue to gather new data shared by community members.

Patricia is struck by her observation that in creating a catalogue for *diversitycapebreton.ca*, she has come full circle, but has also honed new and applicable skills. She is now responsible for creating a catalogue when, at the outset, she was ignorant about how these catalogues even worked: "The cataloguing which I had struggled with, that was my first task in an early research project, is now my task to create. But just because I have returned from where I started does not mean my work is complete" (Nalepa, July 4, 2016).

Patricia continues to work with us on a volunteer basis. In addition to cherishing what she personally gains from the project, Patricia also feels strongly positive about the technological affordances of the web portal project for others. She speaks about ways in which our web portal's virtual and internet-based multimedia technologies offer the means through which research participants are able to safeguard historical information, support individual, community and institutional memory, and develop and maintain valued relationships:

> Throughout the past decade, interest in genealogical television programs has risen, beginning with shows like *Ancestors in the Attic* and *African American Lives*, then later on with *Faces of America* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*, continuing today with *Genealogy Roadshow* and *Finding Your Roots*. The number of diverse ancestry search sites available online is also significant, *Ancestry.com* being one of the largest. Why have so many people become interested in genealogy? Perhaps it is because even though the advent of the internet has made it easier to connect with others, at the same time we have never been so disconnected from

ourselves. Technology has made the world smaller. Those once separated by distance can use applications such as email and video chat to instantly connect. My family recently received correspondence from relatives in the Ukraine whom we had previously lost contact with during one of the many conflicts. They got back in touch with my family by email, hoping to re-establish communication. People are using social media to stay in contact, or reconnect, with both friends and family. Before the internet age, making connections with our past and with people around the world would not have been as possible. Working on the web portal and other projects with Dr. Ostashewski has presented me with the opportunity to answer questions I have about my own heritage, and has allowed others to do the same. Older community members from various backgrounds were able to preserve their experiences and knowledge through the archive. For example, I can remember going to the hospital to visit Mike Kuna from the Ukrainian community and sitting in the kitchen of Joseph Ryba talking about Polish traditions. Both have since passed away. Others expressed an impatience to be interviewed, apprehensive of the onset of forgetfulness as they aged and fearful that their collective consciousness would disappear forever. Often people would share information with me about my own relatives. They provided details about things I often wondered about but never knew for certain, because unfortunately, there was no one left living that I could ask. Or so I thought. This online archive has brought people together across the world from different times, cultures and communities. It is true that while it is something that helps us to learn about our past, it also gives us a knowledge that changes who we are now and who we will be in the future. The portal is not something fixed in history, but is fluid and developing through time. As such, it becomes a living memory; an extension of ourselves (Nalepa, July 4, 2016).

As Patricia's observations powerfully demonstrate, the technologies we engaged in the web portal project have been integral to its research processes and outcomes. The value of the repository's contents lies in their historical data and also, for items such as ethnographic interviews, in their orality. The nuances of the content as spoken word and sound are preserved in recorded interviews.

In the quote above, Patricia mentioned a sense of detachment – an impression that new technologies have contributed to people feeling disconnected more than at any other time. Through research processes such as interviews with community elders, as well as through relationships she made in these processes, Patricia has been able to *reconnect* with her family, heritage, community and personal history. Interview recordings are among the web portal's contents that have facilitated this kind of reconnection via oral histories of family and communities. Indeed, this is

a particular strength of our web portal as a resource, as Eric and I will argue in the following section.

Creating curriculum materials to support culturally responsive pedagogies and inclusive communities - with Eric Favaro

The web portal curriculum materials help students learn how to engage with and draw on community assets, such as elders and other culture bearers. This is integral to promoting empathy and respect for themselves and others, and to encouraging cross-cultural understanding *through dialogue*. Although many modern technologies have disconnected people, and often reduced in-person interactions, the particular technologies and applications employed in the web portal project comprise diverse means for developing and maintaining relationships with elders, family and community histories.

Web portal research and development team member Eric Favaro enjoyed a long career as a teacher and arts education consultant with municipal and provincial education offices in Nova Scotia. He currently works as an international education consultant; he also collaborates with a number of researchers to design curriculum materials that foster global awareness and cultural diversity through music learning. His background as the grandchild of a coal miner, combined with his experiences growing up in an Italian immigrant family in the village of Donkin outside of Glace Bay in Cape Breton, ensured that he brought a valuable critical perspective to the web portal project team.

In discussing the shape of the portal's curriculum materials, Eric observed significant challenges facing curriculum developers in what he referred to as globalization. He asked, "How do we make curriculum relevant for all learners and, subsequently, what pedagogies most effectively engage learners by recognizing, valuing and reflecting their history, culture and world view?" (E. Favaro, personal communication, June 29, 2016). Moreover, in the creation of curriculum materials for the web portal, Eric and I shared interests in creating "culturally responsive pedagogy" (Favaro, June 29, 2016):

> Culturally responsive pedagogy is an educational reform approach to teaching and learning aimed at increasing engagement and motivation of students who are marginalized in schools and communities. These not only include students who are economically disadvantaged, but also comprise those of colour, diverse cultural backgrounds, in particular immigrant children, and those of low

socio-economic status. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a rejoinder to traditional curricular and instructional methods that have often been ineffective. In a culturally responsive environment, the teacher employs instructional strategies that place the student at the centre of the learning, and that value and integrate a student's culture in the instructional process.

Culturally responsive pedagogy goes beyond celebrations and holidays such as Black History Month or Treaty Day. Instead it integrates the knowledge and cultural assets of marginalized students and their communities. Classrooms are becoming unprecedentedly diverse, with huge populations immigrating to safe havens from war-torn areas of the world. The classroom environment must reflect the multicultural nature that is characteristic of student populations in the 21st century.

Culturally responsive pedagogy builds on and nurtures the learner's unique cultural strengths, emphasizing student achievement and well-being. It goes well beyond ethnicity, race and faith. Central to the pedagogy is the broad notion of similarities and differences, focusing on identity and the students' ways of knowing their world. A culturally responsive curriculum, therefore, integrates prior experiences at home and in their community through resources that support learning in the classroom. It is developed with the belief that each of us builds on prior experiences in the assimilation of knowledge and the unique differences that are directly linked to social background, family structure, language and cultural identity. (Favaro, June 29, 2016)

Below, Eric describes ways in which the structure and content of the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal supports a culturally responsive pedagogy. He points to specific branches of provincial and regional education ministries that emphasize the value of such perspectives in learning and teaching, and which demand the integration of these perspectives into the curriculum. He also lists the segments of the portal that attend to this value:

The learning and teaching resource that accompanies diversitycapebreton. ca promotes and supports a culturally responsive pedagogy, building on the lived experiences of all students in order to bring curriculum to life. Through the suggested strategies for learning, teaching and assessment, students construct their own world views, scaffolding on prior experiences and social identities. In a culturally responsive environment, the teacher expands upon the curriculum, using a range of resources to ensure that both the environment and the materials present local and global perspectives. *Diversitycapebreton.ca* acknowledges and values the

contributions of the various cultural groups that immigrated to Cape Breton at the turn of the 20th century to work predominantly in the steel making and coal mining industries: Ukrainian, Polish, Croatian, Jewish, Lebanese, Italian, Greek, Caribbean. These are cultures that are often overlooked in [Canadian] history books. Through the curriculum's suggested activities, students learn that each cultural group built its own community within a community, with its church and parish hall becoming the focal point for the preservation of their cultural traditions. Despite the insular communities within which they lived, these groups supported each other in ways that could be viewed as the beginning of Canada's multicultural society.

The *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal tells stories about four of these cultural groups: Croatian, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian. Through digitized archives, their stories, songs, and other artifacts are preserved for us to learn about the past and to celebrate Cape Breton's rich diversity. The teaching and learning resource is intended for teachers and students to explore, understand and value the rich heritage of this part of Atlantic Canada, making direct reference to the artifacts and cultural assets described on the web portal. It is rooted in the Nova Scotia curricula as well as the Foundation Documents of CAMET (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training). *Diversitycapebreton.ca* provides support for learning in many content areas, including social studies, language arts and arts education. (Favaro, June 29, 2016).

The inquiry-based, student-centered approach upon which the diversitycapebreton.ca curriculum materials are founded encourages students to discover and explore the web portal's contents for each of the different groups represented on the site. By engaging in the learning and teaching activities outlined in the curriculum materials, students are taught how to directly apply their acquired wisdom in this culturally responsive context to topics in various disciplines. They learn to recognize strengths and differences of the diverse cultures, families and communities, and to see their own lives and perspectives as subjects worthy of study. The curriculum materials encourage students to engage with their own communities through meetings, presentations, exhibitions and performances. This kind of learning and teaching practice encourages a safe classroom environment, where students listen to and ascertain knowledge from each other as they direct their own learning.

As Eric goes on to note, the curriculum materials on diversitycapebreton. ca also "promote empathy and respect for [participants] themselves and for others, and encourage cross-cultural understanding through dialogue" (Favaro, June 29, 2016). Eric's statement here underscores a fundamental

value of the close relationship that "applied ethnomusicology" has with education. It is a prime example of ways in which music, music-centered activities and ethnomusicological knowledge and expertise can be powerful resources for facilitating positive intercultural interaction.

The learning and teaching resources on the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal support engagement with the exhibits on the site and teach students how people continue to work together in different social contexts. These resources direct students to learning about ways in which people can participate as active, informed and responsible citizens within a context that draws on the past, present and future, and that makes use of global and local intercultural perspectives. Favaro notes: "Students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to understand, participate in, and contribute to a pluralistic society, engage critically with societal issues, and make informed decisions about alternative social, economic, political, and environmental practices" (Favaro, June 29, 2016). In short, the curriculum materials that are part of the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal support and promote culturally responsive pedagogies. Ultimately, the outcome for students and for their communities is a more robust understanding of global awareness and cultural differences.

Tangible and immediate outcomes of the web portal project and its dissemination - with Jana Zoric

Jana Zoric, as I noted above, is a doctoral student who immigrated with her family to Canada at the age of twelve. Jana recognized that working on the web portal offered her a rare opportunity to apply and further develop the coding and multimedia creation skills she brought from previous work experience. Jana's specific involvement in the project was in the generation of the portal's virtual ethnographic and musical world. This included the creation of virtual architecture that represents the various communities involved with the *diversitycapebreton.ca* project and the selection and editing of materials collected during her research for the population of these virtual spaces. Jana began work on the project as an ethnographer, gathering data through archival and ethnographic research. She was later involved in the creation of components for the virtual world as well as for the portal itself. Jana also delivered in-community workshops in Cape Breton during the portal's public launch events in 2015 (more on these below).

Reflecting on her ethnographic research, Jana observes:

> The Croatian community in Cape Breton, unlike other ethnic groups

> in the region, did not have their own distinct church where they could gather to celebrate social and cultural events. Moreover, they did not socialize or celebrate their cultural heritage in public. The lack of such practices raises many questions about the way cultural identities are constructed and maintained longue durée. I am interested in the ways the members of the Croatian community position themselves in Sydney, how they express their cultural identity, their place in the politics of cultural representation in Sydney, and especially how the community is imagined and maintained. (J. Zoric, 2015).

It is in this context of considering the ways that cultural identities are constructed and performed over the longer term that Jana approached her research for the web portal project.

Jana has been especially struck by the tremendous impact of the web portal project, which she has observed with respect to our interlocutors' relationships with their heritage and cultural representation: "There wasn't a significant celebration of Croatian culture or even a strong sense of community. Our research motivated Cape Bretoners of Croatian descent to perform their Croatian-ness and to engage again with that aspect of their identity" (Zoric, 2015). Jana suggests that the new context that our interviews and the portal provided for the representation of specific aspects of a Croatian identity offered "not the rediscovery but the production of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archeology, but in the re-telling of the past" (Hall 1990: 224). Jana recalls the powerful statement of one research participant, Katie Markotich: "It's cool to be ethnic again" (Markotich, personal communication July 30, 2015). I pursued Katie's intriguing statement, and she expanded as follows:

> Many immigrants sought to assimilate by hiding their ethnic background. One example of this is those who changed their last names. They tried to fit in. They needed to fit in to get jobs to feed their families. Now people are trying to reconnect with their ethnicity. Look at the popularity of sites like ancestry.ca …. (K. Markotich, personal communication, July 11, 2016).

Katie draws attention to a current interest on the part of the general public in "reconnecting" with their ethnocultural ancestry. Like Patricia Nalepa, Katie also notes the ready and common use of online digital resources in their processes of rediscovery.[66]

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6   During the final year of web portal production, Patricia was teaching English in Japan, but she remained connected with our project remotely.

In an interview with me, Katie spoke directly to her individual experience of being both Croatian and Canadian: "Being Croatian […] is just who I am. Who I have always been. Just as I also consider myself Canadian" (July 11, 2016). However, our research team found that people from different cultural groups interacted with the portal project multifariously. This may reflect the fact that various cultural groups have maintained distinctive cultural traditions and activities over time, in different ways and to varying degrees. For example, Jana notes that some people responded to the content of the web portal with a strong sense of ownership, busying themselves with fact-checking. Some discussed nuances of community histories and politics. Others were interested in discovering other interlocutors' perspectives on their communities and culture. Yet others responded by offering alternative interpretations of community and family histories from the ones that our team had documented.

In short, the portal connects with the personal interests of many members of our communities who feel it is important to preserve and maintain family histories and cultural practices. Jana observes that some community members engage with the portal as an opportunity for personal reflection and as a way to remember past community events and elaborate on the occasions that the pictures document. She also remembers several workshop participants who were inspired to contribute their own stories, documents and items of material culture. Some of these broadened the project through their addition of information about interactions with other Cape Breton communities. Generally, as Jana observed through the public workshops and individual meetings and discussions, people were encouraged to participate in both the initial and continual creation and dissemination of materials through the web portal.

Jana also makes the point that the use of new technologies is key to the web portal project's success and longevity. This fact became especially evident during the public launch event, which featured participatory music and dance, as well as short speeches by key members of the research team and participating communities. Jana also held several public workshops in a central community facility – the Ukrainian Hall – expressly to facilitate access to the portal. Since many community members (a great number of whom are elderly) don't normally have access to technologies such as the iPads we provided for the participants, these workshops were also an opportunity for individuals to learn how to utilize diverse technologies.

Jana and I observed the importance of real-time interpersonal interactions in the context of the digital, virtual web portal project,

particularly in our public engagement and workshops related to the portal's launch. The archived documents and online presentation via the internet-supported web portal will endure as a useful resource, but the project originated in and will also continue to grow in the context of personal interactions between the researchers and community members and among the different communities in Sydney. We also observed the value of preserving real-time interpersonal interactions in all of the community-engaged work carried out for the portal and other technology-enhanced projects. These synergies are essential for exchange, dialogue and collaboration. They occur between scholars, students, non-academic team members and community members more generally. While virtual and internet-supported interactions significantly change, enhance and augment real-time interpersonal communications and creative collaborations, they cannot replace them.

Web portal digital curation and auto/biographical observations - with Ely Rosenblum

Ely Rosenblum grew up in Toronto, and completed his undergraduate studies in anthropology and music in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is now a doctoral student in the United Kingdom. When I learned about Ely's Jewish family connections to the Cape Breton urban community of Glace Bay and his interest in gaining ethnographic experience, I invited him to join the web portal project team. Over three years and multiple visits to Cape Breton, Ely recorded interviews and collected photos, documents and audio for the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal section dedicated to Jewish heritage in Cape Breton. Until now, there has been no prevailing narrative on this subject.

As a student primarily interested in sound art, the project provided a valuable opportunity for Ely to learn about and practice ethnography; he also discovered much about Jewish experiences in Cape Breton. Ely speaks eloquently about how he was affected by discovering the history of Cape Bretoners of Jewish ancestry:

> As a child of Jewish parents, with roots in the community, I knew that the Jewish population on Cape Breton Island was dwindling. However, I had not realized the full extent of the exodus of families to larger cities in Canada, mostly in Toronto. On an island better known for its Scottish and Acadian history, an electronic open access resource dedicated to a small but strong community is valuable for those who lived there and for those who have never heard of Cape Breton's Jews. Former

> and present residents often describe the story of Jews on Cape Breton
> Island as bittersweet. What is left are the words, sounds and images
> that tell a story of Jews arriving at the turn of the century by boat; the
> spark of economic prosperity leading to financial success amongst Jews
> on the island; memories of childhood and adolescence; the strength
> of the Jewish community across the province and country; friendships
> made within the community and across ethnic divisions; experiences of
> discrimination and racism; and stories of leaving for higher education
> and major Canadian cities. For some former residents, this was simply a
> fact of life – for others, it is a marker of progress toward the preservation
> of Jewish life and cultural custom (Rosenblum 2015).

Since many of the Cape Breton collections are currently housed at
the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University, Ely's archival research
relied on the expertise of the Beaton archivists as well as on the expert
knowledge of the individuals who gathered the materials in the first place.
The diverse voices that comprised the dialogue through which the web
portal was created have thus provided a unique research opportunity to
access expert community-based knowledge of Cape Breton's Jewish histories
and experiences. This research opportunity, Ely has observed, is one that
permits us to reconsider "how new technologies allow different sorts of
engagement with local descriptions and vernacular accounts from diverse
expert communities" (Srinivasan *et al.* 2006: 266).

Web portal impact in physical spaces – with Ely Rosenblum

Ely's experiences while conducting ethnographic research in Cape
Breton are indicative of our team's multiple imaginative ways of representing
this data. Soon after arriving in Cape Breton to conduct research toward the
portal, Ely, Jana and Jelka worked with local CBC radio producer Wendy
Bergfeldt to create radio segments attending to sounds and stories of Cape
Breton. Ely's segment focused on Jewish experiences in Cape Breton; he also
created a series of sound pieces. Later, he curated a gallery exhibit. The radio
segment, sound pieces and exhibit, all of which have since been migrated
to the web portal, fall under the title "Jewish Life on Cape Breton Island."

In creating the exhibit specifically, Ely worked with several Jewish
families of Cape Breton origin that are now based in the Toronto area. He
drew on their private collections of photos and sound recordings, as well
as on private collections gathered by members of the Jewish community
in Cape Breton. The physical iteration of the mixed media digital and
visual project in the exhibit brought visitors into an environment that
was dedicated solely to the living history of Jews on Cape Breton Island.

The exhibit used locative audio pieces that allowed visitors to enter into dialogue with pre-recorded narratives of Cape Breton experience. It was thus an invitation for those who attended – including former members of Cape Breton's Jewish communities as well as anthropologists, folklorists, ethnomusicologists and Jewish Studies scholars – to react to the sights and sounds of their families' experiences (including their own) on the island. In this regard, it is similar to the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal, which is designed to encourage members of Jewish and other communities to contribute to its living archive and to help preserve their rich cultural heritage.

"Jewish Life on Cape Breton Island" asked questions about the future of ethnographic museums that heritage organizations around the world are grappling with. A curated ethnographic space is often designed to house materials from a community or culture that indicate what sort of lives and experiences occurred there (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Lavine 1991, Kreamer 2006, Simon 2010). The gallery space provided Ely with the opportunity to present an unfinished work and an unfinished history. It offered him the chance to engage with community members and, in doing so, to create with them the material that would also be represented in the portal. The exhibit was meant to spotlight the vulnerability of research that relies on corroborating and conflicting accounts of events, as well as on the memories of an island that has changed so drastically in the 20th and 21st centuries. Like the space at the gallery, a white cube filled with materials and attendees that enrich and complete the intended art-patron relationship, the web portal relies on the participation of community members to remain an active and meaningful archive.

Where do we go from here?

Ely's curated exhibit is a good example of the many branches the web portal project has supported, some of which occurred alongside the portal's development while others were subsequently inspired. Other gains have been made through the project as well. For instance, as a part of the development of the web portal, many of the audio recordings and images that are contained in the Beaton Institute's collections were digitized and reprinted for the first time, allowing for a wider access and viewership nationally and internationally. My engagement with Cape Breton institutions such as the Beaton, community members and organizations endures in ongoing collaborative research, research-creation and public outreach activities that build capacity within these communities and

Figure 2. Emma Cholak at Heritage Fair, Cape Breton University, Spring 2016. Photo credit, M. Ostashewski (April 2016), reproduced here with the permission of Emma and her parents.

raise public awareness about them.

External individuals and groups have given significant attention to the portal, and this is especially true in the realm of education. For instance, the portal has been serving children in their research for school projects. One recent example can be found in then nine-year old Emma Cholak's experience with *diversitycapebreton. ca*. Emma is of Ukrainian ancestry, and she moved recently with her family to Cape Breton from Alberta. Interested in sharing information about her Ukrainian heritage in the annual Heritage Fair, and in learning more about Cape Breton's Ukrainian communities, Emma accessed the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal. Early on in my conversations with Emma, she told me she called the portal "Jackpot!" because it housed so many different kinds of useful materials (E. Cholak, personal communications, April 6 and 7, 2016). When I asked her what she found most valuable, she replied: "I really like the interviews because I think it's good to keep track of these things. If not, all this info will be lost forever!" (E. Cholak, personal communication, April 11, 2016). Her comments were more prescient than she might have expected, since only a day before she wrote that email, one of the community's most lauded culture bearers had died. Emma was grateful to be able to access his interviews

Figure 3. Emma Cholak Heritage Fair Award of Excellence. Photo credit, K. Cholak (April 2016), reproduced here with permission of Emma and her parents.

through the web portal. She is pictured in the photo below, sharing her Heritage Fair presentation in the spring of 2016. She was awarded a medal and a certificate of excellence for her presentation.

As this example indicates, the web portal effectively facilitates excellence in research, learning and critical engagement. More recently, having now connected with the local Ukrainian community through her portal-based research, Emma has joined the local Ukrainian dance group. Thus, the portal has also facilitated a tangible community connection and real relationships for this family, newly-immigrated to Cape Breton.

Emma's is but one demonstration of the ways in which the *diversitycapebreton.ca* web portal fosters and supports constructive, inquiry-based, culturally-responsive and inclusive values in education and community. In addition to students' opportunities to benefit from *diversitycapebreton.ca*, teachers from across the province have expressed interest in the portal and in learning how to use it to its full potential. In response, Eric and I have been scheduled to give Teacher Professional Development sessions during the fall of 2016. As well, Nova Scotia's provincial ministries of education, communities, culture and heritage are enthusiastic about the portal project: they have expressed interest in its intensive community-engaged research practice, as well as in the quality of widely accessible research and multimedia technologies and presentation. Shortly after the public launch of the portal, these offices invited me to expand it by engaging other local individuals and groups in research and information sharing about their cultures. This was exciting because it has always been the intent of our project to continue to work with local groups, beyond Eastern and Central European groups. Only in this way can we engage with communities as active participants in expanding the portal and celebrating a much greater diversity of communities and cultures.

By continuing to engage critically with groups outside our academic institutions, scholars will be able to be constantly mindful of our roles in and relevance to: the long-term sustainability of institutions such as museums and universities; the creation of meaningful education and research; the relevance and enduring nature of these institutions and their activities; and the role of these institutions in fostering inclusive communities.

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