

Beatrice Deer - The Power to Change

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Number 8, Spring 2017

Le 8e feu

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/87022ac>

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Publisher(s)

Diversité artistique Montréal (DAM)

ISSN

2292-101X (print)

2371-4875 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Conti Irion, V. (2017). Beatrice Deer - The Power to Change. *TicArtToc*, (8), 54-55.

BEATRICE DEER

The Power to Change

Beatrice Deer is a pop/folk/Inuit singer born in Quaqaq, a small village on the northeast coast of Quebec. Based in Montreal since 2007, she pursues her dreams while keeping strong ties with her roots. A role model for her community, she dedicates her voice to change. With "My all to You", her new album to be released next Fall, Beatrice shows all her power through her words and her music.

Beatrice wearing the traditional caribou skin amauti she made with Julie Grenier Di Ciero commissioned by the Museum of Man in Paris. September 2015.

In the Inuit culture, pregnant women typically choose another woman called a *sanaji* to accompany them during childbirth. Besides helping with labour, this “midwife” is responsible for severing the umbilical cord – an important moment that is thought to confer future aptitudes onto the newborn. So it came to pass that — 34 years ago — a non-Inuit nurse cut the tube linking a baby girl called Beatrice and her mother. We cannot say for sure if this person knew about the Inuit custom...nonetheless, the multiple talents that were passed on to this gifted child are undeniable. She has power in her words. The power to change.

By Vanessa Conti Irion

Born into a family of artists, the folk/pop/Inuit singer Beatrice Deer had the early support of her parents, Eva and Robert Deer, who encouraged her to follow in their musical steps. She started writing songs and performing at the young age of 15, when she had her very first public show at a fundraising event for the local junior hockey team of her community in Quaqtaq, Nunavik, Northern Quebec. That night, about 150 people witnessed the dawning of a North Star.

As is the case with many emerging artists, at the beginning of her artistic life Beatrice didn't know about the resources that could help kick-start her career. It wasn't until 2004 that she received her first grant from Kativik Regional Government (KRG) to record her debut album “Just Bea”. It earned her the Canadian Aboriginal Music Award for ‘Best Inuit Cultural Album’ in 2005. Many things have changed since then... she now has a sideline as an Aumaaggiivik Program Officer at the Avataq Cultural Institute — an organization which promotes the development of Nunavimmiut art — where she guides other Inuit artists to reach their professional goals and make their dreams come true.

Seeking new opportunities, in 2007 Beatrice moved to Montreal to continue her studies. Here she launched her second self-titled album ‘Beatrice Deer’ and “An Arctic Christmas”, both of them in 2010, followed by “Fox” in 2015. She would meet her current band in Montreal, whose artistic collaboration she describes as “the best!” The Beatrice Deer Band includes Michael Felber (bass), Mark Wheaton (drums), Christopher McCarron and Jordey Tucker (both of them guitars and

back-up vocals). Since 2015 she has shared the stage and the road up north with them. They perform mostly in Indigenous communities and as guests in many festivals and special events here and there.

Aside from singing (among her other abilities figure drawing and sewing), Beatrice Deer succeeds in using her voice and her own life experiences to spread the word about some hard truths concerning Inuit society. Committed to the cause of mental and emotional health issues linked to her community, it became recurrent subject in her speeches and in her music. She never intended to become an activist — “It kind of happened”, she says — but as a result, Beatrice is cherished by her entourage, and is perceived as a role model and a spokesperson for the Inuit.

Inspired by her mother (who works hard for the well-being of the community), as well as by other Inuit artists and friends, such as Sylvia Cloutier, Beatrice is deeply influenced by her strong ties to Indigenous culture when naming her artistic models. Moreover, although she performs some songs in English, her decision to sing primarily in Inuktitut was a natural choice — a way to maintain the origins and the essence of her message. In the same way, introducing throat singing in her music in 2014 was an equally coherent gesture to represent herself and her traditions. With the throat singer Evie Mark and further vocal training she has been able to refine her skills.

Beatrice's drive to improve herself professionally is reflected in her personal journey and lifestyle choices: she adopts a sober posture, exercises regularly, eats healthily and accepts an overall healing process. All these changes have impacted her music, whose themes and energy have evolved into something lighter, despite still touching a few difficult topics from time to time.

“My All to You”, Beatrice's current ‘work in progress’, will be released next Fall. She is preparing this new folk-rock album with lyrics in both English and Inuktitut, and some Inuit traditional content, with legends and throat singing complimenting her inner deep feelings and strong beliefs. Certainly, it will be a powerful opus bringing to light the potential of this woman imbued from birth with the gifts of the Inuit people! **TIC**

Vanessa Conti Irion

Vanessa Conti Irion is *gaucha*, born in the region of *pampas*, south of Brazil.

This area was the territory of *guaranis*, *kaingang*s, *charruas* and *minuanos*, before being invaded by Portuguese and Spanish in the 17th century. Touched by Indigenous miscegenation, this journalist brings in her DNA a mix of Italian and African, Austrian and Amerindian origins. This latter influence rouses her strong belief and respect regarding a direct correlation between humans and nature, besides reinforcing some rituals, such as following moon phases for certain activities and drinking *chimarrão*.

