The 2019 International Folk Music Awards were hosted by award-winning Canadian musician and CBC broadcaster, Tom Power, with French translation by Anique Granger. The awards show started with a welcome by the United States Consul General, Robert Thomas, and an acknowledgement that the event was taking place on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka, Nation of Kahnawà:ké. The full recording of the show is available online.

For the fifth straight year, and despite inclement weather, our attendance figures eclipsed the previous year with 2,910 attendees representing 47 countries.

The conference was held in Montréal, Canada, at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. With 181 Official Showcases, 2,553 Private Showcases, and over 1,000 speed meetings, the conference presented a strong front for folk music artists and industry.

Tanya Tagaq, a celebrated Inuk throat singer, was the keynote speaker. Tanya is a 2014 Polaris Prize-winning recording artist and recipient of multiple Juno Awards, a Canadian Folk Music award, and a 2016 International Folk Music Award nominee. Tanya reached the audience through the reading of her novel, Split Tooth (a 2018 Scotiabank Giller Prize longlisted novel), and sharing her traditional vocal improvisations. You can view the video here.

Buffy Sainte-Marie was reunited with acclaimed music journalist Andrea Warner who authored “Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Authorized Biography”. The biography went on to become a national bestseller. Buffy was also the recipient of the IFMA’s 2019 People’s Voice award.

For the first time in 50 years, John Kay (Steppenwolf founder and vocalist) sat down with Tom O’Neal (rock and roll photographer and Steppenwolf album designer) to share stories of their long careers in rock and roll. Kay and O’Neal were joined by John Entwistle, bass player for the legendary rock band The Who, for a lively discussion about the band’s early days and the music industry.

In addition to awards announced earlier in the year, Best Of Awards were presented to the following:

- **Album of the Year:** Rifles & Rosary Beads by Mary Gauthier
- **Song of the Year:** “The President Sang Amazing Grace” by Zoe Mulford, recorded by Joan Baez
- **Artist of the Year:** sponsored by Levitt Foundation
  - I’m With Her

Tanya Tagaq accepts her award at the IFMAS.

Photo by Jake Jacobson

Global Summits - For the second year, FAI hosted global summits during the conference in a continued effort to bring together community leaders and academics for focused and extended peer gathering. The annual summits are separate from the standard program and are followed by open plenary sessions for all delegates.

The Ethnomusicology Summit was facilitated by the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and focused on the critique of the colonial roots of the term “world music.” This summit provided an opportunity for academics to discuss how concepts of “world music” bolster or hinder musicians.

The International Indigenous Music Summit, hosted by ShoShona Kish, with guest facilitators Gerald Torres and Denis Bolduc, was the first global summit of its kind. This one-day event gathered Indigenous artists, knowledge keepers, and community builders as well as invited allies to discuss important issues facing the Indigenous music community.
CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

1,000 + SPEED MEETINGS
150 NETWORKING AND MENTORSHIP SESSIONS
42 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PANELS

181 OFFICIAL SHOWCASES
2,553 PRIVATE SHOWCASES
94 PRIVATE SHOWCASE HOSTS
64 EXHIBIT HALL BOOTHOFS

476 PRESENTERS
2,910 ATTENDEES

FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES
46% ARTIST
31% INDUSTRY
10% ASSOCIATE
9% PRESENTER
4% MEDIA

OFFICIAL SHOWCASE ARTISTS GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORY

40% CANADA
33% UNITED STATES
27% INTERNATIONAL

“An incredible example of kind, imaginative, encouraging leadership, and an inspiring immersion in arts, culture, and community.”
- Marie Zimmerman, Hillside Festival

“I had no idea of the positive changes and growth the organization has made since I last attended. It was really a valuable experience for me in many ways.”
- Tim Peacock, Nelsonville Music Festival

PERFORMERS
47% MALE
53% FEMALE

PANELISTS
51% MALE
49% FEMALE

PRESENTERS
49% MALE
51% FEMALE

GENDER DIVERSITY

This data is based on the Keychange Initiative, whose priority is to ensure that 50% of acts programmed include at least one person who identifies as a woman, transgender, or non-binary.

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, North Korea, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Scotland, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Wales
Annual General Meeting - FAI's annual meeting of its membership was held Wednesday, February 14, 2019, at 9am ET in the Place du Canada ballroom of the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. In addition to the presentation of the financial and annual report for Fiscal Year 2018, the newly elected board was presented, and the 2019 Executive Committee was announced: President, Lisa Schwartz; Vice-President, Matt Sever; Secretary; Deana McCloud, Treasurer; Alka Sharma, and Member at Large, Ellen Stanley. The meeting concluded with a preliminary summary of FAI’s stakeholder research project. The full recording of the 2019 AGM can be viewed live.

Business Accelerators - FAI curated three business accelerators in partnership with Berklee Online. The accelerators were designed to build core skills for emerging professionals. Each of the sessions had topics designed to guide careers and connect attendees with peers and mentors. The accelerator for agents was designed for small roster agencies to attend with peers and mentors. The accelerator for managers focused on navigating tools and skills needed for building a successful career. The accelerator for entrepreneurs focused on the breadth of folk music at the conference including Cathy Fink, Connie Kaldor, Dom Flemons, Hafdis Huld, Jim Lauderdale, Mireya Ramos, Ramy Essam, Raye Zaragoza, Reggie Harris, Shakura S’Aida, SONIA, Stephen Fearing, Susan Aglukark, Vox Sambou, and Zoe Mulford, as well as artist/administrators Robert Lynch (CEO of Americans for the Arts) and FAI’s Executive Director, Aengus Finnan. The video of the bed-in is available online.

FAI prioritizes inclusion, diversity, and international growth. Presented here are the responses to questions in the post-conference survey regarding FAI’s progress toward meeting related goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>2019 Report Card</th>
<th>2020 Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender balance</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of genres within folk</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of career levels</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of ages</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International representation</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity (language, musical content)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of under-represented groups and people of color</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bed-In - On February 16, 2019, FAI held a livestreamed “Bed-In” performance from the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth in Montréal to commemorate the 50th anniversary of John and Yoko’s original recording of "Give Peace A Chance". Over 300 groups (artists, industry, administrators, and fans) signed up to broadcast their personal version of the song from their own beds (whether at the hotel, or elsewhere in the world). Taking part in FAI’s official broadcast from Room 1742 (the Lennon-Ono Suite) was a roster of artists representing the breadth of folk music at the conference including Cathy Fink, Connie Kaldor, Dom Flemons, Hafdis Huld, Jim Lauderdale, Mireya Ramos, Ramy Essam, Raye Zaragoza, Reggie Harris, Shakura S’Aida, SONIA, Stephen Fearing, Susan Aglukark, Vox Sambou, and Zoe Mulford, as well as artist/administrators Robert Lynch (CEO of Americans for the Arts) and FAI’s Executive Director, Aengus Finnan. The video of the bed-in is available online.

Survey Responses
A post-conference survey was sent to all conference delegates and we received 718 responses. The survey provides us with valuable feedback that we use to inform decisions and processes as we plan the 2020 conference. Thank you to all who participated!

FAI’s board, board alumni, staff, and contractors. Photo by Morten Fog

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More From FAI

Executive Director Aengus Finnan addressing the audience during the AGM. Photo by Shadow Scape Records

CommUnity Gathering - This year’s CommUnity Gathering focused on Mental Health and the Music Industry. JUNO Award-winning artist Lynn Miles presented a feature discussion about artists’ challenges related to addiction, depression, and anxiety. This was followed by testimonials from artists Ellis Paul, Rose Cousins, Eric Andersen, and Florence K. FAI’s Advocacy Committee provide a self-care resource sheet and set up a wellness board at the conference for attendees to share their favorite self-care practices. A quiet space was also designed in one of the conference rooms offering meditation and yoga to focus on self-care and balance.

Photo by Morten Fog

Circle Singing class at the Louis Jay Meyers Music Camp. Photo by Shadow Scape Records

Music Camp - The Louis Jay Meyers Music Camp was refined this year with classes that appealed to attendees’ needs and wants. The highest attended class, The Art of Harmony Singing (taught by The Good Lovelies), had 46 people, while the average class attendance was 21 people. Other top classes were Creative Guitar Tricks for Songwriters, taught by Joe Crookston, and From Writer’s Block to a Masterpiece (Berklee Online) with Shane Adams.

Photo by Shadow Scape Records

Daytime session. Photo by Shadow Scape Records

Presence of under-represented groups and people of color

FAI’s board, board alumni, staff, and contractors. Photo by Morten Fog
About Folk Alliance International

Folk Alliance International (FAI) was founded in 1989 to connect folk music leaders aiming to sustain the community and genre. The leading international voice for folk music, FAI is a 31-year-old arts nonprofit based in Kansas City, Missouri, USA.

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