

## Dalannah Bio - January 2022

Dalannah is now 76 years old as of Oct 12th 2021 and has been singing professionally for more than half a century. Her music career began in Winnipeg, Manitoba with an all-female group called the Feminine Touch. Winnipeg was a thriving music community at the time and Feminine Touch had the good fortune to tour Canada and open shows for groups that included the Guess Who and The Monkees. Back in Winnipeg Dalannah performed at the Town & Country Lounge with jazz guitarist Lenny Breau. During this period, she also worked with New York's Clifford Barbra and jazz greats like PJ Perry, Earl Seymour and others.

Moving to Edmonton – another thriving music scene – Dalannah played with great bands like Everyman's Tonto along with piano player Will MacCalder and the boys. It was the decade of the 1970's, a time of change and their band played many of the festivals that were springing up all over western Canada as well as taking the stage as the opening act for Thin Lizzy, Chilliwack and other rock groups passing through the city.

Beyond performing, Dalannah participated in the LeDain Commission, a government sponsored study that explored the possibility of marijuana legalization.. a study that took place about 40 years before legalization actually happened. Getting involved here was the beginning of Dalannah's life long vocation of working for change. Around this time Dalannah also worked with Graeme & the Wafers, a band that evolved into Stony Plain, performing with Pat Coleman, Geoff Eyre, Bruce Nessel and Al Treen. "This band taught me about how powerful original music could be. We played arenas and you could hear a pin drop."

By this time, Vancouver was calling and Dalannah followed the call. Introduced to musicians as a vocalist willing and able to put it all out there, gigs and performances with Thunderbird Blues Band soon followed, the band becoming a regular opening act for legendary blues & jazz acts that performed at Vancouver's Commodore Ballroom; acts that included Willie Dixon, BB King, Freddie Hubbard and so many more.

Seeking opportunities south of the border, Dalannah moved to Oakland to play with some blues and jazz musicians in the Bay area for a summer. Her life took a turn. A series of events left her homeless and living in addiction. She had a stroke, was in a coma, came out of it and never drank or did a drug again. She still calls it the cosmic kick in the butt that got her back to work as well as working to get her life back!

She started writing. First there were poems, that with the addition of music, became lyrics for songs which attracted the interest of Quest Records, a philanthropic legacy label based in Vancouver that eventually resulted in her first professional recording "Mamma's Got The Blues" released in 2008. Warmly received by the critics and earning her new fans, she followed that CD with "Them Menz", an album that featured stronger songwriting and captured an artist returned to form.

Beyond writing poetry Dalannah put her story into the framework of a script and presented a play called "The Returning Journey", an emotional, musical journey through darkness and into the light of spiritual rebirth. Coincidental with this period was Dalannah's discovery of her first nations heritage, given the traditional name Wimbli Machpya Wia, (Eagle Sky Woman).

Not content with sticking to a formula, but in love with the Blues musical form, Dalannah stripped it down until she had found the sound she was looking for. She approached bassist Owen Veber (Owen Owen) with lyrics and melody ideas.

Their musical partnership clicked and in 2015 Quest Records released Been Around A While. During the recording of the album, Dalannah and Owen entered the International Blues Challenge, making it "all the way to Memphis" as finalists, with Dalannah being inducted to the NY Blues Hall of Fame that summer. The year was capped when DOWNBEAT Magazine named Been Around A While one of the top blues CDs of 2015.

Locally, Dalannah produced Blues For Christmas, an annual event she created to raise money for the Food Bank. Over the years the show grew until it became the unofficial Christmas Party for Blues musicians in the Vancouver area. By the time the 30th Anniversary came around, the show had become a major event and although Dalannah had a large group of volunteers to help her, the amount of work required to mount the show caught up with her and she suffered another stroke followed by a heart attack followed by a third stroke. The Blues for Christmas held its 32nd and final Food Bank benefit on Dec 11th, 2017, The Mayor and council declared that date to be “Dalannah Gail Bowen Day” and gave her the Keys to the City. But now it was time to heal. Not to say that she stopped work completely... because she continued her work on the Missing Women Campaign and other local initiatives designed to aid the less fortunate and damaged people who live on the underside of most cities.

During this time in 2018 her writing evolved further and she sought out longtime friend and collaborator, Michael Creber to work with her on the new songs that would form the basis of her new album released in the Fall of 2019.

The recording is called “LOOKING BACK” and features a blend of originals and carefully chosen cover songs; all related to our current relationship with Mother Earth and with each other. Through the support of Creative BC and the Province of British Columbia, @creativebcs, Dalannah expanded her fanbase and performance schedule with this release. Even with the setbacks and challenges presented by 2020, Dalannah continues to grow; regularly performing virtual live concerts – including the Friday night kick off to this year's Langley Jazz and Arts Festival.

Over the fall and winter of The Covid -19 shut down in the music industry she developed a special tribute to one of her favourite influencers...Billie Holiday. Together with writing partner and arranger Michael Creber a lovely little show made the rounds in the few places available and finally in July of 2021 they were invited to perform a full band version for the Vancouver Jazz Festival. Dalannah also performed this past summer in August at The Squamish Wind Festival and The Heart of the City festival in Vancouver and the Fort Langley Arts & Jazz Festival in Sept. She kept busy with gigs around the city as Vancouver opened up in mid July to 50% occupancy and venues became much more intimate which suited her & Michael just fine. Then a fresh opportunity arrived when the Firehall theatre Director Donna Spencer commissioned Dalannah to script a theatrical version of her tribute to Holiday called “Billie’s Blues”. That play is in development now for a spot in the upcoming 2022 season schedule.

Dalannah, now 76 years old as of Oct 12th, 2021 released her most recent album known as Dalannah’s Diamond Collection titled “ In Her Own Words” . Her label Quest Records selected their 15 favourite songs written and recorded by her on the label over the past 15 years and compiled this anthology to celebrate her 75 years of “Living and Loving” . They included a 16th bonus track of a new song called ‘Blues Keep Knocking’ which made the complete CD exactly 75 minutes long. It moves along in such a seamless and listenable flow it astounds her fans when they suddenly realize an hour has passed so quickly. ‘Blues Keep Knocking’, has been released as a single with a live performance video shot during her Birthday concert at the Firehall Theatre, 5 blocks from her home.

In November 2021 Dalannah was nominated for the very prestigious Maple Blues “Life Time Achievement” award. The public voting ends Dec. 1st. Meanwhile she has gigs and concerts and Festival appearances scheduled into late summer 2022 but even with all the music demands on her time she has still been very active and vocal about those issues she has espoused for more than 50 years... Shelter for the homeless and social housing; the wasteful and destructive behaviours destroying our environment,; imminent climate change action; and indigenous issues especially the “Missing Women Campaign, and of course the outrageous and inhuman Colonial disgrace and Canada’s shameful denials and shuffling under the carpet the Residential Schools program of cultural genocide and abuse of indigenous youth.

She has been called “ Our Matriarch of the Blues” and a “force of nature” . Seems about right so far.